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Renáta Štýbnarová

The Situation of the LGBT Community in Lebanon

Bakalářská práce

vedoucí práce: Mgr. et Mgr. ThLic. Jaroslav Franc, Th.D.

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Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this bachelor thesis and that I have not used any other sources than those presented in the list of sources.

In Olomouc, June 21 2020

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Introduction

Rainbow flags, campaigns for equal rights for marriage and the occasional pride march; that is what it seems is the general public life of the LGBT community, at least in Europe. However, it is not uncommon, around the world, for the LGBT community to be faced with verbal harassment or even physical assault and, in several countries, even with punishment, including imprisonment and sometimes death, as a consequence for their sexual orientation or gender identity. These countries are mainly in Africa and the Middle East, especially Arab and Muslim countries. One country in the Middle East in which the afore mentioned rainbow flags and pride march are even an option is Lebanon. Lebanon seems to be an exception in this region (apart from Israel). There is no official protection offered to LGBT individuals in Lebanon, and they still face threats and harassment, however, Lebanon has agreed to protect certain freedoms, guaranteeing the freedom of expression, as well as social justice and equality.

According to the International Federation of Social Workers (2014), the global definition of the social work profession is that:

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.”

The situation in Lebanon calls for international attention, as, even though they claim to protect the afore mentioned rights, according to recent events, the reality is quite different. The human rights situation of the LGBT community in this country is an issue that calls for social change, empowerment and liberation, which is, according to the global definition of the IFSW, part of social work and that is with respect for diversities, which apply to, among others, diversities of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The majority of the sources used for this thesis electronically available resources. Furthermore, information portals of humanitarian organizations were used, such as United Nations, or of other relevant organizations, focused on the topic of LGBT rights. Other sources

were official government websites, especially those of Lebanon, newspaper articles, and for a better understanding of the problem from different perspectives, even opinion articles were used.

The aim of this thesis is to introduce and describe the situation of the LGBT community in Lebanon through content analysis of chosen news articles. The objectives were to choose a range of articles that could portray the situation of the community from multiple sides. Another objective was to introduce the problem of the rights situation of the LGBT community and its reasons, as well as offer resolutions found in the analyzed articles. The type of analysis used was qualitative content analysis.

My motivation for this thesis came in my practical training in London in my second year. During a conversation with one of my colleagues, she mentioned a developed underground life of the LGBT community in Lebanon. I have always been interested in the Middle East, the language, the culture, the religion was something that fascinated me and that I wanted to learn more about. The LGBT community is also a rather important topic for me, especially as a student of a humanitarian and social major. It was also the complexity of this combination, which could even seem bizarre, considering the fact that in most Arab and Muslim countries it is literally dangerous to be gay, that pushed me into choosing this specific topic for my thesis.

1 The LGBT Community: An Introduction

This thesis focuses on the LGBT community as one of the worldwide marginalized groups. The letters in the abbreviation stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, however it can be an umbrella term for a lot more. Intersexual people, for example are also a part of the community, as are non-binary people, or pansexual people. This label refers to people, focusing on their sexualities or their gender identities, very different things. According to the Better Health Channel (2019), sexuality refers to “sexual feelings, thought, attractions and behaviors towards other people,” one can find other people physically, sexually or emotionally attractive and all of these things are a part of one’s sexuality. Gender identity on the other hand to the fact whether an individual feels more like a male, female or anything beyond or in between. However, it is not only about the physical body, gender identity “describes how people relate to the socially constructed notions of gender; i.e. to femininity and to masculinity” (Gibbbens, O’Shea, 2006). The general umbrella identities are transgender or gender diverse, where transgender refers to not feeling “comfortable with traditional gender identities or behaviors that ‘match’ the sex assigned at birth” and gender diverse is identifying “with a gender or genders outside of male or female” (Better Health Channel, 2018).

1. 1 LGBT Humanitarian Crisis

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual community is still facing harassment or discrimination all over the world. It is true that in many countries, especially western countries, same-sex couples have the right to civil unions, marriage and even adoption, however even in these countries they can still face discrimination and harassment. For example, only very recently, as this thesis is being written, did the United States Supreme Court ruled against the favor of the Trump administration and decided that “gay and transgender people are protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of sex as well as race, color, national origin and religion” (Hurley, 2020). That is in a country where LGBT people are allowed to get legally married, but only so recently had they received proper legal, anti-discriminatory protection in the workplace. Furthermore, hate-crimes against the LGBT are not a completely uncommon phenomenon in the USA, with 30 transgender and gender diverse people killed in the year 2019, there were also 130 transgender women killed in Brazil and 63 in Mexico (Wareham, 2019). Hate-crime in what are seemingly more open-minded and “LGBT-welcoming” countries is not limited to the

United States. Last year, in 2019, there was a case of two young lesbian women being at first harassed and then assaulted and robbed on bus in London (Burke, 2019).

1. 2 LGBT in Arab/Muslim Countries

The LGBT community has always had a rather tough time in Arab or Islam-dominated countries. That is especially where Sharia Law is in place. “The prohibition of homosexuality is rooted in the theologico-juridical corpus of Medieval Islam” (Polymenopoulou and Rehman). There can be two main reasons behind this opposition to homosexuality; one of them is the story from Surah Hud, starting in verse 77, of the tribe of Lut/Lot in a city known as Sodom in the Old Testament. The other one would be that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is forbidden. Marriage, according to Islam, is a marriage between a man and a woman, judged by the rules imposed on marriage by the Qu’ran and the specifics of the roles of men and women in the marriage. Whatever the reason, the fact of the matter is that the LGBT community is often not welcome in these countries. On June 30 of 2016, a resolution was adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council, a resolution concerning the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The vote was 23 to 18, with 6 abstentions. Among the votes against the resolution were, among others, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (Human Rights Council, 2016). Specifically, Saudi Arabia commented that this resolution does not take into account and does not respect cultural differences. They explained their vote by stating that this resolution, which aimed to protect individuals against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, went contrary to its sacred values (OHCHR, 2016).

According to the International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association, consensual same-sex sexual acts are criminalized by jail time in the following countries in the middle east: Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Oman, Lebanon, and Kuwait and punishable by death in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Qatar. In Jordan and Bahrain, there is no protection, but also no criminalization for consensual same-sex sexual acts. Israel is the most liberal of the countries; according to ILGA, the rights of LGBT persons are protected when it comes to employment, same-sex marriage performed in other countries where it is legal is recognized by the state and same-sex couples have also been granted adoption rights.

Israel, however, is rather different from the rest of the Middle East with its culture and religion. The objective of this thesis was to look at a country of Arab culture and Islam as the religion of the majority.

