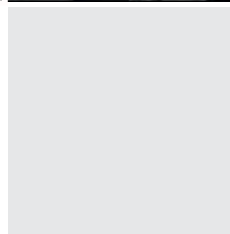
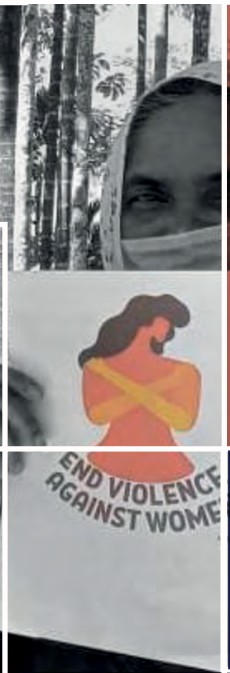
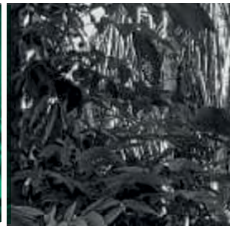






Annual Report 2021



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A Message from LAW's Executive Director

I am very pleased to introduce LAW's new annual report. 2021 was an extremely busy but incredibly rewarding year for the organisation. I am so proud that despite ongoing COVID-19 disruptions and the increasingly difficult contexts we work in, our teams continued to bring help, support, solidarity and hope for justice to victims and survivors of human rights violations and abuses.

Every year, I am in awe of the courage and determination of the people who have been subjected to the worst forms of abuses and discrimination, and of those who have witnessed human suffering and are standing up for men, women, and children who have lost their lives or are not able to seek justice themselves. They are the former migrant domestic worker who is bringing the first criminal case on slavery and slave trading in Lebanon; the 500 Rohingya and 41 Syrian refugees who are challenging the International Criminal Court to act for unpunished international crimes; the hundreds of victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, including children, across our countries of operation who are taking legal action and calling for justice; they are the families of the victims and survivors of the Beirut port explosion who refuse to give up on their search for the truth and accountability. Last year, we represented more than 750 clients, and reached 30,000 people through our legal aid and empowerment work.

We also stepped up our advocacy efforts, amplifying the voices and experiences of victims and survivors, and providing them platforms to tell their stories to national and international decision makers. We elevated discussions and raised awareness of critical human rights violations and abuses and the need for accountability, including on the Beirut port explosion and war crimes

committed in South Sudan and Myanmar. We raised the profile of several critical issues and crises through public events including during the 20th Session of the ICC Assembly of State Parties and we contributed to fostering the need to step up action for children detained in Syria and for Tigrayans. We published compelling resources on the impact of enforced disappearances on children in Syria and through high level events, put the spotlight on overlooked human rights abuses against marginalised groups, including members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Working with our diverse teams in the field, 38 local partners supported victims and survivors through legal aid and representation. We also continued to build the capacity of justice and legal actors, including civil society organisations, advocates and national and local authorities to address systemic human rights violations.

2022 promises to be another exciting year for LAW, with new initiatives and projects starting, more staff joining us to step up our legal, advocacy and communications work, and some new and important cases being filed, including our first communication to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights on behalf of Tigrayan victims and survivors.

I want to thank everyone that has contributed to our work in 2021: LAW staff and Board, our advisory committee, partners and donors, without whom none of our work would be possible.

Antonia Mulvey

Founder and Executive Director of Legal Action Worldwide



A Message from LAW's Board

Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC

I am very pleased to write this message on behalf of LAW's Board. I have been involved in LAW's work since its foundation and every year, as I reflect on what the organisation and its amazing people have accomplished, I am more and more inspired to continue supporting its work. LAW is truly unique, and over the past few years, the organisation has become more ambitious but also more relevant and incredibly important. Conflicts and protracted crises continue to kill, wound, and displace millions. Impunity, weak national enforcement mechanisms and a lack of decisive international political action means that serious human rights abuses go unpunished.

Despite COVID-19 challenges and increased instability in many parts of the world 2021 has been another very successful year for the organisation – demonstrating the determination, passion and relentless commitment of the people who make LAW what it is: an innovative, and fearless organisation which focuses on the opportunities and the changes it can achieve for the victims and survivors of human rights violations.

From the first case of slavery and slave trading in Lebanon to survivors' calls for accountability and justice in South Sudan and Bangladesh, LAW supports and works with thousands of extraordinary individuals who, despite challenges that sometimes seem insurmountable including oppressive political systems, fear of reprisal, bureaucracy, and corruption, will not stop fighting for justice. And that is why LAW's work is so important and that is why the dedication and expertise of its staff is at the core of the organisation's success.

