



“HOMOSEXUALITY is NOT a Disease”
LebMASH Launches LGBT Awareness Campaign in Lebanon
With the Support of Agnes Varis Trust

Beirut, November 08, 2018: This fall, the Lebanese Medical Association for Sexual Health (LebMASH) joins forces with Agnes Varis Trust to launch an awareness campaign under the motto “HOMOSEXUALITY IS NOT A DISEASE- HINAD” with the aim of challenging homophobia and raising awareness around health-related issues.

Extending for the whole month of November 2018, the campaign seeks mainly to affirm that homosexuality is a natural state and not a disease and warns about the futility and dangers of sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE). Using the three main messages “**Homosexuality is not a disease**”, “**Homosexuality is a natural state**”, and “**Attempts to convert gay people are harmful and should be banned**”, as well as the hashtag #NotaDisease, the campaign is LebMASH’s hope to ultimately put an end to the harmful sexual orientation change efforts and practices.

Founded in 2012 by health care professionals, LebMASH focuses on research, education, and policy to achieve equity in health with focus on sexual health and the health of marginalized groups such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) individuals. Receiving multiple reports from individuals subjected to SOCE and concerned mental health providers, the organization partnered with Helem, the pioneering LGBT rights organization in the Arab World, to conduct an investigation which unveiled an alarming situation that required a prompt action. The study confirmed the widespread and various “conversion” attempts in Lebanon, whether through coaxing, hormonal treatments or even “electroshock” therapy, the latter of which was presented and even recommended by a urologist during a lecture at one of the local universities. These practices are harmful and can lead to anxiety, depression and even suicidal ideas.

On the other hand, LebMASH could not disregard the results of a study showing that 72% of people in Lebanon believe that homosexuality is a mental disorder and 79% agree that homosexuals should be taken in for psychological or hormonal treatment¹. As well as numerous TV appearances of self-proclaimed therapists who publicly advocate for SOCE.

¹ Nasr, N., & Zeidan, T. (2015). “As long as they stay away”: Exploring Lebanese attitudes Towards Sexualities and Gender Identities. Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality.



By launching this awareness campaign, LebMASH hopes to change people’s perceptions and behaviors vis-a-vis homosexuality through increased awareness and education. This campaign initially included deployment of Billboards featuring the 3 main messages mentioned above, however, these had to be stricken due to censorship. Instead, the campaign will focus on social media, print media, and TV/Radio appearances.

It is also worth mentioning that the campaign dedicates a help line 76-085714 for people to report any violations or to obtain information on LGBT affirmative providers. The hotline will, also, allow callers from parents, school counselors, or even providers to understand better how to deal with LGBT individuals. Additionally, LebMASH offers “LebGUIDE” – an online directory of LGBT welcoming clinicians ready to provide support and competent care. LebGUIDE can be accessed at <https://www.lebmash.org/lebguide/>

For more details about this campaign please visit www.lebmash.org/hinad or contact Communications Office at 01- 327007 or by email at press@soap-box.me