2 Republic of Lebanon

Lebanon is an Arab country in the Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, as well as Syria, and Israel, with an area of 10,400 square kilometers and a population of over 5 million people (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). The capitol of the Republic of Lebanon is Beirut, which is located near the coast, as are other major cities of the country. The official language of the country is Arabic.

2. 1 Human Rights in Lebanon

According to the country's official website of the Ministry of Information, Lebanon should guarantee freedom of expression and assembly. "Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic based on respect for public liberties, especially the freedom of opinion and belief and respect for social justice and equality of rights and duties among all citizens without discrimination" (MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, [online]). The Ministry (2016) also mentions that Lebanon is a "founding and active member of the United Nations Organization and abides by its covenants and by the Universal Declaration of Human Right."

Upon looking into a world report on Lebanon by the Human Rights Watch, the rights situation has deteriorated in the past years. Even the mentioned freedom of expression and assembly is not being protected. Throughout the anti-government protests beginning in October 17, the government "detained and charged individuals for speech critical of government officials, especially in relation to corruption allegations, and religious institutions" (HRW 2020). In fact, according to the HRW world report (2020), criticizing the president or the army can lead to up to imprisonment; "the Lebanese penal code criminalizes libel and defamation, authorizing imprisonment of up to three months and up to one year in the case of public officials." Furthermore during the protests, according to HRW (2020), Lebanese security forces used tear gas and rubber bullets on largely peaceful protesters, they have also failed to stop attacks on peaceful protesters and even at times used excessive force to disperse them.

Other human rights issues which Lebanon faces are, according to Human Rights Committee (2018), its lack of non-discrimination framework, where, although, as mentioned above, their constitution proclaims equality, they actually "lack comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation" (p. 2).

Gender equality is another point of humanitarian concern in Lebanon. Women are in general underrepresented in political and public life (HRC, 2018, p. 3) The personal status law,

for example, which discriminates against women “in such matters as marriage, pecuniary rights, divorce, child custody and inheritance” (HRC, 2018, p. 3). Violence against women, which includes domestic and sexual violence; in Lebanon it is possible for a rapist of a minor over the age of 15 to be exempt from prosecution if the victim was “promised to him for marriage by her parents” (HRC, 2018, p. 4). Other legal issues with violence against women are a restrictive definition of domestic violence when it comes to “protection of women and other family members from domestic violence,” then “the absence of provisions criminalizing marital rape and sexual harassment,” and “the limited investigation and prosecution of such cases” (HRC, 2018, p. 4). Lastly another issue relating to women in Lebanon is the criminalization of abortion, “except in the even of grave danger to the life of the woman,” this can, and there are reports of such cases, women “resorting to unsafe abortions, which put their lives and health at risk” (HRC, 2018, p. 5).

Other concerns are the death penalty, the concern that “death penalty can be imposed for crimes that do not meet the threshold of the ‘most serious crimes’” (HRC, 2018, p. 4). As well as enforced disappearances, where there is an “absence of comprehensive legislation on disappeared and missing persons,” as well as “thousands of unresolved cases of disappeared and missing persons during the civil war and the absence of any prosecutions for acts” (HRC, 2018, p. 5). Concerning torture and ill-treatment, there is the issue of a limiting definition, which fails to criminalize “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishments” (HRC, 2018, p. 6). The Committee also has concerns about the liberty and security of persons in the sense of arbitrary and extrajudicial arrests and about the privacy of persons, the “arbitrary interference with the privacy of individuals, including allegations of mass surveillance of digital communications” (HRC, 2018, p 6-7). Lastly there are also concerns over the treatment and the rights of prisoners, refugees and asylum seekers, and migrant domestic workers (HRC, 2018, p. 7-8).

2. 2 LGBT in Lebanon

In Lebanon, as stated earlier, same-sex sexual acts are criminalized, yet pride for example has been attempted a few times. There are also some organizations that concentrate especially on LGBT, for example LebMASH a Lebanese Medical Association for Sexual Health. Among others, some of the goals of LebMASH is to “promote evidence-based knowledge to inform conversations in the media and among the public on issues related to sexual health, and the health of marginalized groups such as LGBT individuals” and “influence

and change policies and legislation to protect health rights and well-being of marginalized groups” (LebMASH 2018, June 14). Another organization present is Helem, which is a legal above-ground LGBT organization in Lebanon. The goal of this organization is to “eliminate all forms of stigma and discrimination against the LGBT population in society at large and to grant the LGBT population in Lebanon personal freedom and human rights” (Dabaghi, 2008, p. 17).

Thus, although, as said earlier, same-sex sexual acts are criminalized, specifically through Article 534. This article says that, “any sexual intercourse against nature is punished with up to one year of imprisonment” (Carroll, 2016, p.107). Furthermore, another article mentioned in relationship with the LGBT community by the ILGA organization in their survey of sexual orientation laws was article 209, which is a morality code limiting SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) public expression according to a reasoning of breach of modesty. (Carroll, 2016, p.107). However, this article is in a way rather general and although it can be used to target and discriminate against the LGBT community, the article itself is very general. It is important to mention as well that there have been cases where the court decided that this article does not apply to homosexuals (Carroll, 2016, p.107).

3 Terminology

It is crucial for a better understanding of the analysis this paper is aiming to complete to list and define the words that the analysis will concentrate on. This part of the thesis will also mention the different forms of the words that are being focused on.

The first term is LGBT, also known as LGBTQ+ or LGBTQIA, which, as stated earlier, is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and asexual persons; the plus in the second variation refers to any and all other sexualities, such as pansexual for example. A different and common term used in the documents analyzed in this thesis is homosexual, it refers only to the sexual orientation and does not encompass gender identity, yet it is still used as an umbrella term for the LGBT community.

The word homosexual is also now considered offensive by some people, mainly from the LGBT community. George Chauncey was cited in *New York Times* saying that, “homosexual’ has the ring of ‘colored’ now, in the way your grandmother might have used that term, except that it hasn’t been recuperated in the same way” (Peters, 2014). A point this article made, citing George P. Lakoff, explaining the phenomena of the fall of the word homosexual, was that the words gay or lesbian do not contain the word sex in them (Peters, 2014). This could be a reference to the fact that people tend to concentrate on the sexual part of same-sex relationships, rather than love or companionship. Another aspect is that people from the LGBT community are often sexualized, especially lesbians or transwomen, who are being fetishized.

Another term this thesis takes into account through the analysis is ‘right’/‘rights’. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definitions which apply in the cases of the documents this thesis analyzes are; “something to which one has a just claim as (1.) a power, privilege, or condition of existence to which one has a natural claim of enjoyment or possession, furthermore (2) a power, privilege, immunity, or capacity the enjoyment of which is secured to a person by law and (3) a legally enforceable claim against another that the other will do or will not do a given act” (Webster, 1989).

