

Recommendations from ECWR's Press Conference Announcing the Results of the First Phase of Our Campaign Against Sexual Harassment

The Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR) held a press conference on 24 March, 2007 to announce the results of the first phase of our campaign against sexual harassment, entitled "Making Our Streets Safer for Everyone". The 120 participants were NGO leaders, representatives of political parties, political and legal experts, activists, 20 students from Egyptian universities, and journalists (including BBC, Channel 1, and others). The conference presented an analysis of over 2500 reports of sexual harassment received by ECWR, and a report on sexual harassment laws in six countries (France, Turkey, UAE, India, UK, and Qatar) and the relevant articles of the Egyptian Penal Code. Participants were divided into three workshops to discuss the 3 axes of the campaign: legal and advocacy, media and public outreach, and NGOs .

The recommendations were:

I. Legal: Does Egypt need new legislation to stop sexual harassment or to implement existing articles of the penal code ?

- 1. New and clear legislation is needed that would immediately punish harassers include protection of the disabled and set a more severe punishment for harassers of children**
- 2. Clearly define sexual harassment, in all its forms**
- 3. Establish offices for receiving complaints about sexual harassment, not only in police stations but in other centers as well**
- 4. A severe punishment is necessary because as the punishment increases, it becomes more difficult to evade**
- 5. A high fine must be set**
- 6. A severe punishment must be set for harassers in the workplace**
- 7. Decrease the requirements for providing evidence of the harassment**
- 8. Improve how the police deal with this issue by assigning social workers to police stations**
- 9. Speed the judicial process, issue clear sentences and implement them swiftly**
- 10. The traffic law includes articles making permission to drive conditional on driver's record of previous accidents; this should be applied to other crimes as well, especially the kidnapping of women and subjecting them to harassment**

II. Media and NGOs: How to influence public opinion, especially in local communities ?

- 1 . Listening sessions should be held inside NGOs to monitor sexual harassment cases and trainings should be held on how to document the reports. A hotline to receive complaints should be established .**
- 2. Messages should encourage the media to improve the content of television programs and concentrate on the messages being disseminated, their impact**

on society, and the monitoring role of the media.

3. Using celebrities is important to raise awareness of children (Semsem world, Bakar, other cartoons (

4. The educational authorities should address sexual harassment by devoting half an hour every morning to develop "behaviors" and confront societal problems like sexual harassment .

5. Outreach should be made to developmental associations, civil society, human rights organizations, national councils, ministries, youth centers, mosques and churches to confront to this problem

6. Trainings should be held for teachers, NGO staff, police stations, youth centers, care homes, social and psychological specialists and supervisors, to help in encouraging women to speak out and file reports

7. Correct information and accurate data must be available on the scope of the problem and how to confront it

8. Trainings for journalists should be held on broadening the role of male and female media leaders

III. Youth

1. Addressing the society\'s values critically is very important, such as the encouragement men get from other men to flirt with women, and the blame put on women for supposedly encouraging him

2. Women and girls should be encouraged to break the silence on sexual harassment and speak about it

3. We must work to change the stereotype of sexual harassment being the fault of women

4. Sexual harassment must be monitored even for children and moral and sex education given to reduce this trend in the next generation

5. Advocacy must be made for a law against sexual harassment independent of what exists in the Egyptian penal code

6. An awareness campaign should target the Egyptian society of all classes and ages

7. A study should be done on the psychology of the harasser in order to deal with this behavior effectively

8. Negative changes in society should be addressed and experts should make recommendations on how to confront harassers on a daily basis

9. The role police in protecting citizens and society should be emphasized and they should not be allowed to support the harasser .

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