I am proud to be engaged in LAW's work, and I look forward to another exciting year, where LAW will be taking on more significant strategic cases and will continue to work with victims and survivors to end impunity and secure justice for the most marginalised.

Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC

On behalf of
Legal Action Worldwide Board.

LAW AT A GLANCE

Who We Are and Where We Work*

LAW is an independent non-profit organisation of human rights lawyers and jurists who work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to deliver justice for victims and survivors of human rights violations and abuses.



* Countries where LAW has an office, is working in or on

LAW's Strategic Approaches

Accountability and Rule of Law

LAW works with state institutions to increase accountability and to build internal and international pressure for independent and impartial investigations into violations and abuses. Through this work, LAW aims to reduce the climate of impunity for serious criminal offences and contribute towards rule of law, increased access to justice, peace, and security.

Transformative Justice

Transformative justice addresses widespread human rights violations committed during periods of conflict and repression. It must be locally driven through a whole-of-society approach. We provide gender-sensitive and participatory technical assistance to local legal institutions and organisations and foster the meaningful participation of all groups affected at all levels of the process.




Gender equality and sexual and gender-based violence

Gender inequality is a root cause of human rights violations and abuses against women and girls. We advocate for the voices of women to be heard in processes and discussions that affect them. We recognise women, men and members of LGBTQI+ community as powerful advocates of change. We support their efforts to secure justice for sexual and gender-based violence and challenge deep-rooted gender inequalities.

Natural Resource Exploitation

Marginalised groups such as women and displaced people are commonly denied land rights and use of natural resources in post-conflict contexts. We work with national governments through various dispute resolution mechanisms to improve marginalised group's knowledge of their rights and how to exercise them.

2021 Highlights in Numbers





Over 30,000 individuals reached






+5,700 people trained to become community paralegals, survivor advocates, or grassroots champions









24 training events delivered to justice and legal actors



+850 individuals given legal assistance







3 ICC victims' submissions submitted





+500 people attended our global events






+30,000 individuals received legal information







+750 people represented in Courts




32 media articles mentioning LAW



8 global high-level events organised




1st criminal case on slavery in Lebanon opened



1st criminal case on slavery in Lebanon opened


"Female migrant domestic workers have suffered from the Kafala system for decades." Says Antonia Muhay, Executive Director of Legal Action Worldwide (LAW). "With almost no legal protection or access to justice, thousands have been abused by their employers and deprived of their liberties, including their freedom of movement."

LAW Legal Action Worldwide




3 policy briefs

+350 justice actors given human rights training or capacity building




1325 Accountability

Accountability
 on-making NAP
 GenderEquality
 ArmedConflict



Policy brief

"The light has disappeared"
 Enforced disappearances in Syria and their impact on children and young people



38 local partners



124 training events delivered to grassroots advocates

LAW'S SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH

Improving access to justice for victims is paramount to reducing impunity for human rights violations and abuses. It depends on the courage and resilience of survivors and presumes that they are empowered enough to come forward to share their experiences, articulate their needs for improved legal and other services, and demand justice.

LAW supports victims to become survivors and then advocates who can speak out and fight for themselves, their families but also their communities. This is critically important because human rights violations and abuses, including SGBV, not only affect the person they were perpetrated against, but others including families, communities and those who witnessed those crimes.

Empowering victims and survivors to identify and articulate their rights and their justice needs through legal information and assistance



Supporting victims to advocate for victim-centred truth seeking and justice processes, and assist them to select the appropriate mechanisms.

Advocating to ensure that survivors of human rights violations and abuses are put at the centre of justice and accountability processes and mechanisms



Overlooked and Under-Investigated?
 To improve our response to conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) against men and boys, we'll discuss:

July 2021: 4pm-5.30pm Dhaka; 12pm-1.30pm Geneva; 11am- 12.30pm London.



1325
 Accountability
 Decision-making
 Gender Equality

Monitoring
 Women's Participation
 Comprehensive Approach
 Gender-sensitive Peacebuilding
 UNSCR 1325
 UNSCR 1889
 UNSCR 2122
 UNSCR 2467
 UNSCR 2518
 UNSCR 2662
 UNSCR 2712
 UNSCR 2749
 UNSCR 2876
 UNSCR 2963
 UNSCR 3042
 UNSCR 3091
 UNSCR 3109
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 UNSCR 3201
 UNSCR 3241
 UNSCR 3265
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 UNSCR 10098

Arbitrary Detention of Children in Syria
 With Voices of Child Detainees and their Families

1 December 2021, 14:00 - 15:30
 Join us on Webex: <https://bit.ly/WebexSyriaEvent>

Justice for Gender-Based Violence Against Women.