A different, negative, term that includes LGBT rights, whether it is the right to marriage or to adopt children is the so-called, Homosexual, Gay, or LGBT agenda. The term homosexual and the reason why it is by some seen as negative was already discussed earlier in the thesis. However, this term is also widely used and it doesn’t have to include the word ‘Homosexual’ to be negative. Behind this term is the idea that LGBT rights are not human rights. Upon researching this term, one will find a definition on the urban dictionary or a Wikipedia page, but other pages that come up are also various religious sites. For example, a site of the United

Church of God, Beyond Today concludes an article about the Gay Agenda, “don’t let your life be controlled by the clever marketing of evil as good and good as evil.” (Melear, 2015). The Gay Agenda is the idea that people from the LGBT community wish to push their ideology on everyone, that the rights they are asking for are, as stated above, not their natural rights, and that they are using manipulative ways, especially through media or such events as, Pride, to achieve their goals.

4 Methodology

This part of the thesis describes aims and objectives of the thesis and the methods used in order to achieve these objectives, as well as the process of the research method, which was qualitative content analysis. This chapter is followed by the analysis, the interpretation of analyzed documents.

4. 1 Aims and Objectives Formulation

This thesis aims to inform the reader about and introduce the humanitarian rights crisis of the situation of the members of LGBT community in Lebanon. One of the objectives for the thesis was to choose and analyze such articles that would portray the situation from multiple sides and that would offer a, at least, as near-complete picture of the situation as was possible. The other objective was to analyze the articles in such a way so that the thesis could offer the description of the problem, its assumed reasons and also offer possible resolutions to the issue of LGBT human rights in Lebanon. The point is to raise awareness about this issue as well as to show the different sides of the Lebanese community, the possibilities and struggles of the LGBT community in the country.

4. 2 Qualitative Content Analysis

The method chosen for this thesis was qualitative content analysis. Qualitative research method, according to Hendl, is somewhat of detective work. It “requires the researcher to search for and analyze any sort of information that could help to shed light on the research questions” (Hendl 2005, p.50). It is possible to not only do this kind of research through fieldwork, but also through documentations that already exist - not developed/written by the researcher. This means that the researcher has to find them and analyze them. Qualitative research through document analysis is precisely what this thesis aims to do. The specific type of documents chosen are virtual data, data found on the internet (Hendl 2005, p. 204). This specific category of data was chosen for its convenient access, potential of information, and the language. Language meaning the option of the selection of different languages on the specific websites of the documents.

4. 2 Coding

The meaning of coding is to organize and categorize data in order to interpret them (Hendl 2005, p. 246). The coding used in this thesis is ‘open coding’, this type of coding is done by closely reading the sample documents, “localizing themes in the text”, themes that have a relationship with the topic of the research (Hendl 2005, p. 247). This helps to form a list of themes, then used to uncover their correlations and the relativity to the questions given by the topic or the research question of the thesis and the categories chosen. The specific coding units chosen are sentences and paragraphs.

4. 3 Categories

The coding units are further described through categories which serve as indicators within the main topic of the analysis (Hagen, Končelík, Reifová, Scherer, Schulz, 2004, p. 38). The categories chosen in this thesis are the problem; the meaning behind this category is the analysis of the problem introduced by this paper, which is the current situation of the LGBT community in Lebanon. The other two are reasons and possible resolutions, meaning the reasons behind this situation and the solutions, or the possible solutions mentioned or pointed at in the sample documents.

4. 4 Sample Selection

The documents chosen for the analysis in this thesis were chosen in the following way. First of all, the general category for finding the documents were human rights organizations and specifically Lebanese news agencies. The humanitarian rights organizations picked were Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Since this thesis focuses on the treatment - or the possible mistreatment - of LGBT people, these two globally known organizations that concentrate on not only human rights, but specifically on the abuse of human rights, were sorted out as two of the most sufficient organizations to use as sources. For the later, because of the language barrier, it was necessary to pick those news agencies that were either in English or at least had an English version. Upon searching ‘Lebanon news’, ‘media in Lebanon’, ‘national news in Lebanon’ few were found. Those chosen, mainly because of the language, were National News Agency, An-Nahar, and Naharnet. It was necessary to then check if all of these

internet news agencies ever wrote about LGBT topics and within all of them, at least one article was found.

4. 4. 1 List of Sample Documentes:

Article 1: National News Agency: “Lebanon, global legislators oppose gay debate at IPU meet”

Article 2: Naharnet: “Clerics Force Cancellation of Beirut Pride Gay Opening”

Article 3: An-Nahar: “Pride Week in Beirut: IDAHOTB 2019”

Article 4: Human Rights Watch: “Lebanon: No Justification for LGBT Crackdown”

Article 5: Amnesty International: “Fifteen years of LGBTI community activism in Lebanon: A story of existence and oppression”

5 Analysis

In this chapter the various data found through scrutinizing and coding the six chosen documents are interpreted. Through this chapter this thesis aims to use content analysis to demonstrate the situation of the LGBT community, especially concerning their rights, in Lebanon.

This chapter is divided into four subchapters, the first one talks about the analyzed articles themselves. The three subchapters are arranged into three categories, these are the problem, reasons, and possible resolutions. These categories were chosen to effectively portray the picture of the full situation.

5. 1 Researched Sample Information and Description

5. 1. 1 Information about Sources

The content analysis can be even more beneficial if the sources of the analyzed data are introduced and briefly explained. In this chapter is then a brief introduction into the sources that the five articles were taken from. It was already mentioned earlier, in the sample selection subchapter of methodology that three of the articles were Lebanon-based and two were from humanitarian organization/movement websites. This chapter will start with the Lebanon-based sources and continue with the humanitarian organization sources.

First of the articles is from the National News Agency. This news agency is under the Ministry of Information of the Lebanese Republic. On the official website of the Ministry of Information, the National News Agency is described as being “established to act as an important informational tool and a formal reference to the public authorities and to both public and private media outlets,” furthermore, according to the Ministry, NNA is “keen to transfer the news accurately, honestly and objectively to all Lebanese without exception” (MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, [online]). The website itself is created by sync, which is a digital agency, “founded by Lebanese young professionals”, whose vision is to be, the world’s leader in, among other things, information security (SYNC, About Us [online]).

