

A Report on Violations Affecting the LGBTQ Community in the Workplace

The Lebanese Observatory For Workers
and Employees Rights & Helem

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

This report is within the context of monitoring the violations that members of the LGBTQ community are exposed to in the workplace in Lebanon. This report is part of a unique project entitled “Empowerment and Equality in the Workplace”, which aims at increasing the protection and improving the livelihood levels for members of the LGBTQ community in the place of employment and to facilitate and increase their access to the Lebanese labor market.

It is also a product of the alliance between the Lebanese Observatory of Worker and Employees Rights (LOWER) and HELEM whose aim is to increase knowledge, solidarity and cooperation between the LGBTQ and labor rights movements, to defend the rights of LGBTQ workers in Lebanon, to confront the challenges that stand in their way, and to provide the necessary support for them to exercise their rights workers in equality and dignity.

This project is a first step in accomplishing this hard and long-term goal, and aims at creating at simultaneously building a lasting and strong infrastructure for future advocacy as well as affecting the workplace and labor rights environment for LGBTQ individuals in the long run.

Future programs that will be made possible using the information in this report include:

a- Effective monitoring of the violations the members of the LGBTQ community are exposed to, and providing legal representation and aid for them.

b- Documenting the workplace violations, the members of the LGBTQ community are exposed to for purposes of local and international advocacy (especially with the United Nations Human Rights Council, the International Labor Organization, and other mechanisms).

c- Presenting the legal knowledge to the LGBTQ community, especially where it involves the labor law and the social security and workplace emergencies laws for them to have the legal knowledge that enables them to defend their rights.

d- Presenting the basics of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression to the major stakeholders working in the human rights field in Lebanon, such as union members, lawyers, activists, and civil society associations, and increasing knowledge of minor differences and exposing the fears of the LGBTQ community in their workplace.

e- Raising the level of public and international awareness about the rights of employment for the members of the LGBTQ community, and the necessity of merging them into the labor market.

f- Application of pressure for the rights of workers of the LGBTQ community in Lebanon, in the appropriate national and international forums.

This report was part of a year-long project that required the coordination and implementation of the following programming and infrastructure:

1. The establishment of a common mechanism to monitor and file complaints among the LOWER observatory and HELEM association and the allocation of a hotline for this matter. HELEM took it upon themselves to manage the hotline and take

the calls about the violations in the workplaces, then turn over the complaints and consultations from the members of the LGBTQ community members to the LOWER observatory, which, in turn, contributed to giving council directly, or through their lawyers.

2. The establishment of a common documentation mechanism for the violations among the HELEM association and LOWER observatory, to understand the types and natures, and to issue a report about them. A copy of the report will be sent to the ILO and to the United Nations General Assembly.

3. The holding of eight discussion workshops, about the economic and social effects of the financial and economic collapse on the Lebanese, and non-Lebanese workers, and members of the LGBTQ community, which included activists and civil society associations from all over the Lebanese governorates, including 144 activists.

4. Making an awareness campaign, that lasted one year, highlighting the rights of the LGBTQ community, in partnership among the observatory and HELEM. It included the publishing of a video, and publications on the social networking sites and platforms.

INTRODUCTION

The LGBTQ community – people with atypical sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sexual characteristics – face systemic and structural discrimination in the workplace due to a variety of factors, most that have to do with their expression and their perceived identity and orientation.

They are more vulnerable to bullying and arbitrary

dismissal than other workers on account of this reality. Bullying is usually accompanied by verbal violence, through insults and other various forms of pressure, which strip a person of their dignity especially when it comes from employers or fellow work colleagues. Member of the community also face instances of violence, including threats of physical harm and arrest, by the same sources, which deprives them the right to safety and security in the workplace, and threatens their mental, emotional, and psychological stability. Many members of the LGBTQ community presented in this report have documented also being sexually and verbally harassed in their workplace, including instances of exploitation and blackmail, by colleagues and employers. These violations have been ongoing for years and have remained unchallenged due to a culture of impunity that allows violators to get away with their abuse as most members of the community still feel hesitant and afraid to file a complaint to management or to take legal action - for fear of losing their jobs and for fear of having their identities and orientations be made public and used against them.

These violations have been observed to increase and multiply in case members of the LGBTQ community also face other kinds of challenges should they belong to other marginalized groups. Compounded levels of discrimination have been documented in the cases of LGBTQ refugees and migrant workers for example, who face a significant amount of racism and discrimination in their wages, contracts, and benefits due to employers exploiting their refugee status, their economic desperation, and their lack of legal protections.

This report focuses on stories of LGBTQ community members who have been discriminated against or experienced violence in the workplace. It is based on 46 cases, documented through interviews with

LGBTQ individuals in a joint partnership between LOWER and HELEM. The individuals interviewed were a mix of Lebanese citizens, Syrian refugees, and members of other Arab nationalities residing in Lebanon.

A total number of 57 individuals were interviewed for the project as a whole were, but we documented only 46 of those stories in this report. The remaining 11 were not included because the members refused to provide consent to the authors to publish their narratives and only consented to sharing their demographic information. Some interviews remained incomplete due to various reasons such as shortage of sufficient time, the inability to continue the narrative, and for other personal reasons which interviewees prefer to remain disclosed. Among the members of the LGBTQ community who have been interviewed 29 are refugees, and asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq, and Palestine working in

the industrial, commercial, and/or service sectors.

Sectors in which interviewed members of the LGBTQ community work:

%28.07 of the interviewed LGBTQ community members work in the restaurants and pubs sector, %12.28 of them work in hair styling sector, %10.5 work in fashion design, %8.77 work in industry and construction sector, %8.77 work in the food and beverage sector, %5.26 work in the legal sector, %5.26 work in education, %3.5 work in the hotels sector, %1.75 work in each of the following real estate, media and communications, delivery, sports clubs, military, cleaning services, office services, security companies, and the commercial sector. (Table 1).

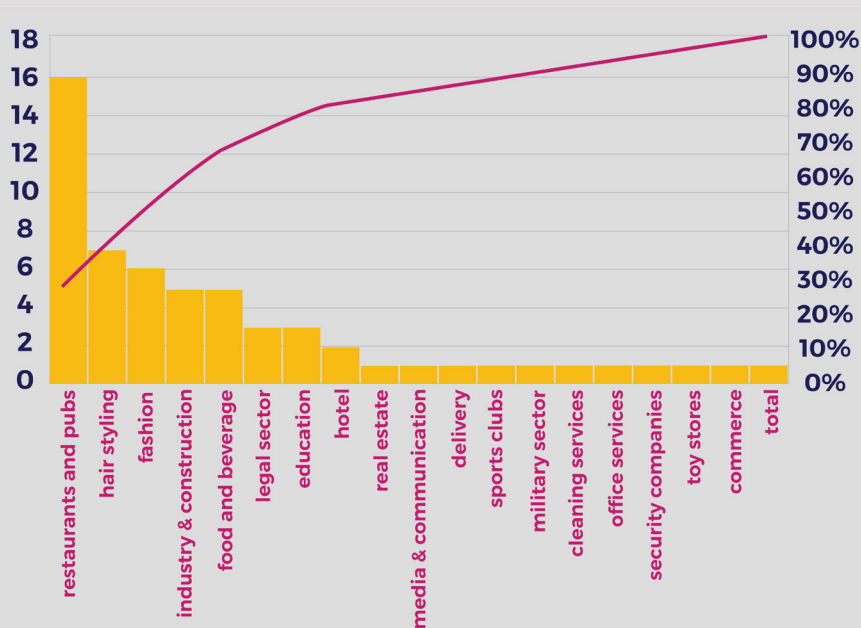


Table 1: the distribution of the LGBTQ community interviewed members according to their work sectors.

Sources of discrimination against LGBTQ persons in the workplace:

Working members of the LGBTQ community are exposed to many types of discrimination in their workplace, or on working occasions. Of those interviewed %35.08 were discriminated against by the administration at the workplace, %31.57 were discriminated against by their colleagues, %24.65 were discriminated against by customers coming to the workplace, %7.01 were discriminated against by supervisors, and 1.75 % were discriminated against by siblings or parents after being exposed, or outed, as members of the LGBTQ community by their colleagues, supervisors, or the administration at their workplace. (Table 2).

