



# A New Victory for the Women's Movement

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Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI

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## Lebanese Parliament Abolished Article 522 of the Penal Code

On Wednesday, 16th of August the Parliament of Lebanon has abolished Article 522 of the Penal code which allowed rapists to marry their victims in order to avoid punishment and prison.

Euromed Feminist Initiative congratulates women's rights, civil society and human rights organizations and activists in Lebanon for their extensive efforts in the abolishment of Article 522 of the Penal Code after years of continuous activism. Although the achievement is still incomplete due to keeping Articles 505 and 518 that legalize the marriage of underage girls, it's still an important step to protect women's rights in Lebanon.

Women's rights activists and groups have been fighting to abolish this Article for a very long time. There were many massive campaigns that raised awareness among Lebanese citizens about the controversial law. Campaigners posted viral videos, billboards of women in bloodied and torn wedding gowns with the caption: "A white dress does not cover the rape.", circulated an online petition calling for the cancelation of Article 522, and hung wedding dresses from nooses at a Beirut seafront.

Their campaigns were supported by the Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Mr Jean Oghassabian, who welcomed the repeal of Article 522 but at the same time he expressed his concerns, writing on Twitter: "While we welcome the repeal of Article 552 of the penal code, we have reservations regarding keeping Articles 505 and 518. There are no exceptions for escaping punishment for rape."

The repeal of article 522 of the penal code is an important step forward to eliminate violence against women in Lebanon. Hopefully this momentum will influence other Arab countries with similar provisions – such as Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait and Syria – to follow suit.

*Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI advocates for gender equality and women's universal human rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination.*

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