The second source is Naharnet, the “first independent Lebanese Digital Media providing real-time news and information in English and Arabic about Lebanon, the Middle East and the World” (NAHARNET, About Naharnet, [online]). Their teams are staffed with multilingual journalists and in their ‘about us’ page they put emphasis on the fact that their teams are

“balanced to represent the social fabric of the Lebanese society and to provide objective and unbiased reporting” (NAHARNET, About Naharnet, [online]). Another important characteristic of this source is their editorial policy. This media organization is independent and does not fall under any political parties. “Naharnet is privately held and self-sustainable...free from external influences” (NAHARNET, About Naharnet [online]). Their platform was built in-house.

An-Nahar is a “daily, political and independent Lebanese Newspaper” according to their own Facebook page. It was founded by Ambassador Gebran Tueni, the UNESCO Courier writes about him and his newspaper that, “it stood out for the diversity of the opinions it published, even if they were sometimes contradictory” (UNESCO Courier). Their website is created by White Beard, a platform based in Beirut (White Beard).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is a nonprofit and non-governmental organization, registered in the United States that “investigates and reports on abuses happening in all corners of the world” (Human Rights Watch). They point out that to ensure their independence, they “refuse government funding and carefully review all donations to ensure that they are consistent with our policies, mission, and values” (Human Rights Watch). The organization describes their work under three words, investigate, expose and change. HRW researches in the field and creating evidence-based records of human rights abuses, they also work raise awareness of the issues through shared stories on social media or working with news media and they attempt to create change through meeting with “governments, the United Nations, rebel groups, corporations, and others to see that policy is changed, laws are enforced, and justice is served” (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, About Us [online]).

Amnesty International is an international movement, registered as a company (Amnesty International Charity Limited) in England & Wales, focusing on campaigning for human rights. They are independent and are funded by members and individuals that support their cause. They raise awareness of global issues and human rights abuses and thus persuade, or inspire, people all around the world into action, “to campaign for change and to stand in defense of activists on the frontline” (AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, Who We Are [online]). Amnesty targets governments, companies and other powerful groups, “making sure they keep their promises and respect international law” (AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, Who We Are [online]).

5. 1. 2 General Tone and Terminology

Five articles were chosen for the qualitative analysis in this thesis. The reasons behind which articles were chosen and from which sources they were taken are already stated above in

the methodology section. It is important to repeat however, that one of the main reasons for choosing the specific internet news websites from Lebanon was language.

Out of the three articles that were chosen from Lebanon-based news sites, only one could be said to have a negative tone directed towards the LGBT community. This was the National News Agency, whereas the other two Naharnet and An-Nahar seemed to have a positive and an open mind about the community. The first thing to notice are the photos used at the headline of the articles. These choices can be due to the different topics of the LGBT rights theme they write about, however, it is still beneficial to notice them throughout the analysis. The first article that of National News Agency is rather formal; it shows a photo of men and women in suits, legislators at the IPU meet. It is also interesting to note that the face expressions are either disinterested or very serious, the colors, in general are dark and the photo itself does not attempt at creating much of a strong emotion within the reader. In the other two news websites, the headline photo is a rainbow, and on the third article also blue, pink, and white, flag. It may seem to be the obvious choice in the third article, as it starts with a mention of the portrayed activist waving their flags. The second article however speaks about LGBT events being cancelled and under the pressure from religious groups and the author chose to use a photo of a flowing rainbow flag instead of, for example, of a religious symbol or the religious group.

The other two articles are both from sites of human-rights centered organizations. Article four, which is that of Human Rights Watch chose a photo of activists taking part in a protest in Beirut from the year of 2016, although the article itself is from February 11, 2019. The article itself has a bitter tone, not towards the LGBT, but at what is happening to LGBT individuals in Lebanon. That might explain the choice of the photo. There are no rainbow flags, or lively, merry colors. The photo shows cold and even destroyed buildings in the background, as well as camouflage-uniformed personnel. At the front are two activists, holding up Arabic and English signs that say “No Homophobia” and “Respect Human Rights”, the colors of the signs are red with the writing done in a dark marker and the other one yellow, with writing done in dark marker and red/orange. The header photo of the Amnesty International article on the other hand is a close-up of the Lebanon flag, merged with the rainbow LGBT flag.

The tone is also set by the diction of the article; the terminology used better defines the attitude of the author towards the LGBT community. The first article is different from all the rest of the articles. Here the tone is formal, as was written earlier, and also cold. The terms used here in the article from NNA, such as “LGBT agenda” or “rights of homosexuals,” suggest an indifference for respect of the LGBT community. That is because these terms have negative

connotations and this article uses, not to show this negative connotation, but as terms the author believes to be sufficient for the article. On the contrary, Naharnet and An-Nahar use terms such as “the LGBT community”, “gay pride”, “openly gay”, rather than homosexual, “IDAHOTB week” (International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia), “LGBTQI community”, “LGBT cause”, as opposed to LGBT agenda, “LGBT-themed activities”, as opposed to which shows willingness to respect the community. This shows an open-mindedness towards the “LGBT cause”, as was used in the later of the two articles.

Articles by the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as goes along with their missions and goals as humanitarian organizations or movements, use respectful, or at least politically correct terminology. Common are terms “sexual and gender minorities”, “LGBT people,” “people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities,” “gender and sexuality issues”, “LGBTI community”, “IDAHOTB”, “LGBTI rights”, and “LGBTI activism”.

The word “homosexuality” is actually also used in both of these articles. In one instance, in the article by HRW, it is used in regards to a statement by the Muslim School Associations accusing organizers of NEDWA of “promoting homosexuality”, thus in this case the use of the word seems more likely to be used because of the context of the accusation. In the article by Amnesty International, the term is used four times. Once in the context of established hostility in Lebanon, the next case is referring to “Lebanon’s international binding agreements to refute the crime of homosexuality”, and the other two cases are in mentioning censorship of homosexuality or homosexual persons. Although the articles use these terms, we must look at the context. The articles use it in describing homosexuality as the sexuality and not any persons specifically and when the article in Amnesty International uses the term to describe people in the last mentioned case, they do not use “homosexuals” or “homosexual” as a term by itself, but “homosexual person”, humanizing the hypothetical individual.

5. 1. 3 Inclusion of LGBT Individuals

This subchapter specifically looks at if and how the articles gave a voice to members of the LGBT community. This may include direct quotes or paraphrased statements about what either specific LGBT individuals or the organizations which represent them have said. Out of the five articles, three of them portrayed this kind of inclusion within them. It was the second and third article, by Naharnet and An-Nahar, and the last article, from Amnesty International.