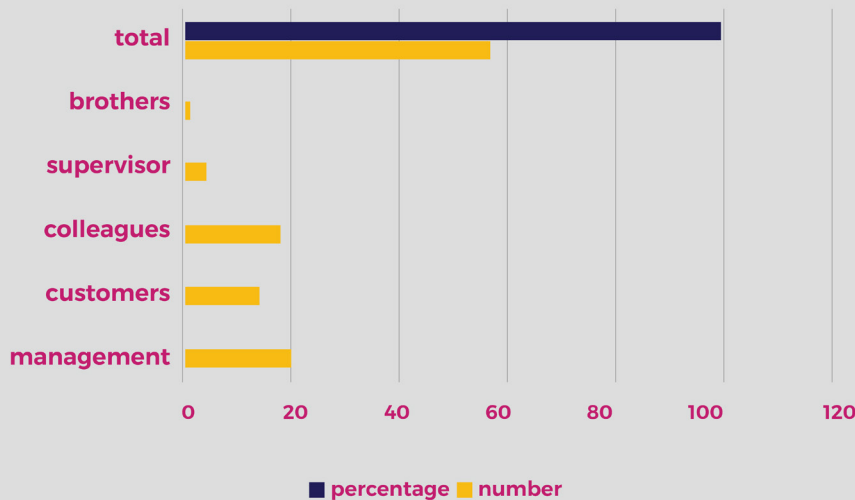


Table 2: sources of discrimination in the workplace interviewed members of the LGBTQ community are exposed to.

Types of discrimination, bullying, and violations against LGBTQ persons in the workplace:

Conducted interviews with LGBTQ members show that the highest percentage of discrimination and violation came from mockery and bullying, which reached %25.03, followed by verbal violence at %21.16, sexual harassment at %8.46, verbal harassment and disclosure of tendencies, identity, or privacy at %6.87 each, wage deprivation at %5.82, expulsion at %4.76, arbitrary dismissal at %6.34, acts of racism at %1.58, sexual blackmail at %1.85, and sexual assault and rape at %0.52 each. (Table 3).

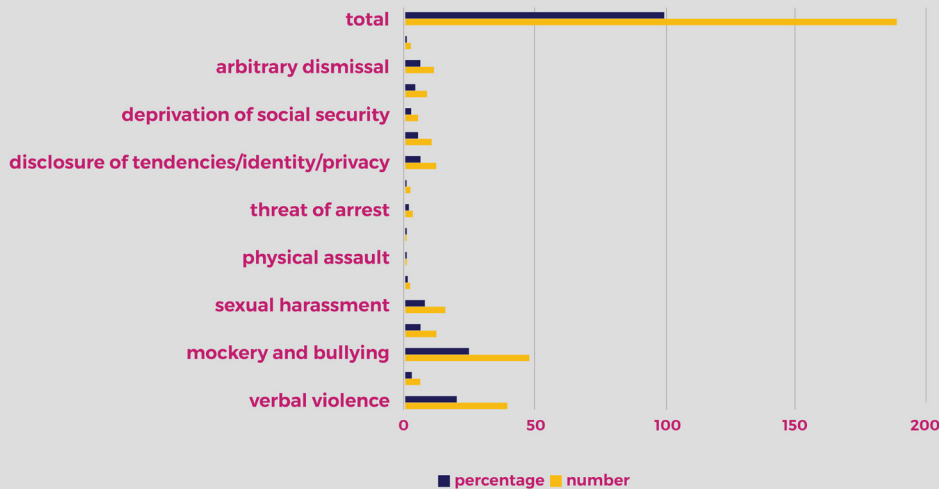


Table 3: types of discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community.

STORIES

CASES OF SEXUAL BLACKMAIL:

The N.¹ Case:

When N. started working for the company S. there were no problems related to her gender identity, three months later she started being harassed, employees working with her started telling Army members stationed near her workplace that she is a homosexual. When she would start work, they used to request that she precedes them to the bathroom so they can have sexual intercourse with her. She was forced to have sexual intercourse, because she considered them to be stronger than her, and can cause her many problems at work.

Fear and anxiety took over her during that period due to her inability to do anything. She always used to fight with employees, who bullied her because of her atypical appearances, they used to mock her, and talk to her in words like “when are we going to have a quickie”, “she was fu**ed today”, “how many di**s have you taken today bitch or tramp”, “you look like you want it”, and other degrading expressions.

After a period of working there, they finally contacted her and told her that her feminine behavior in the workplace is no longer tolerated, and they know about her sexual acts with the other employees (after some employees snitched on her in their attempt to ruin her reputation at work). She told them about what used to happen with her during her working hours, and that she was forced to do what she did, but they did not believe her, and said “you look like you like d**k, so we won’t believe you, we’ll believe your colleague instead”.

1 N. transgender woman interviewed on 20/7/2020

After hearing about the decision to expel her, she asked for her benefits, salary, and compensation, so the administration paid her the salary but not the compensation.

After that, she demanded the compensations she deserves, but they evaded payment. And until now she has not been paid.

Three members of the LGBTQ community who were documented have been sexually blackmailed in their workplace, as they were forced to have sexual intercourse with the rest of the employees, out of fear of losing their jobs, or being scandalized in the workplace.

The T.² Case:

T. was an administrator in a non-civilian apparatus. In the beginning, there were doubts concerning his sexual tendencies, and it happened, at the time, that he was snitched about by members who worked with him. They started to doubt his sexual tendencies. He was threatened, and at the same time, his working hours were increased. He was verbally threatened by his superiors, to the extent of threatening to expose him to his family.

There was a colleague of his who belonged to the LGBTQ community, and he had big connections in the country. So, this colleague blackmailed him sexually and asked for sexual favors, after threatening him with exposing his tendencies in case he didn’t comply. “I had no choice but to yield and have sex with him”. Once he was kissing another man in the car, and when they were caught by some of his colleagues, they started saying “we don’t want a gay to be our superior, we don’t want women”. His colleagues were not comfortable working with him, so his assignments were withdrawn from him, and

2 T. interviewed on 14/5/2020

his responsibilities handed to an inferior ranking colleague, his assignments became limited, and less than what they were before, plus he had to work for longer hours.

Later he was apprehended and transported to bureau of public decency at the local police station. After that he had to attend a court hearing at the palace of justice (the Lebanese court of law), where he was also sexually harassed. After that, he was transported to Roumieh prison for 15 days where other arrested inmates with him also tried to have sexual intercourse with him and harassed him. He couldn't talk at the time because he thought he was not in a position to talk about that.

He stayed away from other inmates at all times, so no one would abuse him, but still he was abused at night, when everyone was asleep. After that he was transferred to solitary prison, where he stayed for 40 days, after which he was presented before a civilian court, which was being constantly hindered. After five sessions he was declared innocent. Five months later he was prosecuted and expelled. He couldn't do anything at the time, and that negatively affected his psychological health, and he had to attend psychological follow-up for a long time, and moved from one doctor to another, and until today, he still can't get over the experience he's been through.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

CASES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

The SH.¹ Case:

SH. started working at a hotel as a chef. In the beginning, she worked her first week as a trial, knowing that work was tiresome. In the workplace, when new workers arrived, old workers would throw all the work at them, which puts more pressure on newcomers. When they noticed that she worked without complaining, they added to her working hours, and at the same time delayed her monthly wages.

During working hours, they addressed her as a female in front of the customers, to attract the attention of the superiors at work, and when one of them did a poor job or a wrongdoing they threw the blame on her to be held accountable. SH. used to go to work early, and when she arrives, an employee used to rub against her, knowing that she didn't want that, later she was told by her colleagues that this person was unsafe, and that she should keep her distance from him.

After a while the 17th of October revolution erupted, and the institution announced that they want to close down, due to the situations in the country, and she was told she had to leave work for this reason. She couldn't get her dues, which were the rest of her wages then, and she attempted to contact the administration, but they didn't answer back.

1 SH. transgender woman interviewed on 25/6/2020

The N.² Case:

N. says that she started working, early 2018, as a seamstress. When she went for the job interview and asked if they were looking for sewing machines workers, the employer was surprised and said, "female employee?". He told her, at the time, that she was a male, and that she should identify herself as such, to avoid any type of trouble.

As a Syrian, she was being paid less than all the other employees, and the extra hours pay was less than that of other employees. Her supervisor liked her work but asked her to improve herself and the way she walks (toughen up), because she was looking "too feminine". Other employees were giving her weird looks at first.

One week later, they started talking about her, and refused to sit with her, and when she asked for work tools, they would look at her with disgust and repulsion. But she didn't pay any attention to them and proceeded to tell her supervisor about these behaviors. The supervisor instructed her to request all the tools she needed from him, and not to walk between the sewing machines. But these conducts persisted, and the looks of disgust continued. Her employer supported her, and she told him about the abuse she went through, caused by other employees. The employer talked to the employees after that, but nothing changed.

Six months after she started working there, some employees started to wait for her in front of her workplace, and sexually harassing her, asking her to have sexual intercourse with them. After such requests repeated, she went and talked to the employer again, and he talked with the employees

2 N. Syrian transgender woman, interviewed on 1/7/2020

about the subject, so they started waiting for her far from her workplace and addressing her with degrading expressions.

During this period, they used to throw any wrongdoing completely on her shoulders, and let her sort things out alone. After the repetitive occurrence of such mistakes – which were not her fault at all – the employer talked to her, and told her, she had to quit her job, because problems started to increase. She had to quit her job with this institution, but she was not done with the threats from the other employees, even after she left.