#16 Days

Tuesday December 7, 2021 11am (C.E.T.)

Panel Discussion

Myanmar: What's Next for International Justice Efforts following the Coup?

Speakers:
 Helena Bignall, Executive Director of Crisis Group, Bangladesh
 Priscilla K. Coleman, International Justice Resource Centre, Myanmar
 Chris Salter, Director of the Center for International Justice, Myanmar
 Matthew Smith, Director of the Center for International Justice, Myanmar
 Anissa Marjan, Director of the Center for International Justice, Myanmar
 Chris Quinlan, Director of the Center for International Justice, Myanmar

A Side Event to the International Criminal Court Assembly of State Parties

To participate in the panel discussion, please follow the link on this post to register.



Women Survivors of GBV must be heard.

#16Days

2021 Highlights



Strategic Litigation

LAW uses strategic litigation as a key approach to achieve rapid, significant and systemic changes in the law, practice or public awareness by taking carefully selected ground-breaking and landmark cases. We use domestic, transnational and international justice and human rights mechanisms to support our cases and secure justice.

2 021 was a significant year for our strategic litigation agenda as we continued to lead breakthrough cases challenging impunity for international crimes, including conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as well as discrimination and human rights abuses against marginalised groups, such as migrant domestic workers (MDWs) and members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Syria Crisis

We represented Syrian survivors of sexual violence in their undeterred quest for justice. In May 2021, we filed a submission to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on behalf of 20 Syrian survivors. This is the first time that they urged the ICC Prosecutor to open a preliminary examination into crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Syrian government. The victims, 13 men and 7 women, are all survivors of sexual violence and many were children at the time of the violations. By filing the submission, the survivors were also the voices of thousands of Syrians who have been subjected to cruel and degrading treatment for daring to oppose the Syrian government.

"I think maybe 10 or 15 people would rape me. When they were raping me, it would last maybe 4 or 5 hours. That was the worst torture that I ever experienced."

(Syrian survivor represented by LAW)

LAW also submitted communications on behalf of 41 Syrians to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, amounting to 477 pages of evidence detailing a pattern of the use of enforced disappearances by the Syrian government against civilians. Our recommendations were quoted in the UN Working Group's recent report.

Bangladesh

In February 2021, Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) attempted a coup and in September 2021, we submitted a communication to the Prosecutor of the ICC on behalf of more than 500 Rohingya refugees who survived the 2017 so-called "clearance operation". The communication follows on from and supports the July 2021 declaration by the National Unity Government (NUG) accepting the jurisdiction of the ICC over international crimes committed in Myanmar since 2002. In their communication, Rohingya survivors urge the Prosecutor to accept NUG's recent declaration, and to recognise the NUG as representatives of Myanmar. If the Prosecutor upholds the communication, it will fulfil its mandate to investigate and prosecute the most serious crimes, some committed nearly 20 years ago, and whose perpetrators remain unaccountable and unchallenged.

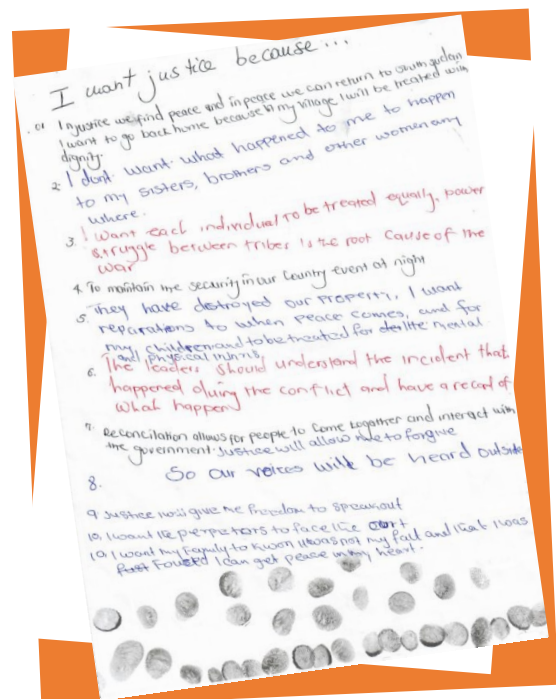
South Sudan

We supported survivors and justice institutions in the country in the pursuit of legal redress for victims and accountability for perpetrators. In December 2021, 36 survivors and witnesses of international crimes committed during the conflict called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open a preliminary examination into the situation in South Sudan. The letter followed the filing of a submission to the ICC Prosecutor endorsed by 31 of them. The survivors and witnesses have formed a group that meets regularly. We amplified their voices by sharing the letter on social media.