The first article, from the National News Agency, did not include any kind of statements or opinions of Lebanese LGBT community members or organizations that represent them,

concerning the votes of their country's legislators at the IPU meeting concerning their rights. The only quotes the article did include was that of one of the legislators present at the meeting. Interestingly, the author of the article chose to include quotes from a legislator that was not Lebanese, but in fact from Uganda. The other article that did not include the voice of LGBT members or organizations that represent them was the fourth article, from Human Rights Watch. Now of course, this organization does work in order to defend people's rights. However, when mentioning organizations that concentrate specifically on the LGBT community. This article talks about a complaint by Human Rights Watch to the United Nations, regarding the breach of LGBT human rights. It is an explanation of the situation, with quotes from the directors of Human Rights Watch, and the Major General of the General Security that was accused of the breach of human rights, however no statement from specific LGBT members or organizations that represent them.

The other three articles have given voice to the LGBT community, either through direct quotes or through paraphrases, specifically stating the people, groups, or organizations that the statements came from. The article from Naharnet, for example, doesn't include direct quotes from any specific LGBT members, but they do include statements by organizers of pride or even mention "Beirut Pride said...", thus giving voice to the community through their event. An-Nahar also gives voice to organizers of LGBT events, as well as the LGBT activists which the article opens with, and the executive director of Helem, the legal Lebanese LGBT organization. Article five also gives voice to Helem, using their statements about an increased number of arrests under Article 534.

5. 2 Category: The Problem

The problem this thesis explores is the stance of the LGBT community and their rights in Lebanon. This chapter then aims to show, through the analyzed articles the current situation of the LGBT community in Lebanon. It talks about where they stand in the questions of rights and how they are treated, either by the **government**, by **religious** communities or by the people in the country in general.

One part of the problem of **rights of the LGBT community** in Lebanon, or lack thereof and also therefore the lack of protection against discrimination and **threats or violence**. **Threats or violence** in general is mentioned in three out of the five articles.

“Members of the LGBT community enjoy comparatively more freedom in Lebanon than in most other Middle East countries but still have no rights and face constant harassment.” (art. 2)

As mentioned before, it is important to mention that Lebanon indeed is more lenient toward the LGBT community than other Middle Eastern countries, however it still cannot be said that people of the LGBT community could feel safe in the country.

“Beirut Pride said that the management of the theatre that had been due to host the opening party had received anonymous threats.” (art.2)

“The activists chose to remain anonymous, as article 534 of the Lebanese penal code is still used to criminalize same-sex relationships, and it announces them “contrary to nature,” and the LGBT community still faces discrimination, harassment, and bullying.” (art.3)

“Most of them [men and women arrested under Article 534] were subjected to violations, ranging from insults to threats, to severe beatings and harassment.” (art.4)

“There is no doubt continued hostility towards any person identifying as or perceived to be LGBTI; for instance, there are social media pages that call for transwomen to be prosecuted and calling on the state to arrest them, torture them and simply remove from public view; television programmes continue to discriminate against LGBTI individuals, and with every show that addresses this issue, a myriad of phone calls and contacts by individuals and organization are made to try and ensure that LGBTI people aren’t harmed in the process; security authorities continue to arrest activists and hamper the work of organizations and individuals.” (art. 5)

Another part of this problem are infringements on **human rights**. The specific aspect of **human rights** is mentioned in three articles, where in the first one mentioned, article 3 the practicing of human rights in Lebanon is seen in a positive light.

“We are here today, practicing our legal right of freedom of speech and expression.” (art.3)

In this specific article, two young men were raising flags, a rainbow flag and the blue, pink and white colored flag of the transgender community, on the iconic emblem of Pigeon Rocks. The citation is a quote from one of them. They were being photographed by reporters and this shows the open side of the **human rights** aspect of the problem. However in the other two cases, the theme of **human rights** was in the context of abuse and violation.

“Bans on these events [human rights events related to gender and sexuality] not only discriminate against gender and sexual minorities and their advocates, but they also undermine everyone’s rights to freedom of assembly, association, and expression in Lebanon,” said Lama Fakhri, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch.” (art.4)

“Activists and organizations working on LGBTI rights claim that there has barely been a day in these past 15 years where there hasn’t been a raid, or a violation of the fundamental rights of individuals through arrests, sanctions, and a limiting of the rights to privacy, protection against torture and degrading treatment.” (art. 5)

The last two articles do come from sources that concentrate on human rights infringements, which explain why these articles talk about it more and even specifically concentrate on the violations. However, it is still important to note that although there have been some steps forward in the question of LGBT and human rights, still the community is faced with threats, harassment and violence from either the **government** or the rest of the community/communities.

Specific problem, as mentioned above, is the treatment of the LGBT community by the **government**, specifically its use of the **executive branch** and **religious groups**.

“Legislators from across the world attending the 139th International Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Geneva have opposed plans by pro-gay nations to introduce the LGBT agenda.” (art.1)

In this citation it is interesting to notice the use of broad generalization “legislators from across the world.” This wording suggests that the anti-LGBT rights mentality is global. This citation is from the very beginning of the article and it poses a rather powerful start. Another aspect to

mention here is “pro-gay”, which mixes all the members of the LGBT community together, although ‘gay’ is a generalized term used for a type of sexuality, whereas the community also includes gender minorities. Although this is a common generalization used for the LGBT community, it is then evident that the article does not seem to think of the correct terminology as important. This could suggest a disrespect to the community or at the very least a palpable lack of interest in it. Lastly, the ‘LGBT agenda’, this term was explained earlier in the thesis in a chapter titled ‘terminology’. In short, it is a term used for the fight for equal rights by the LGBT community that has a negative tone.

“Last year’s edition was also suspended after one of the organizers was briefly arrested.”
(art. 2)

This citation refers to an edition of pride events. The fact that the organizer was briefly arrested may suggest that it was a form of a threat rather than outright violence by the security forces. This implies a less strict system than in other Middle Eastern countries, as was mentioned in an earlier citation from the same article. However, it still shows that there are attempts to interfere with the freedom of expression of the activists.

“Human Rights Watch urged the UN officials to press Lebanon’s government to hold its security forces accountable for violations of international law and to refrain from using unjustified grounds, such as vague “morality” claims, to undermine the rights of sexual and gender minorities.” (art.4)

“On September 29, 2018, it attempted to shut down the annual NEDWA conference of the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality, which works to advance lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and other human rights.” (art.4)

“The security authorities have chosen to support opposing groups that threaten violence by clamping down on the freedom of expression of groups wishing to mark this day in a peaceful manner. Instead of holding those making threats accountable, security forces have taken the threats as a given and imposed the ban.” (art.5)

Once again the last three citations put a very strong emphasis on the abuse of human rights and violence or threats directed at the LGBT community by the government or its executive branch.