They waited for her near her residence and got in her way. She had to change her residence because of such actions. Her leaving her job, and the abuse she lived through, greatly affected her psychological health. She even stayed a whole year being treated in a center for the rehabilitation of victims of violence and torture, because of the discrimination, and the marginalization she lived through.

The D.³ Case:

D. started work with an electronics selling company. She always finalized all the company transactions and finished all the tasks asked of her. She was an active worker in the company, so they could not give her up. There was a person at work who always harassed her, and asked her for many things constantly, and one day there was a television episode with the transsexual “Haifa Magic” which was being broadcasted in the workplace. So, this employee called her over to watch the episode, because she may be interested. After a while he reached out his hand and harassed her, and she clearly displayed her annoyance from such behavior, and there was a hassle among the two due to that.

3 D. transgender woman interviewed on 1/7/2020

After a while he repeated his actions, and she wanted her transgender identity to remain hidden from the rest of the employees, but she didn't stay silent. She told him not to attempt such acts with her again. As a result, he threatened to expose her gender identity and sexual orientation to the rest of the workers, and started calling her harmful descriptions, such as “you are a fa**ot” or “you like to be fu**ed”, and he went on to bully her afterwards. She, in turn, went to the manager and told him what happened with the employee. She told him that her behavior is normal, and she can't control her movements, so he told her to look out for her appearance, because she looks like “she likes to be fu**ed”. She told him that her parents know about her situation, and that he knows the environment from which she comes.

He then told her “yes, but your feminine movements are obvious to everyone”. She couldn't put up with all the insults from him, so she decided to quit her job, and demanded the rest of her salary, he called her after a while and told her to come to take the rest of her salary and stated that he doesn't want any homosexuals at work. That affected D.'s life. She remained for two weeks in an unstable psychological condition, and then she started looking for a new job.

The KH.⁴ Case:

When KH. started work she didn't tell anyone that she was transgender, but her expressions seemed to be noticed by others. At first, she was assigned to welcome people coming into the office and finalize their basic transactions upon entry. These individuals would criticize her mannerism and behavior and the way she expresses herself at work. They would talk to the other employees,

4 KH. transgender woman interviewed on 27/8/2020

saying things like “do you have a gay guy up there and having prostitution in the office?” After the mistreatment in the office increased, she started to impose herself on the office, the way she really wanted, and the people coming in always criticized something about her when they enter.

Once, she was sexually harassed by one of her colleagues, when she was in the office. He asked her to go the bathroom to tell her something, and when she went in, he followed her, took his clothes off, waved his private parts in front of her, and told her that he wanted to have sex with her. She managed to block him and asked him to put his clothes back on, after this incident this employee started to manipulate her working hours. When she would leave the office for an hour, he would write that she left for three hours.

Add to that, people in the office started saying that she was forcing him to have sex with her. Once there were television channels in front of the office filming an episode related to the rights of the LGBTQ community, one of her colleagues told her to go and interview with them, because she was obviously homosexual. She went and had the interview, and the episode was broadcasted on the channel. Her colleagues started telling her that she was gay, and that the television channel knows there are gay people in the office, and that’s why they came to film here. The verbal violence started to target her. She would be told that she is negatively influencing the reputation of the office.

After this incident, she was informed that her actions, and her non normative appearance were bad for the office reputation, because she visits places for the LGBTQ community and she stands on street corners, and orders came to expel her

from work. That had a big effect on her mental health, and she didn’t know how she was going to pay her accumulated bills, which caused her to be concerned about how she will pay her rents and her accumulated expenditures.

The M.5 Case:

When M. started working at her institution there were no problems. After a while, some customers started to come in, who were over drinkers, and started to annoy him. There was a female customer who always came in and every time she would annoy him with her mistreatment. She would pour the drinks on him and insult him in front of everybody. She would always reach out her foot to him and ask him to bring her glass over to her feet. He felt she was treating him with superiority. The remaining customers always used to call him with harmful descriptions. When he didn’t hear them, they would say things like “are you deaf” or “are you blind”, and some of them would tell him that he worked for them, and that he should serve them, because he earns his living from them, and that they support him.

Once he was working as usual behind the bar, one of the customers got drunk, went behind the bar, and tried to sexually harass him. He would rub off on him in a weird way which he never wanted. When the situation got out of control, he yelled at him, and asked the security to get him out from behind the bar. M. used to be annoyed from such actions and practices, but he couldn’t complain to the administration, for fear of expulsion, because he considered that the administration can easily replace him. Also, he was afraid of his employer who had big connections in the country. He always asked for his right to be registered into the social

5 M transgender man interviewed on 28/8/2020

security, but he was always ignored and rejected and was denied that right.

The R.⁶ Case:

When R. started working for the company O., he didn't tell the rest of the employees about his sexual orientation. At the time, treatment was good, after a while at work, his colleagues started bullying him, and criticizing his non normative behavior. They would say to him: "why is your voice so soft?", or he wasn't a man, men don't act like he acts, and don't dress the way he dresses.

He, in turn, went to the employer, and filed a complaint concerning the way he was being treated, the employer intervened, and told the rest of the workers not to be concerned with him or his behavior. One week after the incident they went back to mocking him and started calling him descriptions like "fa**ot" and "nympho" and other names that annoyed him. During his work period, there were two persons with him at work, who would sexually harass him. They would touch his privates. One of them asked to sleep with him, and in both times, R. refused what was happening, which led to the accumulation of tensions.

They were causing him annoyances after he refused. They would go to the employer and tell him that his work isn't very good. In addition, there were many problems between R. and his brother, and once his brother came to his workplace and threatened to kill him because of his sexual orientation. One of the employees defended him and pushed his brother away, so as not to hurt him. After a while, the employer came to R. and asked him to quit his job, because of the problem with his brother, so he left his

6 R. cisgender man, interviewed on 17/9/2020

work after being forced, and went to search for another job. He was clearly affected by this, the debt accumulated, and worries increased on the payment of bills and the expenses involved.

The M.⁷ Case:

M. used to work in a company, along with a colleague who always told her he wanted to sit with her. Once he told her he wanted to smoke hookah with her, and they agreed to meet at his house. When she went to him, he started to sexually harass her, and pulled out his sexual organs in front of her. He asked her to look for pornography, took his clothes off, and asked her to touch his organs. She, in turn, was scared because she was young. She reached out to another friend, to give him an alibi so she can escape. His uncle was an administrator in her workplace, and so she told his uncle and his mother, and they yelled at him when they knew.

Also, there was another person at the workplace, finalizing transactions for workers, and he always started his conversations with her using words like "what a pair of eyes, what a walk, give me a kiss, give me a s**k". He would talk in an explicit manner and language with her. Once, he invited her for a drink of juice, and he started touching her in an inappropriate manner. She blocked him and never gave him any further attention. M. was unable to file a complaint, out of fear of the damage that can be done to her, and out of fear of holding her responsible for the problem. Working with her at the place of employment was another gay person who would, always talk to her in the feminine pronouns saying "hey girl" because she used to keep her hair long, and care for herself and her appearances, and would further expose and bully her. Once she wanted to imprint her fingerprint to begin her work

7 M. transgender woman interviewed on 25/9/2020

day, when she heard two of her colleagues saying, “this guy likes to be fu**ed, he is a homosexual” and they said to her “go and get yourself a surgery, how are your parents tolerating you” and sometimes her father would be standing with her and they would tell him “if he was our son, we would have killed him a long time ago”. After several bullying attempts, she filed a complaint to the administration, and told them she was being bullied, and talked to in degrading manner, and the administration told the rest of the employees never to address her in that manner again and threatened with expulsion. These subjects added to the depression that she faced, and she started to have a case of physical fatigue because of the words she was hearing, especially that she was sensitive.

The K.⁸ Case:

When K. started to work at the company, there were no problems. A while later, the rest of the employees started noticing her non-normative appearance, and they started to question her identity. Later they dealt with her with a lot of mockery, and they always used to tell her “fa**ot”. After a while, the way she was treated started to change, employees didn’t settle with just mockery and bullying, they started reaching out their hands and sexually harassing her. Most of the time they would pass their fingers on her backside, then moved up her body. They always talked to her in names like “fa**ot, why do you get fu**ed, come suck my d**k, do you like d**k”. After they went too far with their words, they started to touch her with their hands, and kiss her without her consent. They saw that she had a weak personality, so they gave themselves the permission to invade her physical space, and they started to impose their will over her, and bully her, with the support of the administration.

8 K. transgender woman interviewed on 12/3/2020

From time to time, they would carry metal tools and imply to her that they were sexual organs, and that she should love them, and they would pass them all over her body. She couldn’t file a complaint then, out of fear of being expelled from her job, and becoming unemployed.

