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## Human Rights Council

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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### **Written statement\* submitted by the Kham Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organisation in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 February 2011]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## Human rights situation of female prisoners in Lebanon

People enter prison when they commit a crime, when they behave, at a certain time and in a certain society, contrary to the rules and regulations.

But in Lebanon, when a person commits a crime, he is punished twice: the first time when entering prison and losing his freedom and the second is actually living the reality of the Lebanese prison.

That is due to the fact that the prisons in Lebanon are still unable to keep up with the legislation, and is still incapable of implementing the outcomes of the international treaties.

The situation of women in the prisons isn't any better than that of men. Female prisoners are the most marginalized due to the fact that they are already put through a lot of pressure and prejudice in their everyday life. And it gets worse when they are imprisoned and lonely, especially the foreign ones.

The situation of women in Lebanese prisons:

In Lebanon there are four prisons for women and one for minors:

<i>Region</i>	<i>Prison</i>	<i>Prisoner count</i>
Beirut	Barbar Khan Prison	60 prisoners
Mount Lebanon	Baabda Prison	70 prisoners
Bekaa	Zahleh Prison	29 prisoners
North	Tripoli Prison (Kobba)	129 prisoners
Mount Lebanon (Dahr Al-Bashek)	Female minors prison	11 prisoners

### The most common problems prisoners are suffering from

(a) Overcrowded rooms; they are too small and have a large number of prisoners. Also they lack the means of heating and cooling. The presence of a large percentage of foreign prisoners waiting to be deported to their own countries is making the problem worse.

(b) Lack of health services: from medical services to medications to everyday needs: laundry hanging wires, food supplies, special needs (sanitary pads), cleaning supplies, refrigerator, heating and cooling... And the absence of basic sanitary conditions, like adequate airing and exposure to sunlight, which causes the spread of germs and diseases.

(c) Social isolation; most prisoners don't have visitors

(d) The prisoners are not separated according to the type of crime committed. One can find women that had committed misdemeanors in the same cell with others who had committed major crimes. A fact that is teaching some women criminal skills they had previously lacked.

(e) The services presented by some social institutions are limited to certain groups, like the foreign prisoners, or to specific crimes (like prostitution). The services presented are insufficient.

(f) The absence of the processes of rehabilitation and correction in the prisons and facilities, and that shows through the following:

The fact that some prisoners keep entering the prisons time and again.

The fact that some prisoners were under eighteen when they committed their first crime and are now much older, but still committing various crimes.

Through the different activities carried out in the female prisons, noted that the prisoners suffer a major downslide in their health, mental, and social situations. Starting September 2009, the center offered medical, psychological, and social services to the prisoners. The benefactors have so far reached 287 prisoners.

The services offered by the center and those offered by the various institutions to the prisons are still insufficient, and do not cover the basic needs in the absence of a correctional plan that presents the medical, social, and mental services.

It is said that the prisons are a place for correction and discipline, since they are the strongest means of prevention and the most effective ways to protect the society and reduce crime rate... yet we all know that there are people who enter and re-enter prison (some more than ten times!). Where is this correction they received the first time around? What about the second time? The third? The tenth?

The reality is that the prison is producing people with hatred and grudge against society, due to the bitter circumstances they live through while they are in. This grudge will lash out at the society and the state and will turn some of the prisoners into professional criminals; they leave prison only to come back in with a bigger crime.

This is why these penal institutions should offer their prisoners a series of programs and social, educational, medical, correctional, and vocational services leading, as a whole, to the rehabilitation of the prisoner and to his regaining his psychological and social balance.

## Suggestions

It is only accomplished by joint effort of the different institutions: the state, the organizations, the educational institutions, and the society...

Some of these steps are:

(a) Considering the reality of the prisons a national problem that affects society as a whole and not just the prisoners, and improving the public awareness and social acceptance of the prisoners; when a person enters prison, they lose their freedom not their humanity.

(b) Putting serious effort towards creating and implementing a comprehensive correctional plan that includes the health, the social, and the mental aspects.

(c) The state Commitment to comply with the minimal standards of treating prisoners, and to implement all the international treaties that relates to forbidding prisoners' torture and keeping up their dignity and humanity.

(d) Giving better care to the correctional facilities and concentrating on the care for the juveniles.

(e) Allowing the media to break the barrier in order to educate the society about the world of prisons and prisoners.

(f) Encouraging the NGOs to enter the prisons and offers their services to the inmates and having them provide educational and awareness programs.

(g) Giving special care to the female prisoners and their physical, mental and social situations, and creating special rehabilitating programs that work inside the prison and after they are released.

### **General suggestions for prisons:**

#### **1. Improving medical services:**

There must be an organized health plan. There must be doctors, nurses, specialists as well as control over the medical work. The absence of these elements caused, in most prisons, the widespread of diseases and even the death of some young inmates (for lack of quick treatment).

This requires coordination in between the various prisons' administrations – regarding the health work – and making it totally and directly related to the Ministry of Health.

It was noted that the person holding the nurse's job is not specialized in nursing; he can be member of the armed forces with no medical background. And even if he were a nurse, he is usually following orders and instructions - from above, and doesn't lawfully do his work.

Many prisons lack medications (especially for those with chronic diseases), and basic medical instruments (like devices to measure blood pressure, or blood sugar). And most don't even have pharmacies. Therefore every prison must include a pharmacy to administer medication.

It should be noted, however, that the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces works, every once in a while, on supplying common medications.

#### **2. Building new prisons and rehabilitating some existing ones:**

Through our visits to 12 prisons, it was noted that the Lebanese prisons don't live up to the legal prison standards. For what is required is building new prisons that are separate from the Grand Serial. Despite the upgrades and the reconstruction work which were done to some prisons, the best solution still lies in changing or creating new prisons that are healthy and psychologically habitable and adequate to be used by prisoners.

Accomplishing this humanitarian issue requires an emergency plan by the government.

The prison cells remain overcrowded, and many prisons have more prisoners than they can handle (Kobbah and Jib Jinnin prisons).

On top of that, some prisons require rehabilitation: painting, creating windows for airing out the rooms, maintenance and cleaning the bathrooms and setting them up so they can be used by people with special needs.

#### **3. Providing a psychological team (psychiatrist, psychologist, and mental specialists):**

One of the most important aspects for the female prisoners is their mental state. They were originally suffering from social isolation which is what led them to crime to begin with. And that only gets worse inside prison due to the exclusion they get from their families. The prisoners find relief and security in the organizations that visit them (they even request it).

#### **4. Inmate segregation:**

It is very important to separate some prisoners from the rest; like those suffering from chronic and contagious illnesses, or the smokers. The overcrowded cell issue must be

solved, and that is through quick sentencing, and through setting trials dates for prisoners who haven't been on trial yet.

The issue of prisons in Lebanon isn't about money; it is about human dignity. Different parts of the local society should come together to solve it in a healthy adequate manner. This is a category of society that has the right in decent living and a life just like the rest of human beings. They should be supported and helped before it is too late. A national protective mechanism to observe prisons should be quickly formed, especially since Lebanon has signed Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture last year.

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