None of the citations, really none of the articles seem to mention the government in a much pro-LGBT rights light, however the Lebanon government still seems to be relatively lenient.

5. 3 Category: Reasons

There are two main reasons that stood out from the articles. One is culture along with religion, interpretation of scripture and the usage of the morality clause to discriminate against the LGBT community. The other is the ‘us versus them’ mentality. This is an issue present in many types of discriminations throughout the world concerning any marginalized groups of people, including racism, xenophobia, or homophobia. It is a process of labeling people by one of the aspects of their existence. “From this categorization we create “us” vs. “them” paradigms, where we view outsiders with either indifference or hostility. Instead of a city being a place of cohesive coexistence, it becomes divided into thousands of tiny groups, each vying for self-interest” (Krook, 2014).

5. 3. 1 Culture, Morals and Religion

“Representatives from the pro-gay nations had moved an amendment of the IPU rules to debate the rights of homosexuals, even after objections from mainly Arab Muslim and African members.” (art.1)

As the citation says, the main actors of objection against LGBT rights being discussed were mainly Arab, Muslim and/or African. It is a summarization of the subcategory of the category reasons. Arab and African pointing toward the cultural reasons and Muslim pointing towards the religious reasons behind the situation of LGBT individuals in Lebanon (which is not to say that Islam is the only religion that is not generally enthusiastic about LGBT rights).

““Religious institutions called for the cancellation of the concert, linking it to the promotion of same-sex marriage and associating it to debauchery and immorality,’ Beirut Pride said in a statement late Wednesday.” (art.2)

“Clerics had called for the cancellation of the concert in Byblos because some of the group’s songs were deemed offensive to Christians.” (art.2)

This citation speaks of a concert by Mashrou' Leila, an indie band based in Beirut, who's lead singer is openly gay. They often focus their lyrics on humanitarian and social issues. "Their rousing, sensual electro-pop anthems about political freedoms, LGBT rights, race, religion and modern Arabic identity have challenged the status quo of the Middle-Eastern pop industry" (MASHROU' LEILA, About [online]).

"He claimed that the article requires an event 'to be consistent with the moral standards of that particular society,' and maintained that 'the topic of the conference remains controversial in Lebanese culture.'" (art.4)

"He" that this citation speaks of is Major General Abbas Ibrahim, director of General Security and the article this mentions is Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This article says that "the right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions can be placed...other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of...the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedom of others" (OHCHR, 1966). This may imply the particular interpretation of the article by the General Security to be used to target the LGBT community. As this article that the Major General is referring to mentions morals as well as the protection of the rights and freedoms of others, it seems to be a question of where they draw the line and distinguish people's freedoms.

"However, in the past two years, state security authorities have intensified their crackdown on this day by cancelling activities on various pretexts, the main one being 'to ensure the protection of the audience as radical religious groups have threatened to attack if the event goes ahead.'" (art.5)

According to this article, that uses such words as "on various pretexts" and the general tone of this sentence, it would seem that they do not take the quote they use in this citation. The question of protecting audiences from radicals, according to this article, seems to be an excuse used by the state security authorities to shut down LGBT-themed activities and events.

5. 3. 2 Us versus Them Mentality

“Hon Akamba Paul (Busiki County) referred to the vote as a first win in the battle that they came ready to fight. ...to fight LGBT issues that have often been smuggled onto the IPU agenda.” (art. 1)

“Articles 1 clause 2 of the IPU statute talks about defending and promoting only those rights that are accepted universally and issues of LGBT community as you can see have been widely opposed.” (art. 1)

There are two citations from the same article, article one, in this subcategory. The us vs them mentality is evident in both of the cited parts of the article. The mentioned quotes used in this subcategory are by Hon Akamba Paul, a member of the Parliament of the Busiki county of Uganda. However, the article used these quotes on purpose and it gives no indication of disagreement with these statements, quite the opposite. From the general tone of the article, these statements seem to describe the author’s feelings toward the LGBT community rather accurately.

The first citation offers two interesting aspects; one being the fact that the Ugandan Parliament member believes that the LGBT are something to be fought. He even suggests that this was an important struggle, a battle, he specifically came to fight. The other is the word “smuggled” in regards to the suggestion of the discussion of LGBT rights and equality. This word has negative connotations, suggesting something forbidden, illegal.

The second citation displays a blatantly expressed belief that LGBT rights are not human rights. That they are not universally accepted. An acute example of an us versus them mentality; placing the LGBT community in a category, a class that is not just different, but even less than human, so much so, that they do not have the right to ask for equal treatment and human rights.

“General Security’s interference followed public statements from the Muslim Scholars Association accusing the organizers of promoting homosexuality and drug abuse.” (art. 4)

The choice of wording here, “promoting homosexuality” has two important elements to consider. Firstly, the concept of promoting something. This indicates that homosexuality is

something that can be advertised, something people can be persuaded to take part in, perhaps as though homosexuality was a trend. The use of the word “homosexuality” itself is worth mentioning. As mentioned in the chapter about terminology, this word has begun to have a negative connotation, especially within the LGBT community and it has a direct concentration on sex, rather than on the members of the community as emotional human beings. The other element is the issue homosexuality is paired with in this sentence, and that is drug abuse. Pairing these two aspects together is communicating that either they belong in the same category or that they go hand in hand. Pairing homosexuality with drug abuse which is mostly globally illegal, unhealthy and can lead to addiction and even death is giving the essence that the “promoted” sexuality can lead to a similar life, or the very least it is shown in a negative light.

“The media talked ‘about’ LGBTI individuals but never talked ‘to’ them.” (art.5)

Two features regarding this category are present in this citation. One is the labeling and categorizing of LGBT individuals which has already been established as the us vs them mentality. This is suggested in the first part of the sentence; talking “about LGBTI individuals”. The second feature is the contrast of talking about versus talking “to.” It is difficult to break this kind of mentality, when the group, or community, in question is not included in the conversation that is held about them. Which is precisely what this quote from article five suggests; that LGBT individuals were discussed without the opportunity to either defend themselves, explain or in general to have a voice.

5. 4 Category: Possible Resolutions

This is a rather complex situation, especially when one tries to look upon the situation through non-western eyes. It is important to take into account hundreds of years of a developed culture and religion, where it is not easy to propose any kind of change, even the type of change that the western world might see as improving human rights worldwide. In this chapter are the possible solutions seen within the articles, this includes even suggestions discovered through the close reading of the articles, which are against the LGBT rights. The other types of resolutions concentrate on working the system and raising awareness and solidarity.