After a while, the employer himself was harassing her, and talking to her inappropriately. He knew about the practices she was exposed to, and told her at the time, that she was falling short in her work, even though she was finishing all her duties flawlessly. He asked her to quit the job, and didn’t pay her what was due, which were a full month’s wage. She couldn’t do anything, and she had to leave her job, which led to the deterioration of her mental health, and she started feeling anxious and stressed, because of her expenses, rents, and

SEXUAL ASSAULT

overdue bills, which forced her into prostitution.

CASES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT:

The M.⁹ Case:

When M. started working, she didn't allow much space for talk, and the employer at that time gave her a small house he owned near the workplace, so she can sleep in.

The next day, after she finished work, she went home to be surprised by the employer knocking at her door. It was approximately two hours after her shift was over. He told her he wanted to come in, so she opened the door and let him in. As he went in, he started to sexually harass her, and told her he wanted to sleep with her, and threatened her if she didn't do it. At the time she didn't allow for anything to happen, so he used force to pin her on the ground in order to get what he wanted. She threatened that she would disgrace him at work, and that is when he immediately left the house.

The next day she left all her work-related items in the workplace and contacted one of her colleagues to tell him that she left the residence keys at the house, and that she's leaving the country for Syria. The incident had a severe impact on M., who couldn't apply for any jobs after that, out of fear that the incident might happen again. The whole ordeal affected her psychological health. She lost hope, and as a result the fear and obsession that she might live such an ordeal again were born into her life.

9 M transgender woman, interviewed on 17/9/2020

**THREAT OF
ARREST**

CASES OF THREAT OF ARREST:

The M.¹ Case:

M. went to apply for a job after an employer talked to him, stating he wanted to work on a project with him. At first, there were minor disputes concerning his nationality (Syrian), and they were mostly related to his political views. The employer told him he will overlook the subject. When he started work, other employees would mock him, bully him, and tell him that the owner employed a “fa**ot” at the workplace.

They used to give him remarks about his clothing, and behavior. They would say things like “come play with my d**k” or “mine is bigger” and they always criticized his clothes. After a while they started adding to his chores, and the supervisors started to delay (intentionally) the payment of his salary. When the delays became longer, he started to insist that he get paid, and they would ask him to wait for the employer to arrive to work, knowing that the employer gave his instructions that his pay should be given to him.

After a while, M. noticed that some of the construction materials were being stolen, and witnessed other employees taking them. At night, he went to the employer to tell him about the matter, but the employer couldn't do anything. They started telling the employer that he is useless at work, saying “what do you want with that fa**ot?” They would also exert pressure and use intimidation with him at work, and always denigrate his mother and/or his dignity. After a while they beat him with a mop stick, and tried to strangle him with it, while swearing at him and threatening to circulate his

1 M. cisgender man, interviewed on 10/7/2020

name on the police and military checkpoints. As soon as he managed to escape them, he started to run and flee.

The next day he went and told the employer what happened, who in turn talked to them trying to diffuse the situation. After this incident, there was another attempt on his life, where he said individuals tried electrocuting the shower while he bathed.

M. was living at the workplace at the time and the attempt to electrocute him had come after they threatened him that they will end his life that week. The next day the employees went to the employer and started to plant ideas in his head, that it's necessary that M. leaves his job. When the employer met him after the incident, he requested that he pack his things and leave, without giving any reasons why. He couldn't do anything then, other than request the remaining part of his wages, which were 300 thousand LBP, of which he only got 100 and left his work. While he was leaving, he was stopped by a checkpoint in the area where he worked. It turned out a colleague of his had told the checkpoint about him, and the checkpoint requested his identity and residence papers, which were still valid at that time. Still, that didn't stop the checkpoint members from arresting him and beating him up, while addressing him with racist remarks and told him not to come and work in Lebanon anymore.

The R.² Case:

When R. saw the advertisement about a barber shop on the internet looking for employees, she went and talked to the owner, and they agreed on her working for him. She was diligent at work, which created a sense of jealousy and nervousness with

2 R. transgender woman, interviewed on 12/7/2020

the older employees. They used to whisper with the clients, telling them she is Syrian, dirty, or cheap, so they wouldn't let her do their hair. They were racists to her, mocking her non normative appearance, always with words like "fa**ot", and telling the customers "any woman was more feminine than her", or "look how her body is smoother than yours". Some customers would tell the owner to stop hiring Syrians, or say "don't mind the Syrians because they get less pay".

R. told us that: "I once walked into the bathroom to wash my hands, and it happened that the owner was in there. He started feeling my body, and touching my genitals with his hands, which bothered me". The owner would invite her over to his house for a drink, but she would refuse as she was not accepting of such behaviors. Once she was in the bathroom, and he walked in on her, and started to harass her sexually. She stood up to him, and told him he couldn't do that, and then he started justifying his actions.

When she refused to have sexual intercourse with him, he threatened to expel her, so she asked for her remaining wages so she can quit, but he refused to pay, he told her if you want to file a complaint against me go ahead, you can't do anything. He threatened to have her arrested because she was Syrian and have her deported to Syria. They started shouting at each other, and she left her work without being paid her dues. That affected her psychological health, and caused her anxiety and stress, concerning how she will pay her bills, which caused her to lose weight drastically.

THREATS TO KILL

CASES OF THREATS TO MURDER:

The S.¹ Case:

S. used to work with a friend of hers in the area where she lived. They had agreed to open a bakery, at which she worked for about nine years. In the beginnings there weren't any obvious problems with that person, but after a while he started having rapid mood swings. He would get angry at small things and start to throw around insults. She always heard insults that denigrated her mother or sister whenever there would be problems related to the shortage of bakery items which she would forget to buy, like sweet corn cans, and such. Because of the insults, she couldn't handle the bad treatment, and decided to leave the bakery and quit work. Soon after her friend followed her home trying to force her back to work, threatening her with a knife. When she saw him, she began to scream, and quickly escaped from the house, and managed to run away from him.

Afterwards he started to expose her sexual orientation and her gender identity in the area, saying things like she "is in her underwear", "is a bastard child", "fa**ot". After she quit work, she headed to the ministry of labor to file a suite and claim the rest of her compensation, which she deserves for the work period she spent. She knew that filing a lawsuit would require money, about 200 USD, so she offered the money to the employee at the ministry, who considered it a bribe, and started yelling at her, and rebuking her. She walked out of the ministry and couldn't do anything from that moment on to get her dues. Straight away she went

to the LOWER observatory to present her problem. During that period the employer she worked for was scandalizing and defaming her, and even told the boy who worked with them at the bakery not to go near her because she might have sexual intercourse with him, even though he was a minor, thereby also accusing her of having sexual intercourse with children.

In addition to that the uncle of the employer, who entered into a partnership with him at the bakery, started to threaten to kill her, stating that he will get some men to kill her.

Quitting work affected her life greatly, when it came to paying her expenditures, rent and food, which she couldn't pay anymore. So, she started having meals at her brother's house. Noted that she had a disability in her leg, which prevented her from doing most jobs, and got her worried about how to provide money to cover her expenditures.

¹ S. transgender woman, interviewed on 21/7/2020

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

CASES OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE:

The R.¹ Case:

When R. came to Lebanon, she wasn't 18 years old yet, and her father forced her to work in a poker club against her will. She was hired at that workplace even though she was underage, and she was being discriminated against and bullied in all sorts of ways. She was ridiculed and made fun of her non-normative appearance, and the employer used to call her names whenever the customers were displeased with her like "fa**ot", and "gay". Once she was in the bathroom and one of the customers asked her about the whereabouts of the employer, she told him she didn't know, and allegedly he didn't like the way she spoke to him and so he got angry and told her never to reply to his face. He hit her, and she was transported to a medical center to be treated. She remained in bed for four days afterwards. Customers used to call her names which irritated her, like "brother of a bi**h" or "you Syrian dog", and other disgraceful remarks.

Besides that, whenever customers would lose a game, they would address her with all sorts of cruel words. Once she couldn't tolerate that anymore and told the employer, but he always insisted that the customer is always right. After a while she couldn't stay at work, so she left, and when she did, the employer didn't give her all her dues. When she came to him to ask for her dues he said: "go away you brother of a bi**h, you have nothing here". That had a big effect on her psychological health; it caused her a case of fear and depression and created also anxiety of not being able to pay her bills and rent.

1 R. transgender woman, interviewed on 18/9/2020

The M.² Case:

M. says that at the beginning, the team at his place of employment was good. He used to deal with them as though they were related, but never did he tell them about his sexual orientation. The salary he agreed upon with the employer was 700 thousand LBP, but the employer gave him 400 thousand only, claiming that business wasn't good. One time, his colleagues tried to view the contents of his phone, which could expose his sexual orientation, and they started pointing fingers at him. He told them there is nothing, so the employer's brother investigated his personal life and violated his privacy, and after he found out some details, he told the employer that such behavior is not acceptable at the workplace.