"We want justice because..." is a powerful and poignant statement on the lack of accountability for horrific crimes that remain unpunished.

"I want the perpetrators to face the court. I want those who are responsible for the war and for what happened to me not only to acknowledge what they did, but to be punished for what they did."

(South Sudanese survivor of sexual violence)





SPOTLIGHT:

Solidarity stand the day of MH's case hearing

Migrant Domestic Worker Criminal Case in Lebanon



Solidarity stand the day of MH's court hearing



6 facts about migrant domestic workers in Lebanon

LAW represents MH, an Ethiopian woman who came to Beirut as a Migrant Domestic Worker (MDW).

MH is one of thousands of MDWs who live and work in unbearable conditions, under the kafala system, that enables systemic abuse and discrimination. In October 2020, LAW filed a first of its kind criminal complaint on behalf of MH alleging that the treatment she suffered from her former employer and recruiter amount to crimes of slavery, slave trading, racial discrimination, gender discrimination, and torture.

One year later, on 19 October 2021, the first hearing took place, but was suspended when neither defendant attended. On that day, supporters of the case, including representatives from the Embassies of Germany and Sweden and local civil society organisations and actors stood in solidarity with MH in front of the courthouse.

This landmark case has the potential to be groundbreaking. If successful, it will open the door to legal redress for the many thousands of other MDWs who are held in similar conditions, and will highlight the widespread and egregious crimes that are committed under the banner of the notorious Kafala system



Advocacy

LAW conducts strategic advocacy with national, regional and international decision makers and influencers. Through policy analysis and research, advocacy events, diplomatic meetings, and communications, we raise awareness of the issues we work on, contribute to critical debates and legal developments, and generate evidence that provides compelling arguments to advance our legal work and secure changes for the people we represent. We also support national champions to promote human rights and the rule of law.

In 2021, we organised a series of global events putting the voices of victims and survivors at the forefront of the discussions on important issues. We contributed to high level policy events, and in partnership with other international organisations and member states, we advocated for increased action from national and international legal and human rights institutions on tackling systemic impunity and securing justice for victims and survivors. We also raised awareness of critical issues through communications and media avenues, including traditional and social media engagement and creative advocacy.

4 August 2020 Beirut Port Explosion

On 4 August 2020, a proportion of 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate exploded at the port of Beirut, causing the most powerful explosion in Lebanon's history and one of the most powerful non-nuclear explosions in history. The explosion killed more than 200 people and injured more than 7,000. The explosion damaged 77,000 apartments, displacing 300,000 people. A domestic investigation was set up in the aftermath of the explosion, but which has been obstructed and delayed at every turn, highlighting the deep-rooted corruption and impunity that plague the judicial and political system.



Antonia Mulvey meets with the families of the victims and survivors of the explosion in Beirut

Securing an international fact-finding mission into the Beirut Port Explosion

LAW works closely with survivors, victims, and their families, including the parents of children that were tragically killed in the explosion. Together, our advocacy efforts have focused on amplifying their calls for truth and justice by rallying support for the establishment of an international, independent fact-finding mission to investigate the Beirut Port Explosion, under the United Nations Human Rights Council.

In November 2020, LAW published a report setting out the publicly available facts on the explosion, the status of the Lebanese investigations, and the significant restrictions on access to justice in Lebanon. On the first anniversary of the explosion – 4 August 2021 – LAW published an updated [report](#) detailing the ongoing failures of the Lebanese domestic investigation to deliver justice for the survivors, the victims, and their families.

In 2021 LAW held two side events on the explosion, one to the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council on [10 March 2021](#), and one to the 47th Session of the Human Rights Council, on 15 June 2021. Those important events focused on the ability of Lebanon's domestic investigation to deliver justice for the survivors, victims, and their families. They brought together UN experts, international experts, Lebanese lawyers, and the parents of three children that were tragically killed in the explosion, who spoke of the suffering that they, their children, their families, and the whole community experienced on the 4 August 2020. Parents used the panel to highlight the Lebanese authority's failure to protect their children from harm, and to call upon the international community to support their calls for an independent and impartial fact-finding mission into the explosion.

"Please do not forget our case."

(Mireille Bazergy, mother of child killed in the explosion)

"People say that the explosion was an accident, but we say that Isaac was murdered, because negligence on this scale is absolutely criminal."

(Sarah Copland, mother of child killed in the explosion)

On 16 September 2021, the European Parliament (EP) took a significant stand against the lack of accountability and lack of progress in the Lebanese investigation into the explosion, by passing [a Resolution](#) on the situation in Lebanon. The Resolution echoes LAW's recommendation and calls "for an independent international fact-finding mission to Lebanon to investigate the Beirut explosion within the framework of the UN."

