



This factsheet is from a three part series for LGBTQ people, looking at laws that affect you, your rights and what to do if arrested, and information on sexual health, in Egypt, Iran, and Lebanon.

ARTICLE 19

# YOUR RIGHTS AND

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE ARRESTED

## 📍 LEBANON



February 2018

### BEING LGBTQ IN LEBANON

In **Lebanon** being a gay, lesbian, bi, or trans person is not considered a form of sexual perversion or psycho-sexual sickness as it is in other countries in the Middle East. **Lebanon** offers some information and resources about sexual orientation and gender identity, mostly online.

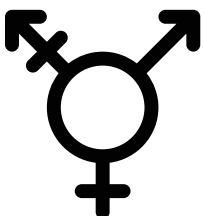
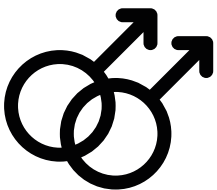
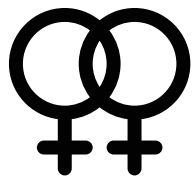
Nevertheless, slang and derogatory language that demonises LGBTQ people is prevalent; equating same-sex sexual conduct, cross-dressing, and gender-nonconformity with having a weak personality, loose morality, or mental problems. This is reinforced by some media that spread negative images of LGBTQ people through misinformation. However, there are also positive portrayals of LGBTQ people in Lebanese media that play a vital role in raising awareness of homophobia and discrimination that LGBTQ people face in Lebanon by the state and its laws.

As a LGBTQ person in **Lebanon**, you have probably experienced various forms of harassment and abuse; perhaps from members of your family, classmates, neighbours, acquaintances, co-workers, or security forces.

So, it's fair to say being queer in **Lebanon** is not always easy, especially if you're out, with all the social, cultural, and legal barriers that you and other community members face every day. However you are part of a vibrant and resilient community that is constantly surviving and manoeuvring through the barriers put ahead of you.

With all the difficulties you face, it is important to be aware of your rights and the support available.

Although the legal system and a portion of society is hostile to LGBTQ people, there are ways that you can partially and temporarily protect yourself. As laws can be used against you it's important to be knowledgeable. This does not guarantee



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Read our factsheet on "[The Laws That Affect You](#)" for a breakdown of the national and international laws and see what is illegal in Lebanon for LGBTQ people.

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COMMUNITY.**



your safety and security, but by being aware of the laws and understanding how the legal system works you may be able to avoid some abuses and know how to deal with them if you have to.

In **Lebanon**, the law remains vague. Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code criminalises sex against nature, and while it is not clear what the definition of sex against nature is, this article has been used against the LGBTQ community.

Since the law is written in such vague language please keep the following in mind:

- Sexual acts between two same-sex individuals can be proven by confession or being caught in the act. The authorities cannot do an anal examination in Lebanon anymore, and in case you are obliged to do it you should report it as an act against the law.
- If you get arrested, don't be fooled by promises from police or law enforcement agents, (e.g. "If you tell us you are gay or had sexual relations with the same-sex partner, we will let you go").
- If you confess, it will be used as evidence to convict you.
- Remember, your sexual relations are part of your private life, you have the right to stay silent during interrogation. You are allowed to refuse to answer a question related to your sexual orientation.
- It is your right to make a phone call, don't believe it if you are told otherwise. Call your family or the right lawyer or support NGOs as listed below.
- You can call a lawyer, and it is highly recommended that you remain silent until they come. Anything you say during this time can be used against you.

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- Regardless of what you are told, your messages and private communications, including on dating apps, are part of your private life. It is your right to keep them private and not to unlock your phone even if asked by the police. If asked, demand to speak to your lawyer.
- At any point you have the right to request a translator.
- If arrested, the security forces may try to intimidate you by sending you for a rectal examination, or through other means. **In Lebanon, anal tests have been banned by the Ministry of Justice and the Syndicate of Doctors and it is your right to refuse to undergo one.**
- Regardless of this you should be aware that overwhelming medical and scientific opinion holds that it is impossible to use these exams to determine whether a person has regularly engaged in same-sex anal sexual conduct. Even if they claim that an anal exam states that you have had anal sex, that is not proof and you should not confess to anything based on such claims.
- Remember that physical violence of any kind is illegal during interrogations. In case of violence you can ask to call a forensic doctor.
- And don't worry, in the absence of evidence, you have the right of release.

## WHAT LAWS CAN BE USED AGAINST YOU?

In **Lebanon** the police have the right to stop you at any point and ask for your ID. Always carry your ID with you, otherwise you may be asked to go to a police station until you can prove who you are by calling someone to bring your identification card.

The police may sometimes judge you from the way you dress or to which ethnicity or nationality you belong to.

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Being LGBTQ in **Lebanon** can be criminalised under Article 534. If somebody is caught having sex in a car or a public place their crime will be doubled: in the Penal Code, Article 531 condemns public sex and Article 534 is used to criminalise same sex acts. Police also tend to look for drugs in cars that are parked in cruising areas.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ABOUT SODOMY LAW IN LEBANON

If you are interested in learning more about what the law says about LGBTQ people in **Lebanon**, there are some good resources available online that you can consult. Here is a list of some of those materials:

[www.afemena.org/publications](http://www.afemena.org/publications)

You can also refer to the allied NGOs, such as Helem, AFE and Mosaic:

**Helem Helpline: 71916146**

**AFE Landline: 01326469**

**Mosaic Helpline: 76945445**

## FINAL WORD

We hope you find this factsheet helpful and educational. Please share it with your friends and loved ones.