After a while, M.'s telephone was laid on the reception table, and anyone could log into the phone, so the employer himself accessed the phone without M.'s permission, and he saw pictures of other men. They had begun to call him "fa**ot" and other harmful words. One time, M.'s friend was with him at the workplace, in the kitchen, and it happened that they kissed, and the employer saw them. He lashed out at them, verbally and physically, and expelled M., who cleared his belongings and went to Beirut because of the pressure that incident put upon him. Signs of malaise started to show on his body, and he was administered to a hospital twice, and he became in a constant state of worry, due to his inability to pay the bills and rent which were overdue.

2 M. cisgender man, interviewed on 28/9/2020

The D.³ Case:

D. used to work at a hair dressing salon, before she met N. for whom she worked for later at a fashion designer store. She liked her when they first met, and she offered her a job, and asked that she visits her to get the job. Her treatment was good.

At work, N. was the manager, and D. faced discrimination because of her gender identity and sexual orientation by one of N.'s female friends, as well as by a few persons who were constantly present in front of the store. One time she was working inside the store, and a friend of N. was present there, angry at something, and when he saw her at the door of the office, he lashed out at her with insults, saying words like, "step aside you brother of a bi**h", and other insults, which annoyed D. Because she doesn't like to be called such names by anyone, she went and complained to the owner of the store, telling her how her friend had acted. N. apologized on behalf of her friend. At the same time, customers used to ask her to do tasks which were not included in her work contract, like cleaning toilets, while they watched.

D. didn't like doing these tasks or being asked to do them, especially that they were not listed in the work contract, and when she went to get textiles for the store, people outside the store would get in her way, and call her outrageous descriptions like "you d**k" and other lewd words, aimed at her honor.

One time there was a person sitting next to the janitor of the building where the store was, and he was getting in her way and asking her if she could introduce him to young girls who come to the store. After he talked to her, she threatened

him and there was a minor dispute, which led to a problem that almost reached the extent of physical violence, so D. told the owner, who, in turn, went and talked to the person and ended the problem. Other than that, the owner never sought to register her into the social security system, and there was some disregard towards this subject according to her statement as well.

One month after the minor dispute stated prior, D. had to stop working at the store because debts piled up and the store went bankrupt. N. informed D. that she can no longer pay the salaries, and the store owed D. 15 days' pay before she left. This had a huge effect on D. because she was devastated during that time. She became depressed, short-fused, and developed hatred towards the country, along with a feeling of insecurity of being in the streets. Because of her inability to pay the bills and the rents she had to pay, and she started feeling as if she was in the wrong place.

3
D. transgender woman, interviewed on
13/8/2020

**DISCLOSURE OF
AN INDIVIDUAL'S
TENDENCIES \
IDENTITY \
PRIVACY**

CASES OF DISCLOSURE OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S ORIENTATION\ IDENTITY\PRIVACY:

The A.¹ Case:

A. used to work as a waiter at a restaurant in Beirut. There were no problems at first, and he never disclosed his sexual orientation at work. His brother used to work as a supervisor at another branch of the restaurant. After a while A.'s family knew about his sexual orientation, which affected his relationship with his brother. His brother told A.'s superior at work, and the rest of the employees, about his sexual orientation, and that there are institutions and associations that support these matters.

After that, A. noticed, as he walked in to start working his shift, how everyone at work was looking at him weirdly, and when he opened his locker to put on his uniform, he didn't find anything in his locker. It was completely empty. One of his colleagues told him that his brother came and told everyone about him. He went to the manager's office to complain, but the reply was that he has to leave work, without revealing any reasons why. He was told he has to refer to the administration in Dbayeh. A. started to ask for his share of the tips that the customers give for the restaurant workers, but he wasn't given anything.

After that the manager started calling him dirty names like "fa**ot", and bullying him, but A. insisted on taking his share of the tips, so he took it and walked away from the restaurant. Later he called the restaurant management demanding the sum of 700 USD which the company owed him, he was asked to sign his resignation and later he was only given 800 thousand LBP. A.'s unemployment had a big impact on his life, as he had rents due which forced him to ask around for charity because he has no work.

The M.² Case:

When M. went to meet the employer everything was alright, he had his friend with him, who was applying for another job, at the same time. There was a hassle concerning his nationality, since they didn't want to recruit anyone who is not Lebanese, so the two persons were finally hired after a lot of racially charged bickering. M. was being paid two dollars an hour, unlike his Lebanese friend who was being paid three dollars an hour.

This difference was because of the nationality, and because he didn't have valid residence papers. How was informed that in case any police patrols showed up at the workplace the administration cannot be held responsible for anything. After that, he was informed in a recruiting interview that he should shave his beard, and remove all the piercings in his ears, and stated that "this work is not for madams", but he accepted the job and he yielded to these rules. After he started working, they started to interfere with his personal life details, bully him, and describe him as part of "Lot's people" (gay), and as having feminine appearance and behavior. He told the worker's supervisor about the constant harassment he had to put up with, and the supervisor told him

1 A. cisgender man, interviewed on 15/6/2020

2 M. interviewed on 23/6/2020

he should “pull himself together” and not act in a feminine manner.

After a while the supervisor told the manager about this subject, and the latter forced M. to quit work because of what he had heard about him, and because of his feminine behavior, and added that these things smear the reputation of the restaurant. M. couldn't tell him anything, so he asked for the remaining part of his wages, and the manager refused to hand him his money. He surrendered to the decision, out of fear of any causing a problem related to his nationality. This incident had a big impact on M.'s life. After quitting work, he had to apply for asylum with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and to take the amount of money granted by the commission so he can pay his bills, and rents, also he became afraid of applying to another job because of such practices and the effects they left on him.

The GH.³ Case:

When GH. was working at a bar they had exhibited what some might describe as feminine behaviors; and their fellow employees noticed their way of talking and moving. After a while one of the employees asked them about this behavior, and they were not shy to tell him that that was their nature. During that period, they were facing problems with their family because of their non-normative sexual orientation. The problem grew bigger, and someone close to the family told the employees at their workplace, which complicated the problem even more. One of the employees threatened them that he would expose them before everyone else and tell them about their sexual tendencies.

They started endlessly bullying them, surrounding them and asking about the earrings they wear,

3 GH. gender fluid, interviewed on 6/7/2020

and their feminine behavior which was obvious to everyone, and whether they preferred males or females. At that time, they were not afraid to answer them, and the reaction of the employees was that they went and told all the other employees about them. There was also a type of verbal harassment, when they would address them with “how big do you like it?”, and other types of insulting descriptions and expressions. The problem between the interviewee and their family increased more at that time as well, to the extent that they would wait for the interviewee in front of his workplace to physically assault them.

When the family harassment became too much to bear, the interviewee decided to tell his/her work manager, because they were in danger, and might get beaten up at any time while they are leaving their workplace. The manager replied that they can't continue working with him and that they don't want any type of trouble inside the workplace.

The S.⁴ Case:

S. says that when she started working at her job there were a few employees who were nice to her. One employee was perceptive of her identity and accepting of her privacy. Besides that, there were a few employees who rejected her non-normative appearance, and her way of expressing herself. Their treatment of her was superior and unethical. They used to pose questions like “why you don't look manly enough? Why are you soft?”, and they would allow themselves the liberty to pry into her personal life without her permission.

When she used to go out to eat during break periods, they would refuse to eat with her. Furthermore, they would tell customers that she is “gay” and the

4 S. transgender woman, interviewed on 12/3/2020

customers, when they hear that about her, would go and ask around if she really was. That upset her a lot, and caused her psychological health to deteriorate during working hours. She was forced to endure everything however in order to maintain her job. She says that one day there was a client in the store who told her about what was being said about her, and then asked if she was indeed a homosexual. S. stood up to her, and suddenly they were yelling at each other inside the store in front of all the customers.

The employee who was talking about her was also shouting at her and saying harsh words. The owner of the store saw what happened, and took the side of the employee who was yelling at S. and he forbade her to speak with her that way, and informed her that she should pack her things and leave the workplace as soon as possible without getting any payment for half the month that she had worked. S. collapsed, and started crying, and that affected her psychological health, and she started suffering from depression after the expulsion. Her life was damaged by this, and she feels as if that the community refuses to accept her as she is, and that her presence is not welcome which led to a form of stress and concern and fear of people.

DEPRIVATION OF WAGES

CASES OF DEPRIVATION OF WAGES:

The A.¹ Case:

A. used to be a construction worker for a contractor, with whom he had worked for about a decade, on and off. After a period of time where they were not in contact, the contractor called him and offered him a new project. The shifts were long, and he was rarely allowed days off.

A while later, the contractor started having some health problems, which didn't allow him to proceed with the project, so he had to leave it. After some time, he contacted the contractor again to demand the remaining wages they owed him, but the contractor kept evading him, and didn't pay the money. He contacted the contractor several times without any result.

The R.² Case:

When R. started working at a job at a website, there were no problems. The salaries would be paid in full, at the end of every month, and he didn't face any type of discrimination. The agreement stated that he gets paid in USD. After a while the owner started delaying the payments of the salaries. Then he started paying in LBP.