Through compelling letters and with our support, the families of the victims and survivors also urged the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Secretary General to establish an international fact-finding mission into the explosion.

Protecting South Sudanese Survivors and Victims' Identities and Strengthening their Calls against Impunity



We have continued to advocate for better mechanisms for the protection of victims, survivors and witnesses of international crimes in South Sudan. In particular, in international judicial settings.

We submitted a report to the CEDAW Committee, along with a [request](#) for a General Recommendation on the protection of victims' identities by CEDAW's individual complaint mechanism. We also contributed to the HRC's 47th Session by making an oral intervention at Interactive Dialogue with the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

LAW also called on the Government of South Sudan to step up efforts to provide Truth Seeking Accountability and Justice for the victims of the conflict including providing fair and adequate reparations for the survivors.

In December 2021, we held an official [side event](#) on accountability pathways for survivors in South Sudan at the 20th Session of the Assembly of State Parties (ASP20). The event, hosted by the Government of the Netherlands and with contributions of national and international experts, emphasised the urgent need for victims and survivors to access the justice and support they want and need, through domestic, regional and/or international mechanisms.

Demanding Action on Enforced Disappearances of Children in Syria



LAW continues to be one of the very few organisations advocating for greater action on enforced disappearances of children in Syria. This year, we published a [policy brief](#): "The Light has Disappeared" Enforced Disappearances in Syria and their impact on children and young people. This important advocacy resource details the devastating consequences of enforced disappearances on families and communities across Syrian society, in particular children whose risks of violations and abuses are compounded by family members disappearing. The brief also considers the broader implications of missing and detained persons for the peace process in Syria but emphasises the few political avenues available to young people and children.

We also raised the visibility and understanding of the impact of children detainees through a [video](#) produced with Freedom Jasmine and released on the International Day for Victims of Enforced Disappearances. Finally, we also hosted with the European Union a [webinar](#) on "Arbitrary Detention of Children in Syria" which gave a platform to children who have directly suffered from human rights violations. The panel brought together survivors, international justice actors and civil society representatives to explore strategies for addressing the needs and supporting child detainees, their families and their communities in the pursuit of justice. Through powerful and hard-hitting testimonies, survivors reminded Syrian authorities and the international community of the urgent need to take action to stop the arbitrary detention of children.

"I was in the "branch of the slow deaths". I was 15, the youngest child there. they brought in a 12-year-old. He was crying calling for his mum. We had to silence him or we would be tortured..."

(Former child detainee, panellist)

Pushing Ground-Breaking Legislation in Somalia

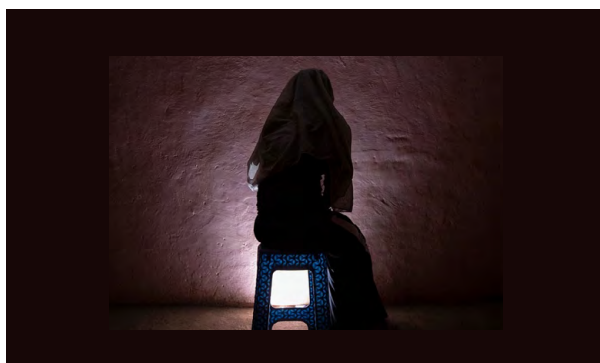
We have continued to advocate for the adoption of the Sexual Offences Bill (SOB), which was developed with the technical advice and support from LAW in 2013-2015. The Bill is a significant milestone for women and girls as it criminalises a wide range of sexual offences.

We have also fought hard against an attempt to introduce a new Sexual Intercourse Bill which normalises violence against women and girls in the country, demonstrating that women and girls' protection is just not a priority or even a concern.

Elevating Conversations and Amplifying the Voices of Unheard Victims and Survivors

We organised high level panel discussions to raise the sense of urgency and increase decision makers' attention on critical issues, putting emphasis on bringing the stories and voices of victims and survivors of international crimes whose calls for justice and accountability remain unanswered.

"[Overlooked and Under-Investigated](#)" was co-hosted with the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh and considered national and international responses to conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated against male and LGBTQIA+ survivors, and the links between high quality survivor services and the pursuit of justice and accountability, with a particular focus on the contexts of Syria, Myanmar and South Sudan.