“...IPU should restrain itself from such useless debates,’ Akamba said.” (art. 1)

This suggestion for what can be possibly seen as a resolution comes from the aforementioned Hon Akamba Paul which, although he is from Uganda and not Lebanon, the article from National News Agency of Lebanon seemed to agree with the statements. As seen earlier, under the ‘reasons’ category, Akamba understands the LGBT rights issue to be something to fight against. For him, according to the quote, the resolution appears to be to forget about it and, at the very least, to not make the protection of LGBT rights globally legally binding. Not spreading awareness of oppression of marginalized groups to countries where it is not already acceptable; as Akamba earlier suggested, LGBT rights are not universally thought to be human rights.

5. 4. 1 Working the System

In this subcategory, the resolutions are concentrated on working the system, going through the proper channels to make a proper and legal change. This type of resolution is suggested, or hinted at, in three of the five articles.

“Tarek Zeidan, the executive director of Helem...told Annahar: ‘We need to be very aware of the ramifications of all of our steps and to ensure that we understand the system and how far we can push, and push to the limit of that extent.’” (art 3)

Here the executive of the Lebanese LGBT organization calls attention to the importance of being aware of and understanding the system. The way it is put in this article, the suggestion here is to stay safe (“ensure that we understand the system and how far we can push”), and yet to stay bold (“push to the limit of that extent”).

“The complaint was submitted to the UN special rapporteurs on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and on human rights defenders, and to the UN independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.” (art 4)

“The legal fight for LGBTI rights has been bringing lawyers to police stations and courts when needed, advancing principles that are setting a precedent for others to build on. It has brought judges to deliver brave and solid judgments that refuse to criminalize privacy...They

refer to Lebanon's international binding agreements to refute the crime of homosexuality and thus reject prescribed penalties. They also rely on internationally-approved medical references to refute that same-sex conduct 'goes against nature,' rendering thus Article 534 inapplicable." (art 5)

The other two citations describe a reaction; not an offensive strategy, but a defensive, reactive one. The first one is wide-reaching, calling directly on the United Nations, for the protection of human rights, such as the mentioned freedom of speech or freedom of expression. The later citation on the other hand is comparatively more local. It focuses on individual cases, small steps that can then lead to more and more cases, serving as "a precedent for others to build on."

5. 4. 2 Raising Awareness

"Thirteen Samandal Comics affiliate artists collaborated with Helem... 'Art has always been the greatest tool to any movement,' one of the attendees of the show told Annahar." (art 3)

Art, as this citation also suggests, is an often used tool in any kind of process of raising awareness or any movement. Art brings people together, breaks barriers, helps people understand, to even find common ground for groups of people that might not think they have anything in common. Using art as a tool of a movement, tries to show the issue in a way that everyone can understand, often highlighting and intensifying emotional reactions that can sway people's mind, or at least somehow stimulate it. Samandal Comics is a "volunteer-based non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of the art of comics in Lebanon and the rest of the world" (SAMANDAL COMICS, About Us [online]). They are based in Beirut and their mission is to serve as an "alternative platform of expression for cultural and social issues" (SAMANDAL COMICS, About Us [online]). Interestingly, another Beirut based group of people that aims to raise awareness of social issues through its work.

"...LGBTI individuals started occupying a space in public discussions... They built alliances with journalists, who helped them break religious, social and political barriers, and shifting the way they were being represented in mainstream media." (art. 5)

Social media and mainstream media can both serve as tools for raising awareness. The, sometimes both, positive and negative aspect of social media is the freedom of expression of the users with the protection of anonymity that the internet offers. It can also help bring LGBT individuals into public discussing on their own accord, with their own voice. Collaborating with journalists is also an important idea of a possible resolution, as articles and any kind of positive additions into mainstream media can lead to breaking barriers, whether it be religious, social or political, as is stated in the citation. Representation in general is important, and the way a labelled group of people is represented, whether negatively or positively, is crucial in how they society in general will then see the members of the group.

“In 2003, they raised their flag for Iraq; since then they have raised it repeatedly to protect the right to freedom of expression, criminalize violence against women, demand justice for migrant workers, and to protest against the garbage mismanagement crises.” (art. 5)

Such a showing of solidarity, on one hand raises awareness of the LGBT community in the raising of the rainbow flag, but it also shows a mentality of “we will stand up for you.” This expression of an attitude directly opposite that of the famous Martin Niemöller, “first they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a socialist....then they came for me-and there was no one left to speak for me,” can lead to alliances and companionships between the affected groups/communities. It is a way of showing that not only are the other groups not alone in their struggles, but that the LGBT community is not afraid to, and is willing to stay with them, even though they do not have a guarantee that these groups will do the same.

6 Research Results

Through content analysis, this thesis aims to look at and understand the situation of the LGBT community in Lebanon, especially when it comes to their rights. The analysis itself was divided into three categories, the problem, the reasons, and possible resolutions; these categories attempt to provide an overall picture of the situation.

All of the articles had two common factors, those were the LGBT and Lebanon, those were the main two requirements of the articles. Other than that, common factors that were being focused on throughout the analysis were mostly LGBT rights, human rights, NGOs, the involvement of government officials or its executive branch, media, religion/religious groups or officials, violence/threats/harassment.

Starting with the description of the problem, it is important to say, that in Lebanon, a right that all humans are to be granted is freedom of speech and freedom of expression. According to the analysis, that is one of the rights that is being taken away from members of the LGBT community in Lebanon. Although, members of the community, on the one hand, feel confident enough to organize such events as is the Beirut Pride, these events do happen to get shut down. Another, often mentioned, part of the issue is violence and harassment against the LGBT community. This harassment can take forms of anonymous threats, social media sites calling for their punishment or aggression by the police.

A common cause for, for example, cancellation of LGBT events are initiatives from religious groups or religious officers. The influence of these groups in Lebanon seems to be significant, as well as religion as well. A common reason used against the LGBT is the 'morality clause', meaning that LGBT events, whatever they may be, are seen as promoting homosexuality, which is sometimes paired with undesirable social phenomena (in one of the articles drug abuse were said to be promoted, along with homosexuality by a meeting that concentrated on human rights and advocacy among other things). Of course there is also article 534, which is often used against LGBT individuals; the article outlaws sexual acts that "go against nature". Another reason for the current treatment of the LGBT community in Lebanon is the us versus them mentality. This mentality was very easy to see in the first article that wrote about legislators voting against the topic of LGBT rights to be discussed. The way the LGBT were written about in the article showed this kind of mentality. It was also mentioned in other articles that the LGBT were often talked about, but not to. The problem was not connecting and seeing LGBT, not as a labeled group, but as human beings.