No one at the time knew about R.'s sexual orientation, and his situation was stable. Sometime later he started to face some family problems, because of his sexual orientation, and his cousin sent him a

1 A. cisgender man, interviewed on 12/6/2020

2 R. transgender man, interviewed on 8/7/2020

death threat. The threats then started to increase, which caused him a constant condition of fear and anxiety. During his stay in Lebanon, he had registered with the UNHCR. One time he was on his way back home, when a car, occupied by two persons, intercepted him in the underprivileged area he used to live in. It was at night, so they blinded him with the headlights, and tried to run him over. After this incident, another car tried to run him over on his way from work.

At the time he had a video project he had to finish at work, but because of the threats he couldn't, he was very stressed and worried during that period. He had told the UNHCR about the threats he is getting, and they advised him to change his residence, and leave his work, to ensure his safety. He didn't tell any of his colleagues about the advice he was given. He finished the video, in spite of all the pressure he was under, and delivered it on the next day to his superior at work. The next day his manager told him he had to pack his things and leave (because he couldn't pay his salary anymore). He couldn't do anything at the time, so he asked for all his dues, the bills that should be paid and the rest of his wages. The total sum of the bills he had paid was about two million two hundred and twenty thousand LBP, and the manager promised to pay him his dues, but later started to evade paying the money, so R. contacted him many times, but he didn't answer and later he was blocked so he couldn't call anymore.

The N.³ Case:

N. started to work at an institution during late 2019, and the month she started work was not paid fully. At first customers were not accepting of her non-normative appearance, and spoke of her in a harmful manner. She would constantly hear things like "look

3 N. transgender woman, interviewed on 31/8/2020

at this sight” and she would avoid answering back because she didn’t want any problems at work.

The customers would give her weird and uncomfortable looks, and say to the owner: “what are you employing? Why are there such sights in your store?”. When the people’s comments increased, the owner told her that he can’t tolerate people talking about her anymore, and she told him that the salary was insufficient, so he quickly asked her to leave the accounting and switch to work in the kitchen, which meant her salary will decrease. She had no choice but to agree, so she started to work in the kitchen, where the employees started to bully her, and mock the way she looks and acts, and say things like “what a fa**ot” and “why are you doing this to yourself” or “we had enough trouble when you were at the cash registry”. After the violations she was facing heightened, her psychological health deteriorated, she couldn’t put up with the situation anymore. She started taking nerve medications because of the abusive treatment she was living in. After she quit work, she was increasingly worried about how she will continue to live, how she will pay her bills, but at the same time she was more comfortable because she left that abusive treatment behind.

DEPRIVATION OF BENEFITS

CASES OF DEPRIVATION OF BENEFITS:

The N.¹ Case:

The employees at the supermarket where N. used to work knew about his sexual orientation because of the way he looks and acts. They always scrutinized the way he expressed himself, and gave him remarks about it. They would always wear him down with work, always throwing more chores on his shoulders, because to them he does his work properly, and can handle the extra work. He didn't have any breaks or vacations available, his shifts were long, and work was tiresome most of the time.

They would deduct his breaks from his wages, and weekly or yearly vacations were unpaid. Employees bullied him constantly, and said words like “he has a tunnel up his a**” and other degrading expressions. They would annoy him most of the time, and he had to keep silent so he wouldn't lose his work. In some cases, when the disputes intensified, he would threaten the other employees that he will file a complaint against them. One time, while he was packing some goods, one employee slandered him: “f**k your sister's p**sy with a d**k, what a pu**y you are”, so he went to the administration and filed a complaint. The manager replied that the employees were just talkative, and they couldn't do anything about it.

He was also facing constant discrimination by the administration, and the manager used to yell at him with harsh words constantly during work hours, but

this behavior extended to all the other employees at the institution, and most of the employees suffered from the same treatment. The manager would ask them to show up at work during compulsory quarantine periods, to clean the supermarket, since they don't have anything else to do. He always considered filing a complaint, but was afraid of losing his job.

1 N. cisgender man, interviewed on 5/9/2020

**EXPULSION &
ARBITRARY
DISMISSAL**

CASES OF EXPULSION AND ARBITRARY DISMISSAL:

The D.¹ Case:

When D. came back from abroad, a friend of hers had told her about an offer she was given by a company, so she applied to work there. When she went to be interviewed for the job, the interview went smoothly with no problems, and she found that employees in the company are separated, in a way that the supervisors are stationed in a different section than the rest of the employees. At the beginning there was hierarchy, which hindered the company having team spirit and intimacy.

D. started working with the company on a project for an international organization, in addition to a project they had been working on which targeted men who have sex with men (MSM). When she started work on the project, she started to mingle more with the employees, especially those who belong to the LGBTQ community, and they warned her about the director, that he is hard-headed, and that it's not in anyone's best interest to oppose his opinions, and she should be careful around him.

The director was hard on women, and talked much about sex inside the workplace. A meeting would be held every Monday, and in that meeting he would consume all the talking space, leaving no time for anyone else to speak. First, she told no one about her orientation, but later she unveiled them. After

she did, one Monday meeting, she could tell there was a difference in attitude towards her from the employees.

At that meeting, all the employees sat, and everyone started to update the director on their news, and they told him that M. was helping with classifications during the procedure to look for homosexuals, and there was a debate within the meeting about the idea that the project was targeting transsexuals, and there the director interrupted and said: "how can we know that? Do we take their clothes off?" D. was shocked with such words, as he continued "where can we find them at the bars and restaurants? How do we find them do we see a rainbow coming out of them?" D. was annoyed by this talk, and said to him "we work with big organizations like UNICEF and we have to watch the way we talk, especially when we intend to marginalize people, besides we have to ask ourselves if we are ready to tackle such a project at this time." The director took her words personally answering back that he was not discriminating, and told her they will reopen this conversation later because he didn't like the way it went.

She couldn't continue the meeting, after that and found herself under psychological pressure, whether she should talk or not. She spoke with her friend, the supervisor at work, who said as a comment on what she had said in the meeting, "if you don't want to lose your job, you should have thought this thing through before speaking about it".

Later the director put out a survey to assess work methods, and to know whether the institution was suppressive or not, and after he saw the survey that D. had worked on, he told her they should talk more on Monday, since she had mentioned everything

¹ D. queer woman, interviewed on 8/7/2020

in the survey, and came to the meeting with queer clothing. She entered his office, and sat far away from him, so he asked her to come closer, she replied that she was comfortable where she was, and then he told her “I know you didn’t fit into the team atmosphere and that you weren’t happy with the survey”. He shut the office door and went on “I work with people who would say that the sky is raining when I spit in their faces, I think you don’t belong to this team” and concluded the interview with the comment “two whales don’t fit in one room”.

She was forced then to resign her work as a result of the pressure applied by the director. That experience affected D., it made her more interested in gender cases and human sexuality and started to fight for the right of the members of the LGBTQ community.

The D.² Case:

When D. started working, all the employees were asking her to do chores that were not part of her initial work agreement and threatening her that in case she didn’t finish those chores, she will have to quit her work. She had no choice but to accept, in spite of the verbal violence and mockery she always faced there.

They always addressed her with degrading expressions, such as “you donkey”, “you mule”, “you can’t work”, “you’re a pansy”, or “female”, also they would tell her that she’s soft, and should toughen up and not act in such feminine manner. After all of this intense bullying, she decided to tell the management about all the discrimination against her, but they took no action regarding the matter.

After some time, work was increasing, and people

2 D. transgender woman, interviewed on 10/7/2020

started to become short-fused around her, and at the same time superior to her when she would request anything.

A while later, the administration called her and informed her that she should quit her work, and gave her the rest of her money. When they told her that, she knew she couldn’t go to the owner because she knew the amount of harrasement the would display, he always libeled employees, and she always did her best to avoid the verbal violence caused by this man. Also 200 thousand LBPs were deducted from her dues as a compensation for the items she damaged, knowing that she was not the one who caused the damage. She had no other choice but to quit work, and that affected her psychological health, so she entered a state of depression, and became concerned for her well-being, and the payment of her expenditures with no support.

The M.³ Case:

When M. started working, he agreed with the employer on a wage of 500 thousand LBPs. Treatment was good at first, but when the employer saw that he really needed the work he started exploiting the situation, by increasing the amount of work required of him, and the treatment also changed. When M. asked for a raise, the employer refused. In addition, he always used disrespectful expressions while addressing him like “hey fa**ot, hey stupid” and addressed him disrespectfully such as “come here you” sometimes call him “bastard”. He couldn’t speak up at the time because he needed the work and couldn’t leave it. When the customers heard the way the employer called him, they used

the same expressions, so they would call him like “hey fa**ot, hey d**k”.

3 M. cisgender man, interviewed on 29/9/2020

After some time, a new person was employed at work, and M. was asked to train him and introduce him to the workplace. After a period of training the employer told M. that his services are no longer needed, and handed him his wage and told him to take his things with him. He couldn't do anything at the time, so he had to leave work, which caused his psychological health to deteriorate, and made him vulnerable to anxiety, worried about how he will pay his overdue expenditures.