Tigrayan refugee rape victim (©AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty)

We co-hosted an online panel [discussion](#) on international justice for Myanmar with Fortify Rights. The event was held on the margins of ASP20, which highlighted the need the National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar to lodge instruments of accession to the Rome Statute with the UN Secretary General and the importance of the solidarity between the peoples of Myanmar, including the Rohingya. Panellists called upon the ICC to urgently demonstrate its effectiveness and relevance as a justice mechanism, by acknowledging and responding to Article 12(3) Rome Statute declaration made by the NUG of Myanmar in July 2021, recognising the ICC's jurisdiction.

On Human Rights Day, we convened a panel [event](#) on the humanitarian and human rights situation in Tigray, hearing from witnesses of the atrocities committed against women and girls, and amplifying Tigrayan victims and survivors' calls for justice and support.

The event concluded with panellists, including Tigrayans, urging the international community to take action to stop more deaths and abuses happening through an independent investigation, and for Ethiopia to ensure immediate access to international humanitarian organisations, and the cessation of hostilities with a focus on finding political solutions.

"Rape is being used as a weapon of war with the intent to inflict unimaginable pain and suffering."

(Tigrayan women's rights activist, panellist)

Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality, peace and security in Lebanon and Setting out a post-pandemic Agenda

As a member of the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), we partnered up with ABAAD (Resource Center for Gender Equality in Lebanon) to conduct research on the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality, peace and security in Lebanon. The GAPS project included the publication of 10 evidence-based country briefings and an overarching multi-country evidenced-based paper that set out recommendations for national and international actions to respond to the gender, peace and security impacts of COVID-19 and future pandemics. Our [research](#) on Lebanon found that the immediate response to the pandemic was gender blind and failed to incorporate long-term and strategic approaches to address the needs of different communities and to end gender inequality and violence against women and girls.

Raising Awareness, Engaging Influencers and Building Pressure for Action and Change

We amplified the reach of our work by engaging with the media and delivering social media campaigns. Our work on the Rohingya crisis and the Beirut explosion was featured in national and international press and the media, including The Washington Post, NBC News, Al Jazeera and The Guardian.



In support of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, we ran a 16-day twitter campaign featuring powerful and action-focused quotes from our clients.

"He was from my clan, he raped me and my family wanted to hide the information. I refused to be silenced, I refused to give in. I went to the justice system and that's where my fight began. I won the fight; he is in prison now."

(GBV survivor, Somalia)



Photo credits: Léa Skayem

SPOTLIGHT:

Dealing with the Past: A memory for the Future; Gendered Crimes during the Lebanese Civil Wars



In partnership with UN Women, Justice without Frontiers and the Committee of the Families of the Missing and Disappeared, under the project: Dealing with the Past, we shone a light on the suffering, ongoing impunity, and undying quest for the truth and justice of the survivors and families of victims of Lebanon's 15-year Civil Wars (1975-1990).

Under this project, we undertook a preliminary investigation and research into gendered crimes against women and girls during the Lebanese Civil Wars. For the first time, we found that sexual and gender-based violence - including rape, gang rape, mass rape, genital mutilation and sexualised torture and humiliation - was systematically perpetrated by state actors, state and non state aligned militia. We found that the abduction and killing of women, including pregnant women, girls and infants was used frequently by armed state actors and non-state armed militia to terrorise the population. Yet, more than three decades after these crimes took place, thousands of women, girls and their family members, remain in search of justice. A report on these findings will be issued in June 2022.

"I saw about 19 young girls aged between nine and 15 years being escorted to the camp. They were in an indescribable state. They had blood stains all over their clothes and legs. They were raped with bottles. [...]"

I saw a man who was crying [...]. He told me that two of them were his daughters and that the younger one is not among them because she died. She was raped with a bottle and the bottle broke inside her..."

(75-year-old woman)

"They threw babies in the air and shot them in front of their mothers. Then they raped the mothers and killed them."

(49-year-old academic)

Also under this project, we commissioned a documentary, "Mu'ajjal," and photo series, to raise public awareness of forced disappearances committed during the Lebanese Civil Wars. The photo series was exhibited in Beirut in October 2021 and highlighted the experiences of the families of the disappeared still grieving the loss of their loved ones.

"Mu'ajjal" recently won four international awards in four different countries, including the Tokyo International Short Film Festival, the Inonu University 13 International Short Film Festival in Turkey, the Indie Filmmakers Festival in Tokyo, and the Algerian Digital Gate International Film Festival.



Legal Aid and Empowerment

LAW provides legal information, assistance and representation to individuals and communities to facilitate their access to justice. We work with partners to increase victims and survivors' rights awareness and knowledge of avenues for legal redress which is particularly challenging in fragile and conflict contexts. Recognising the critical importance of survivor-led justice, we first support and empower them to recognise and assert their legal rights and provide them with legal advice and representation, if they wish.