The interpretation includes a resolution that may not seem to go along with the thesis, however it was seen as important to include the suggestions of all of the articles. The first article seemed to suggest that the resolution might be to drop the topic of LGBT rights overall, as not every country sees LGBT rights as part of universally understood human rights. Besides this suggestion, the others concentrated on building bridges between members of the LGBT community and the rest of the Lebanese community and working the system. What is meant by working the system is mainly going through the appropriate channels to slowly change the policy and to work on changing the treatment of the LGBT community by the government. For instance, it can mean anything from filing complaints to the United Nations or campaigning to “small steps” such as fighting individual cases of LGBT peoples being detained on the basis of article 534. Raising awareness, building bridges between different groups of people is also one of the most common suggestions for a possible resolution of this issue. Whether it is through social media, as there is a rather wide audience that people can reach through this channel, where they can share their stories and struggles. It can also be through such events as pride and workshops, where people can also share their stories, as well as answer questions and connect, face to face, on a personal level with others, making it slightly less anonymous - however also potentially less safe - than social media. Another resolution that is also already taking place are alliances with journalists, or visual artists, that help these individuals spread their stories, helping them be represented in mainstream media; helping the LGBT community with normalizing their existence.

7 Discussion

This topic was chosen with the knowledge that it is a very complex problem, especially with the present cultural and religious implications. A great discussion could be led as to whether it is correct of westernized nations to spread their views of what is correct and what is not, and to pressure countries with such distinct cultures into accepting certain laws that their cultures, or religion, might not let them agree with. This has been one of the important questions when it comes to involvement - humanitarian involvement especially - in other countries, the question of, what some could even go as far as calling ethnocentrism, the belief that the culture of a given individual is superior to others. What right do Western nations have to force other nations to adopt their beliefs?

If it is assumed that the issue is viewed from the humanitarian point of view, in the sense of striving to better the lives of every individual and that one person's right ends where another person's right begins, the discussion can then be led to the situation at hand and its possible change for the better of the LGBT community. It is a question whether the proposed possible resolutions can have an actual effect on the government and the rest of the Lebanon community. From the articles it would seem that they perhaps can. As mentioned earlier, there have indeed been cases concerning article 534, and the fact that it does not refer to LGBT people, that have been won. There were very few, but they do exist, which in itself is a success. The question of pride in general is another complicated issue worthy of discussion. The existence of pride itself, depending on how the event is organized, can even have a negative impact on the opinions of the LGBT community. For some, it can indeed be a successful way to celebrate the existence of LGBT individuals, show their strength, bravery and existence, as well as offer an opportunity to share their stories and humanize the community through various workshops. However, the pride event can also be seen as LGBT individuals "shoving their sexuality" in other people's faces, it can cause anger and even endanger members of the community.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to introduce and describe the situation of the LGBT community in Lebanon through content analysis of chosen news articles. The objectives included choosing articles that would portray the situation from as a whole and then to introduce the problem of the rights situation of the community, its reasons as well as to show possible resolutions found in the analyzed articles.

The methodology used was qualitative content analysis. Five articles were chosen from various sources, these sources were either Lebanon-based or from humanitarian rights focused organizations. Through open-coding, common themes of the articles were chosen, which were then used to create the categories chosen to describe the situation of the LGBT community in Lebanon. The categories were the problem, which concentrated on the description of the situation, the reasons which offered the found reasons for the issue of the treatment of LGBT community in Lebanon and the last category was possible resolutions, which were suggested or hinted at in the analyzed articles.

The thesis found that the situation of the LGBT community in Lebanon and their human rights is quite complex. On the one hand, Lebanon promises to protect freedom of expression and assembly, and yet there are cases of cancellations of peaceful events, such as the Beirut Pride or other LGBT-related events. Furthermore, part of the problem was violence and harassment of members of the community and the lack of proper protection against such violence. The fact is in their legislation, Lebanon still has an active article in place, article 534, which is still being used to discriminate against members of the LGBT community. The general treatment of individuals belonging to the community by the government and by religious groups is also part of the general problem, as religious groups call on the government to halt LGBT-themed events, which are in accordance with freedom of expression and assembly.

The reasons for the issue of the situation of the LGBT community in Lebanon were two that stood out throughout the analysis of the articles. These two were the question of culture, morals and religion and an 'us versus them' mentality. The reasons for the current treatment of the members of the LGBT community in this country are then that the culture itself and the various religious groups present in Lebanon find it difficult to accept the LGBT community. Although they are aware of their existence, it is believed by many that the lives of, or even the existence of LGBT individuals, goes against the moral codes of their culture or religion. The

‘us versus them’ mentality describes a fundamental problem of many marginalized groups, which is the idea that the marginalized group is somehow very much different than the rest of the population. Through the articles it seems that this issue goes so deep that the LGBT community is viewed as less than human, that LGBT rights are not universally accepted human rights, which is a crucial aspect of how the LGBT community is and can be treated in a country.

This thesis also includes possible resolutions which were found to be suggested or hinted at throughout the analyzed articles. Two basic categories of resolutions were to work the system and raise awareness. Working the system indicates such options as complaints to the UN, working with lawyers and in general humanitarian organizations to change the legal situation in the country. However, it also refers to “small steps,” in the sense of lawyers taking on individual cases of human rights breaches or of discriminations against the LGBT community on a regional level; especially arguing against the article 534 being used to discriminate against the LGBT community, where there have already been a couple of successful cases won by the LGBT individuals. Raising awareness can be done through the events that are already happening in Lebanon, through art, whether it is visual art or a band such as Mashrou’ Leila, or through campaigns. Part of raising awareness can also be working with journalists to create a positive representation of LGBT community members in social or mainstream media in the country.

The hope for this thesis is that a reader of this thesis will be introduced to the problematics of the rights of the LGBT community, if they have not known about it before and to realize the graveness of the situation throughout the world. The specific choice of Lebanon in this thesis also hopes to help show the reader that although a country may officially agree to uphold and protect certain rights does not necessarily guarantee that it will. Thus this thesis hopes to raise awareness about the breach of human rights, and discrimination of LGBT individuals in Lebanon. However, there is also a positive note that this thesis hopes the reader will realize, as a motivation and hope for social change and a breaking of the stereotypes that are held about individuals from the Arab nations. Throughout this thesis, it is pointed out that Lebanon is one of the more humanitarian-wise advanced countries in the region and humanitarian organizations - some of them legally based in Lebanon, groups, such as bands also coming from Lebanon, and individual activists - nationals fighting for the cause - are taking action in order to create social change. In the future this thesis can also be used for comparison about the situation of LGBT rights, concerning their improvement or deterioration, in Lebanon

specifically, as this thesis shows the current situation in Lebanon and briefly mentions the existence of harassment and violence targeted against the LGBT community members.

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