The G.⁴ Case:

During the month of July 2020, the administration called G., and requested a meeting with him and a number of employees. During the meeting he was informed that the company will shut down many branches in several areas, due to the destruction that materialized after the Beirut explosion. They explained the situation that arose in the company, and their inability to continue their work before they are compensated by the insurance companies, so they can repair the damages.

This situation caused many employees to become unemployed with no prospect as to when they will go back to work. His name was on the list of employees who need to sign a premonitory, he was forced to sign it and asked to leave his workplace immediately, but they told him they will pay him his wages for the days he worked so far. Knowing his rights in the Lebanese labor law, he filed a complaint to the Ministry of Labor and demanded compensation for this arbitrary dismissal.

The company was adhering to article 50 paragraph F of the Lebanese labor law⁵ and they did not agree

to pay him any compensation. When the company knew he went to the Ministry of Labor to claim his dues, they were afraid of the procedures. He then went to the Palace of Justice (Lebanese court of law) and filed a lawsuit against them, and they were waiting for the company's response to the lawsuit. The company replied and at the time of the interview, G. had 10 days to respond to their reply. This had a massive effect on his psychological health, because he was annoyed for being forced to sign the premonitory, especially during these times the country is going through, which put him in a state of anxiety and nervousness related to his ability to pay his bills, and rents, and that put him under more pressure.

4 G. cisgender man, interview not dated

5 Article 50, paragraph F of the Lebanese labor law gives the employer the right to end and employ-

ee's contracts in part or whole due to an overwhelming force, or economic or technical conditions for this termination, like reducing the size of the institution, or completely stopping work.

RACISM

CASES OF RACISM:

The M.¹ Case:

M. used to work in a factory, and he was forced to go to work hours prior so his manager would be pleased with him, that was at the expense of his health. There was racism in the workplace, because there was a clear separation between Lebanese and Syrian workers. As a Syrian working there, he couldn't speak. The daily work pressure was unending, and he used to notice that he was being treated harshly and was being harassed and always criticized for his nationality. When the supervisor got together with the manager, the supervisor insisted that he looks presentable before the manager, and when the manager isn't there, he would throw on M.'s shoulders more chores and work that was not in the work agreement.

One day, as he was working, he saw the manager talk to the supervisor, and after that they told him that he can't continue working with them. He had to leave as soon as possible. The supervisor insisted on dismissing him without paying him his dues, and for no reason. That was a shock for M. and had direct impact on his psychological health, and that caused him extreme psychological pressure.

The A.² Case:

In the beginning, A. had faced problems at work related to his nationality, and that reflected on his salary. He always asked for a raise, and they would always reply that he is a Syrian, and this is the salary he deserves.

Once A. was attending a party for LGBTQ people, and one of his colleagues at work was there, and

1 M. interviewed on 25/6/2020

2 A. cisgender man, interviewed on 29/9/2020

when they got back to work, his colleague told all the other employees that he saw A. at a "homosexuals' party". Since then, he started receiving degrading harassment at his workplace and hearing the question "what's your role in the intercourse?" They would scrutinize him and ask about him every time they find him with someone, and they would talk about him amongst themselves. When he used to go out during working hours, he would hear remarks such as "hey beautiful where are you going?" or "what a nice jeans you're wearing". He would be humiliated at work, by having other employees force him to do more work like cleaning the storage, and if anything, wrong happens they would blame it on him.

In the final period at his job, a new manager was hired who was a racist. He decided to cut away with some of the Syrian employees, and he asked A. to work inside the storage instead of the lounge.

He had no choice but to accept, but when the harassment increased he couldn't stay anymore and left the job. After leaving the job, he contacted a psychological health organization, because of the anxiety he was facing, and he started to worry about how he will pay all the bills and the rents and the overdue expenditures he has.

VERBAL VIOLENCE

CASES OF VERBAL DISCRIMINATION:

The N.¹ Case:

N. used to work at a sewing factory and at first there were no problems at work. She used to sew and at the same time she was in charge of the employees with whom she worked. Most of the problems she used to face were related to wages, and at the time there were no problems among the employees. After a short while, a partner named Y. joined the administration, and he had a problem with her attitude and her feminine appearance.

He asked the administration to stop doing business with her because he didn't like the way she acted and looked, and used to ask questions and make comments like "why you don't make your eyebrows? Are you not ashamed of your actions? Why is your hair long? Do your parents not see the thing you are?" N. couldn't do anything about this harassment and was eventually forced to leave work along with a group of other workers. After she was informed about her dismissal, she asked for the rest of her dues, her salary, and social security compensation. After she quit working with them, she couldn't find a new job, and became busy caring for her sick mother.

The S.² Case:

When S. started working, she was always the victim of harassment because of her sexual orientation and because of the speech hindrance she suffers from. Discrimination and bullying would sometimes come from customers, and her colleagues would

1
N. transgender woman, interviewed on 25/6/2020

2
S. cisgender woman, interviewed on 31/8/2020

say that this thing is "forbidden", and "you can't be with girls", and her colleagues started to drift away from her when they knew about her orientation. They would also ridicule her, slander her, and say harmful words to her that targeted her honor. Customers would always comment on her behavior, and ask the other customers to stay away from her because she is "homosexual". They would bully her, tell her they didn't want her to do anything for them, or sit with them. They also used to disinfect the glass of water after she drinks from it, out of fear that she would infect them with her homosexuality. They were afraid of sitting with her, and wouldn't let their daughters anywhere near her. These behaviors bothered her and caused her grievances and heartache from herself and from her job. Also, she couldn't file a complaint out of fear that she might be dismissed from work and lose her job. Eventually she couldn't handle all the harassment because her psychological health started to deteriorate, and so she decided to quit her job and never to go back again. As a result of that, she started taking nerve medications, she became highly volatile, and nervous because of what she was facing.

The R.³ Case:

R. always had a different way to deal with customers. She appreciated customers and treated them with respect at all times when she was working, but she was always upset as she was being targeted and talked about due to her non-normative clothing, speech, and expression.

They would always say "look how he is dressed", because she was comfortable with the way she dresses, and according to her, she would express her identity through her behavior and clothing. But being from and working in a closed-off and

3
R. transgender woman, interviewed on 10/7/2020

conservative region, she was faced discrimination at her workplace, and according to her, the residents of that region didn't accept her. So, every time they saw her, they would give her remarks related to her behavior, and say "why such actions?", "toughen up", or "be more like a man, why is your movement too soft?" and other such remarks that presented a source of great discomfort for her. After some time at work, the store started to fail and owner informed her that he couldn't pay salaries for the workers. After that, the employees had to leave work and close down the store. She loved her job, and when she left it, she felt as if she lost everything, and it negatively impacted her psychological health.

The G.⁴ Case:

When G. applied for the job the son of the business owner was running the work, and she was being ridiculed during her interview by the owner's son and his girlfriend. After she started working there, the employees started to bully her during work hours. She endured continuous bullying and mockery for the first three months. An employee named A. used to work with her and call her "my wife", and she told him that it upset her.

The B.⁵ Case:

When B. started working at a barbershop, those who worked with him knew that he was gay but had no problem with the matter, and he remained at work without anyone bothering him. There were a few customers who used to bully him and discriminate against him when they came into the store; and they would tell the rest of the employees that they didn't want him around because he was gay. He couldn't resist this treatment because of the indirect discrimination of the administration,

4 G. transgender woman, interviewed on 9/7/2020

5 B. cisgender man, interviewed on 13/8/2020

especially that there was no way to complain or grumble at work and they did nothing to defend him.

The N.⁶ Case:

The employer at the place that N. worked, as well as the employees, treated her in a decent manner. However, there was this one employee who always mocked her at work and annoyed her. She always caused her problems indirectly, and talked with all the other employees about her. She filed a complaint to the employer about the behavior of that employee but she was refused and asked never to repeat that again. After a while, N. had a motorcycle accident and had to stay home, where she was notified by the employer that he can't have her at work again, so she quit her job.

6 N. transgender woman, interviewed on 10/7/2020

BULLYING AND MOCKERY

BULLYING AND MOCKERY:

The D.¹ Case:

D. used to work in a company as a cleaning woman and part of her job was being responsible for several sections, like reception and a second-story restaurant. When she applied for the job, there was no apparent discrimination from the administration, or her supervisors when it came to her long hair or her feminine appearance. They also informed her that she will be registered into the social security after three months of work, but she refused and asked to be registered as soon as she begins work for them, just like any other worker.

She told them that she knows that workers should be registered in the social security on their first day, but the company regulations stated that they register employees in the social security after three months. Then she was notified that she will be registered in the social security, but the salary they agreed upon will be reduced from 450 thousand LBP to 350 thousand LBP after her registry. Sometime later, signs of discrimination started to show clearly on some of the employees because of her long hair and her feminine appearance, and she thought they were obviously afraid of the LGBTQ community and had no idea of the differences that exist in society.