In 2021, we reached more than 30,000 people with legal information and assistance and represented more than 750 individuals. SGBV was one of the most common human rights violations that our clients needed assistance and representation with. Our legal representation work was undertaken nationally, regionally and internationally.



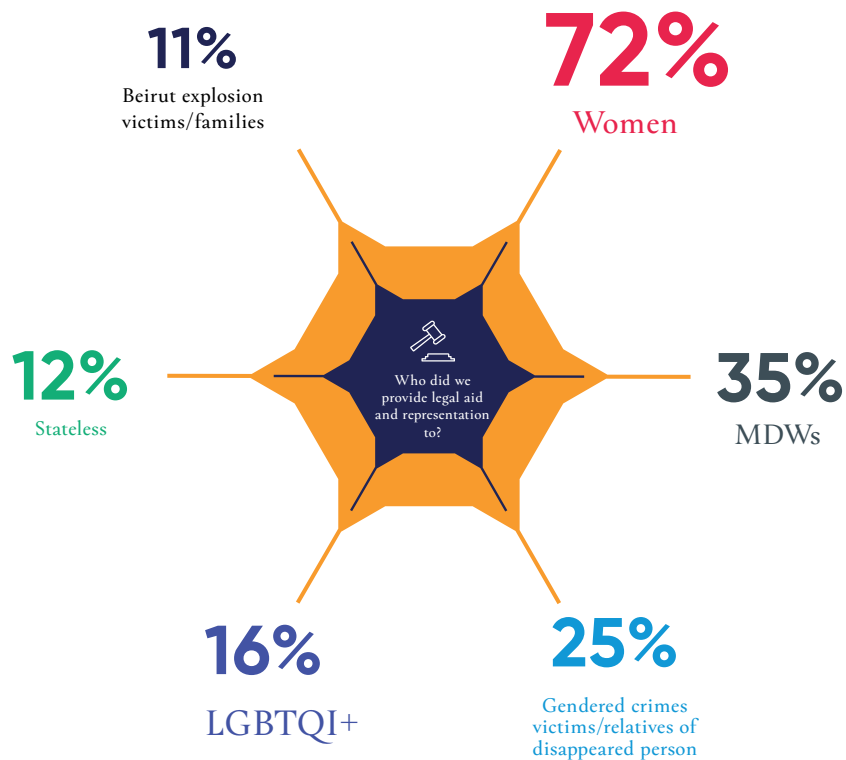
Legal information session in Beirut

Lebanon

We provided legal assistance to 356 individuals and legal representation to 46 individuals. We also referred 147 persons for psychosocial, medical or other support services. 97% were women or girls; and 93% were victims of gendered crimes during the civil wars or relatives of a disappeared person.

"I really thank them because they stopped my brother and his wife from harming me. My brother used to hit me and abuse me, but now he doesn't come near me, sometimes he calls me and I don't answer. I feel safer than before."

(Recipient of legal aid)





Antonia Mulvey chairing a session at the Paris conference

Bangladesh: Rohingya Crisis

We provided legal assistance to 257 Rohingya (107 women, 150 men) up from 122 in 2020. We also provided legal representation to 533 Rohingya (479 women and 54 men), including acting on behalf of these clients in communications to the ICC, and the International Court of Justice. As of December 2021, LAW was also representing 279 individual clients and a community network of more than 400 Rohingya women “Shanti Mohila”.

Somalia

We concluded a programme that focused on empowering women to meaningfully contribute to justice, support, and advocacy services for SGBV survivors in Mogadishu. We received more than 1,400 complaints, of which 70% were related to GBV. 316 GBV complaints were reported to police, all of which were investigated, resulting in 192 convictions. Convictions included prison sentences and fines.

“First I received legal advice, then I was taken to police station to report my case, after which the perpetrator was arrested and immediately taken to court. That was all before my family intervened in my case. It is time for you to also report in case you face any form of abuse.”

(SGBV survivor)

Syria Crisis

We co-hosted with EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) an international [conference](#) on “Supporting a Survivor-led Justice Movement in Syria”. The hybrid conference was held in Paris in October 2021, and part of a series of discussions between Syrian survivors, activists, civil society and representatives from other conflict-affected regions. The 58 participants engaged in a cross-regional exchange with leaders and human rights defenders from Syria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Palestine. Discussions highlighted the importance of gender-sensitive and gender-inclusive approaches to peacebuilding processes with meaningful participation of survivors and victims. Participants also stressed the need for empowering victims to become survivors and enabling Syrian civil society to lead efforts towards justice, accountability, and sustainable peace.

