

## Taking the Honour out of “Crimes of Honour”: A Project for Changing the Jordanian Mentality \*

### Theme(s):

- Gender-Based Violence

### Type of Program:

- Raising Awareness

### Country/Region:

- Jordan (National)

### Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- Managing Partner EnConsult

### Author:

- Yusuf Mansur, Director of EnConsult

### Human Resources:

- Principal Researcher (Economist) to design the empirical model, draft the study and present and disseminate the findings
- Researcher (Psychologist/Sociologist) to supervise the questionnaire and data gathering process
- Volunteers (neighbourhood leaders, grass-roots activists, sociologists) to, along with the Researcher, interview the households of victims, gather and input data

### Partners:

The Project Steering Committee, comprised of stakeholders including religious, academic, political, and cultural icons, will be involved in all phases of the project. CAWTAR is being asked to partner in Phase 1 activities; other initiatives and media experts are being asked to partner in Phase 2.

- **Initiative overview:** The initiative stems from the idea of taking out the element of ‘honour’ from ‘crimes of honour’ and replacing it with the slogan of ‘poverty’. The aim is to turn this crime into an economic one and strip it of its misguided moral connotation. This may necessitate changing the mentality of the people in Jordan and then changing the legal and institutional framework, which has failed in dissuading the perpetrators of such crimes.
- **Social discriminatory practices targeted:** The so-called ‘crimes of honour’ are accepted practices in several Arab societies, especially in rural poor areas, where they are considered necessary for maintaining traditions and commitment to family ‘honour’ to the point that women who are related to the victims, such as mothers and sisters, defend this crime in some cases and even assist in perpetrating it.
- **Socio-cultural context:** According to official figures, about 28 Jordanian women die of ‘crimes of honour’ every year. But independent groups affirm that the real figure is much higher. Some of these crimes are perpetrated in rural and Bedouin areas and the local authorities do not report them on purpose to avoid scandals. Ignorance, poverty and the patriarchal tribal system have led to extensive misinterpretation of Islamic creeds and women are made to carry the burden of mistaken mental structures. The practice of killing women, which goes back to the pre-Islamic period, was ‘legalised’ to purify honour as if it were religiously acceptable despite its complete contradiction with Islamic Sharia.
- **Laws and policies:** Crimes of ‘honour’ are legalised by virtue of Article 340 (No. 16, 1960) of the Jordanian Penal Code. The code stipulates that ‘he who discovers his wife or one of his female relatives committing adultery with another, and he kills, wounds or injures one or both of them, is exempt from any penalty.’

In case the killing is taken to court, it is still possible to invoke Article 98 of the Penal Code, which stipulates that ‘He who commits a crime in a state of great fury resulting from an unlawful and dangerous act on the part of the victim shall benefit from the extenuating excuse.’ The positive law reflects women’s inferiority, which is confirmed by the negative implications relating to women’s in-family physical protection and their right for compensation. To illustrate, a woman’s testimony before the court is worth half that of a man’s.

According to the Code of Personal Status, a woman accused of sexual non-abstinence is questioned and her virginity tested. Women do not benefit from any guaranteed protection for the children they have outside marriage. Such children are considered the outcome of a ‘crime’ and are sent to government centres until their parenthood is determined. A woman loses the right of custody for her legal children if she remarries a man who is not related to her children. A Jordanian man, married to a foreign woman, can give his Jordanian nationality to his children whereas a Jordanian woman, married to a foreign man, does not enjoy such a right.

In 1999, a grassroots campaign led by a women's movement and independent non-governmental human rights organisations, was initiated in an attempt to repeal Article 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code. In spite of the absence of social and political support, the campaign succeeded in collecting 15,000 signatures. According to a survey by Jordan Times, 62% of Jordanians are against the amendment of Article 340 and a much lower rate is against its repeal. The official support for the campaign was almost non-existent.

## Objectives and Goals

Most crimes of honour in Jordan are perpetrated in poor Bedouin areas. Domestic violence among the poor in Jordan becomes a 'crime of honour' and the term 'honour' is extended to any visible non-observance of social principles by women. This does not include deviation from moral standards only. In some local communities, it covers going out to study or work. The objective of the initiative is to change the mentalities of the Jordanian local communities, extirpate the belief that crimes against women emanate from 'honour', and address these beliefs from an economic perspective. The main objectives are:

1. Providing evidence and proof, through documented court cases, files and data, to establish the fact that honour crimes are basically economic and not religious or cultural.
2. Disseminating the study results among the target groups through the media and communication channels in order to create a social awareness aimed at combating crimes of honour.
3. Establishing a new mentality in dealing with these crimes.