They started to also call her expressions like “fa**ot”. They would bully her and criticize her feminine appearances with harmful words. The working hours were long and tiresome, and while she was entitled to a vacation every week, most of the time she never took it. Her supervisor was one of the people who

discriminated against her, and she told the boss in turn about her long hair, and the decision was made that she should cut her hair. When when she was notified, she refused, and she told them that they should have requested that before she started work not after she got used to it.

After that, they started telling her she looks like a woman, and that people got confused whether to call her as a female or a male. The verbal harassment with which she was addressed were very hurtful. At the time she couldn't do anything but put a hat, and cut her hair a little on the back of her head, and cover the rest of her head. Quickly they discovered her act after it was recorded on a security camera, and repeated the request that she cut her hair. She was thus forced to quit her job.

The H.² Case:

When H. applied for work as a kitchen employee at a restaurant they didn't know about his sexual orientation and they had rejected him because of his appearance. After they knew about his orientation they decided to hire him. They wanted to control the monthly salary and the working hours by exploiting his orientation.

His relationship with other employees was formal at first and he didn't speak to anyone. But soon he began to face many forms of bullying and mockery at the hands of his colleagues because of his perceived orientation, and they would always call him a “fa**ot” and mock his feminine appearance. After a while, problems started to increase, so the manager called him over, convened with him, and the meeting went badly to the point that they shouted at one another. He was then asked to leave

1 D. transgender woman, interviewed on 12/6/2020

2 H. a cisgender man, interviewed on 22/6/2020

his work, so he quit his job. H. was expelled because of his sexual orientation, after being exploited because of it. He was getting paid 300 thousand LBP, and the manager didn't give him the rest of his wages after he expelled him.

According to H., this expulsion affected his life greatly, after he became unemployed, his fear was increasing when it comes to paying the rents and his expenditures which greatly affected his social life.

The A.³ Case:

When A. started working, there was no discrimination from any employees or customers, but harassment came only from her supervisor, who always attempted to create problems for her at work by telling the rest of the colleagues that her friend Z. isn't a woman, but a transgender person, and she would tell it in a way that was clearly an attempt to create problems and scare her to pressure her to quit her job. These behaviors hurt A. especially that they were meant to force her to leave work. In addition to that, she faced a few problems with the human resources manager before they forced him to quit his work in the company. A. had been registered in social security after five months of working for them, but when she left her job, she never withdrew her compensation from the social security, and now she needs them back in full.

The S.⁴ Case:

When S. started working at a restaurant, and during the first few trial days, she was a coordinator doing her job by giving instructions to an employee who worked with her. That employee refused some of her instructions, so she notified him that she will

3 A. transgender woman, interviewed on 20/8/2020

4 S. transgender woman, interviewed on 31/8/2020

tell the employer, who was his brother. When she confronted him with that, he started to request that she cut her hair, and not put on any make up, and change her clothes. She explained to the employer the behavior of the employee, but he quickly threatened to physically assault her, and started yelling at her. The next day she was indirectly pressured into leaving work, as a result she was depressed, and lost her self-confidence. In addition, she left the area where she used to work and live, and started working in sex work to have an income.

The R.⁵ Case:

R. sought to apply to a job as a saleswoman in a showroom in a clothes store, she went to interview the person in charge of the work, and the interview did not go well, because he mocked her and verbally bullied her. She was told "you don't belong here, and you can't work here because of your appearance". She also encountered many harassment attempts, whenever she tried to search and apply for a job, job recruiters would offer to have sexual intercourse with her, in return for residence or other benefits. Employers would bully her constantly, and she would hear expressions such as "you don't deserve to be working here", "you should be standing under a bridge, that's where you should work", plus they would laugh at her every time she looked for a job.

The S.⁶ Case:

When S. started working, the relationship he had with all the other employees was good, but after a while it started to change, especially when some employees started treating him in a racist manner.

5 R. transgender woman, interviewed on 10/5/2020

6 S. cisgender man, interviewed 12/2/2020

Some of them were good to him, and accepted him, but others considered him to be diseased and too different. He was close to some of the employees, whom he considered to be his friends, and used to tell them many details of his life, and share his experiences. The employees who didn't accept him kept looking at him in a suspicious manner, and he was subject to a lot of harmful and degrading verbal assaults and mockery. They would force him to do extra work which was part of their job description and not his. Despite all of this, he couldn't file a complaint to the administration out of fear of losing his job, as he didn't want to cause any problems at his workplace.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members of the LGBTQ community suffer from the worst types of injustice, exploitation, and deprivation of worker rights. It is not enough that they are severely stigmatized and targeted outside of the workplace by legal, governmental, social, and cultural discrimination, but they are also deprived of pay, hospitalization, registry into the social security, transport allowance as well as expulsion from work and unjust arbitrary dismissal. In addition to all of this, they suffer from racism, verbal violence, mockery, bullying, subjugation, physical violence at their place of work. They are forced to disclose their identities, orientation, personal privacy; and if they do not or are found out, they are threatened with arrest, harassed, sexually blackmailed, assaulted, and even raped.

This hideous exploitation of the most basic human rights of the LGBTQ community, which contradicts the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Lebanese Constitution, and all of the international covenants that Lebanon has signed and ratified, must be stopped, and those responsible for the discrimination should be held accountable. Be it employers, supervisors, colleagues, or customers/clients visiting the workplace, no one should be immune from accountability and allowed to continue their discrimination with impunity.

The protection of LGBTQ individuals requires serious overhauls in the way the labor market, the employment sector, and public/private institutions safeguard their workers – but it more importantly requires the amendment of several articles of the Lebanese labor law as well as introducing new

ones that protect and safeguard LGBTQ workers equally with all other workers clearly and explicitly aiming at putting an end to injustice, exploitation, and deprivation of rights stated in the law, as well as the full and complete application of the law in favor of these members, and so the following recommendations are a must:

For the Lebanese Government

-1 The complete separation of any dispute that arises in the workplace from article 534 of the Lebanese labor law and preventing the use of this article as an excuse, or a threat to deprive members of the LGBTQ community of their rights, or exploiting it for any other means.

-2 The introduction of an explicit text to the labor law which offers protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual characteristics. The law must criminalize and penalize any individual or institution that directly or indirectly perpetrates or allows the perpetration of abuse, blackmail, extortion, bullying, harassment (verbally or sexually), and assault (physically or sexually) against a member of the LGBTQ community. The law must also penalize any actions or pressure that forces a member of the LGBTQ community to disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, or sexual characteristics in the workplace or during work hours.

For Civil Society

-3 The spreading of knowledge of LGBTQ issues and rights among different communities

and working classes, and opening channels for discussion, interaction, and understanding among them.

-4 The reinforcement of the concept of solidarity among different working classes, to ensure their rights of social protection, general liberties, including sexual freedom, in order to prevent the employers from exploiting the work forces and strengthening their divisions, as a result of the continuation of the ignorance of worker rights in terms of syndicate liberties and human sexual liberties and the respect of the desires and sexual tendencies of workers.

-5 The reinforcement and protection of the LGBTQ workers requires, in parallel, the activation of a social movement of the LGBTQ community which addresses the fears of the community and strives to make their voices heard to resist the continuation discrimination and violence in the workplace. Because many members of the LGBTQ community are concerned about stigma and outing, most tend to waive their rights by avoiding accessing recourse to justice through legal action. This requires more work and support for the community in order to encourage it to start demanding justice. Most of the cases in this report avoided going to the court of law to claim their rights, and the request for consultation for these cases appeared as though it was only an appeal for help, or a space to express the problems faced by members of this community, with no serious intent to prosecute their cases.

-6 The hesitation and fear that grips the LGBTQ community is likely to lead to further bullying, discrimination, and exploitation for them. While work should concentrate on spreading awareness and knowledge, it should be noted that LGBTQ rights is not just a legal issue but also a social and

cultural issue where society plays a large role in ensuring justice, equality and equity. Therefore, spreading knowledge and awareness among society at large is also a key factor in addressing these violations, particularly among workers and labor rights activists who need to know about LGBTQ people and the challenges they face.

-7 The amendment of the Lebanese social security law by introducing articles that clearly and thoroughly ensure that LGBTQ workers are able to enjoy all of its work benefits including health insurance, social security, medical care, hospitalization, and end of service compensation.

-8 The inclusion of LGBTQ workers in unemployment compensation and the national unemployment fund if and when established.

-9 The amendment of the Lebanese labor law with regards to work contracts ensuring they are exclusively written contracts and signed by both employers and employees alike.

-10 The inclusion of LGBTQ individuals through policy and procedure in all trade unions and professional syndicates and the removal of any bylaws, policies or norms that have prohibited LGBTQ individuals from joining these institutions in the past