**Lebanon: A dangerous place for women**

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No, this is not a sensationalist title. Lebanon has truly become (or has always been) a dangerous place for women. In recent years, Lebanon’s media began covering cases of women murdered by their spouses, and the frequency of the occurrence of violence against women revealed a pattern associated with deeply rooted patriarchal sentiments. And if being murdered by the person you vowed to share your life with isn’t tragic enough, in most cases, the judicial system did not deliver justice for the victims. The Lebanese public never knew the depth of the problem our society faces with unpunished domestic violence and the long-standing tradition of honor killings – which was, until recently, permissible by law. The following is a recap of some of the cases that made us aware of the injustices against women in our country and that also sparked public outrage over the judicial system’s handling of violence against women.

Our journey starts in Halba, Tripoli, with Roula Yaacoub who was regularly beaten by her husband. In July 2013, Roula, discovered by her neighbors, [was](http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/257772) beaten with a stick and succumbed to her wounds upon her arrival to the hospital. Roula’s husband was initially arrested for the crime, however he was released after the presiding judge claimed that there was not enough evidence to indict him. The judge had ignored a significant amount of evidence against Roula’s husband which prompted feminist groups to [protest](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-protest-women-idUSBREA270LS20140308) the decision and call for a law that would protect women from domestic violence. In April of 2014, the protests were able to force parliament to draft a law (although it was incomplete), but it did not change things significantly. As of this past May, the decision has been reversed and Roula’s husband has been charged with “causing her death.” He remains a fugitive wanted for the death of his wife. Roula’s case became the first of many cases that provoked public fury and concern, and Roula’s mom who became a frequent guest on various television shows, was joined by other heroic moms who would not give up until their daughters have received justice.

From Halba to Beirut, Manal Assi [was](http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/261457) brutally murdered by her husband. After Manal confronted her husband about his marriage to another woman, he began to beat her with everything in sight – including kitchen utensils, cleaning equipment, tables and chairs. The doctor’s report mentioned serious injuries in almost every part of Manal’s body, and her husband confessed to calling her mother and having her watch her daughter being beaten to death. On July 16, the husband was given a “light sentence” of 5 years in prison for his crime. According to the sentence, Manal had “cheated” on her husband which made him angry and forced him to brutally kill her.  The honor killing – which has been illegal in Lebanon since 2011 –  was being revived in a completely shameful decision that ignored the violence Manal had endured for years at the hands of her husband. Tuesday is the deadline for the court to consider appealing the decision and KAFA is organizing a [protest](https://www.facebook.com/events/881733581932639/)Tuesday morning to pressure the court.

Around Lebanon, many other women share a similar story. Crystal Abou Shakra [was](http://www.almodon.com/economy/2014/4/17/%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%B4%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%86) poisoned to death by her ex-husband, who she had divorced due to his acts of violence towards her. Again, her ex-husband was not indicted due to “lack of evidence.” Roqaya Monzer [was](http://www.weeportal-lb.org/ar/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B0%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B6%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%8A) shot at point blank by her husband when she asked for divorce due to his violent behavior. Zahraa Al-Qabout also [faced](http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/255008) a similar fate. This past week, a new victim was added to the list. Maymouna Abou Alaylah [was](http://www.annahar.com/article/444789-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B6%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D9%8A%D8%B1) murdered by her husband who reportedly used the glass that forms the base of the hookah to strike her on the head and then stabbing her repeatedly with a knife. These are just some of the cases that have been reported and the frightening reality is that many more cases are undisclosed.

The real battle here is that the killers of the women mentioned above are not paying for their crimes. The only way for this madness to stop is for justice to be served. These men knew beforehand that will not suffer the consequences of their actions in a country like Lebanon, which embraces patriarchy and suffers massively from corruption in its institutions. This unique and unfortunate alliance between corruption and sexism is why Lebanon is a dangerous place for women.