## Good practices

### Innovative Approach

- The initiative will be undertaken in two phases. The first phase includes data collection, initiative design, and presenting documented results to local community leaders, specialised governmental institutions, non-governmental organisations and international structures. The second phase consists of launching a national media campaign to change the mentality of the Jordanian people, especially in rural and Bedouin areas. The first phase activities will stand by themselves and remain valid for the second phase.
- The initiative requires a multifaceted approach, combining academic accuracy and thoughtful, creative tools and techniques to achieve the set objectives.

- Messages and addresses based on proofs, evidences and results will be sent to and disseminated by the media to establish a new mentality opposed to crimes of honour. The study results will be presented to magistrates, police superintendents, and religious figures during meetings and conferences, who will be provided with supporting information that can be used as references in the future. This approach will be supported through television programmes targeting Bedouin and poor areas.
- Data will be simplified and presented in an easy-to-understand forms that take into account and respect Bedouin mindset and customs in order to help avert violent, negative or opposing reactions inside the local community. They will also enable the religious leaders and the community leaders to maintain credibility in conveying messages to target groups. The approach, models and analytical examples will be extended to cover other states after completing the initiative in Jordan.

## Overcoming Challenges

- Potential challenges may be related to social resistance. Awareness-raising campaigns are expected to impact on tribal leaders and family members, and to generate an adequate environment in the local community for combating honour crimes.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Specific initiative data will be collected from court files, field interviews, questionnaires and other research models. Data will be integrated in a measurement model to determine the correlation between data and honour crime causes. The analysis will focus on the family since it is a strategic social unit to reach crime perpetrators and victims through the following data:

- **Family income:** correlation with crime perpetrators
- **Family wealth:** highlighting correlations between family wealth and low probability of honour crime perpetration in rich families as such families are not usually influenced by a smeared social reputation and continue supporting their children
- **Number of working family members:** correlation between the high number of working family members and low rate of smeared reputation as a result of 'honour loss'
- **Educational level of breadwinners and families:** This is one of the indicators that contributes to income level and family adoption of new ideas; education, training and skill development are indicators of a major social dynamism, especially in Bedouin societies where educational level and wealth are low.

- **Number of family members:** This figure has an impact on the main breadwinner as a higher number increases the burden of reputation smear from honour crimes on the breadwinner and the possibility of family members' punishment is greater as a result of 'honour loss'.
- **Punishment measures:** As extenuation and encouragement, non-severe punishment and laws make the punishment for purifying one's honour less costly for the crime perpetrator, and vice versa.
- **The victim's income-generating capacity:** In its relationship with income improvement, whenever the income-generating capacity increases, its impact on the family increases and the likelihood of punishing a woman in the name of honour decreases.
- **The victim's educational level:** This provides 'future promises'. The higher the victim's educational level, the greater will be the impact on the family income in the future.

## Ensuring Sustainability

After completing this initiative, and depending on the available funding, it is expected to:

- Create a free hotline and a 24-hour call centre open 7 days a week, run by female and male specialist counsellors . The call centre will cooperate with local hospitals and authorities in providing assistance to the women most threatened women by honour crimes and the men most likely men to commit them.
- Create a shelter in cooperation with the concerned authorities. The shelter will be unique because it will work as a clinic made up of counsellors, researchers, physicians and pharmacists.
- Train women officers to work with police departments and the family protection unit.
- Consolidate the programme of the family protection unit. This will be interactively done to ensure speedy crime reporting so that the unit can carry out the necessary measures to assist the most vulnerable women by:
  - Discussing their issues with health specialists to meet their health needs.
  - Providing women with information on physical safety; ensuring their safety, if need be; and providing health and psychological counselling to them so that they can lead normal lives, in coordination with the other concerned services.
  - Providing legal counselling, especially to the most vulnerable women during court hearings.
  - Providing a qualified specialist medical team and an equipped health care space in line with victims' needs.
  - Creating a Jordanian police investigations unit specialising in these crimes that will train teams that will be integrated into police departments, the family protection unit and the shelter.

## Contribution to Social Transformations

### ● Changing the Approach to Combating Crimes of Honour

Crimes of honour have been considered for a number of decades as a deep-rooted social problem at the traditional, cultural and religious levels. As a result, several studies have focussed on social standards and the religious dimension of the issue. But these investigations have not generally succeeded in combating the destructive phenomenon.

### ● Adding the Economic Dimension

The examined economic dimension has not directly focussed on treating crimes of honour. Rarely has there been an investigation that tackled the economic forces that reinforce the paternalistic practices and violence against women in spite of the established clear correlation between ‘crimes of honour’ and poverty and ignorance.

### ● Promoting Awareness and Support Campaigns

Studies by themselves are not sufficient to combat this type of behaviour against women. Experimental research results (economic and others) dealing with ‘crimes of honour’ can be effective if linked to a strategy to disseminate research results through an appropriate qualitative campaign that will make it abnormal to accept crimes of honour at the popular level and at the level of the supporting institutions. The issue of ‘honour’ in these crimes has not benefited from in-depth and extensive media coverage.