“It is not easy for us to talk about our pain. Because the injury is still in our hearts. We were in Geneva and talking about people who were forcibly disappeared. The burden of finding my father, sisters and relatives is on my shoulder. And this is a big burden, but we keep going because we believe in justice.”

(Syrian activist, speaker)

Rahma’s Story:

25-year-old Rahma* was raped by the driver of a Bajaan (a three wheeled taxi) and another man on her way back to the camp where she lived. Following the rape in a house, both men escaped. She was escorted back to the camp by two women. The community-based Independent Complaints Mechanisms met Rahma at the Gedoolle camp during one of their weekly legal awareness visits, and she was referred to HINNA center for medical assistance. She was then taken to the police station to report her case. One of the suspects was arrested and arraigned in court. He was later sentenced to five years in prison.

*Synonym



SPOTLIGHT:

Rohingya Survivor Advocates



Survivor advocates on training day

As part of our ongoing work with the Rohingya community in Cox’s Bazaar, we empower Rohingya women and men to act as a network of Survivor Advocates. Survivor Advocates act as critical links between Rohingya community members living in the camps and legal, medical, and psycho-social services. They also assist and support Rohingya community members, especially SGBV survivors, about legal avenues available to them. Survivor Advocates receive ongoing training including on international justice processes related to the Rohingya Crisis such as the ICC investigation and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) case between The Gambia and Myanmar on the application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In 2021, we delivered sessions on women’s rights, SGBV and advocacy, to better equip advocates with the knowledge and tools they need to plan and implement effective advocacy activities in the camps.



Survivor Advocates advocating on SGBV during the 16 Days of Activism

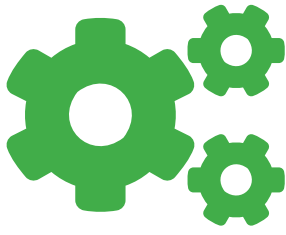
In 2021, the number of Survivor Advocates trained by LAW increased from 50 to 75. With more advocates, in the camps, we are able to reach more people and be more efficient in delivering legal updates to LAW’s clients. We are also better equipped to support SGBV survivors. By December 2021, Survivor Advocates had provided 15,976 Rohingya with legal information.

“

Survivor Advocates act as critical links between Rohingya community members living in the camps and legal, medical, and psycho-social services.

“Back in Myanmar, there was no system for women to come out of their house. Here, we have learnt about our rights and today, we are able to say important things to people with confidence and people listen. Before, people did not trust that women can do anything helpful, but now they see that we give them good and correct information, so they trust us.”

(Woman Survivor Advocate)



Technical Assistance

LAW works with national justice institutions, law faculties and partners to strengthen their ability to deliver survivor-centred and effective justice and uphold human rights through targeted capacity-building programmes adapted to the contextual situation and specific needs. We often connect national lawyers with international experts for long-term mentoring and cross pollination of legal strategies and capacity-development.

This year we combined a range of in-person and virtual activities globally and in-country, fostering learning, peer-to-peer information exchange and dialogues between justice and legal actors, including survivors, civil society organisations, and authorities.

Syria Crisis

In 2021, Syrian lawyers received 130 days of on-the-job mentoring from our legal team investigating human rights abuses and international crimes in Syria. Our mentoring programme encourages the development and implementation of robust client and case methodologies in human rights work. The programme is centred around 4 key pillars: 1) identification and pre-screening of witnesses 2) referrals 3) interviewing, and 4) safe storage, use and analysis of evidence. It promotes professionalism, understanding of best practice, and a sense of the law's strategic potential.

Our partner lawyer in North-west Syria cites LAW's mentoring as a major contributor to her professional development and her desire to use her legal training to identify and solve problems in her community. She is now conducting legal information sessions for internally displaced women to raise awareness of the importance of registering births.

The multilingual series was aimed at informing Sri Lankan lawyers, students, and other members of civil society of the relationship between Sri Lankan domestic law and human rights--particularly the rights of children and the relationship between gender and the law. These webinars were viewed and shared by hundreds of internet users in Sri Lanka, significantly expanding knowledge and awareness of rights issues and gaps in the existing legal framework in Sri Lanka.

We also worked with the National Peace Council to deliver 24 conflict management, pluralism and reconciliation trainings to Sinhala majority communities in Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Kandy, Badulla, Monaragala, Ratnapura, and Kegalle. We trained 870 participants in total, reaching our pre-COVID-19 targets. The trainings were aimed at five target groups including youth, women, religious leaders, government officers and local-level politicians. All these trainings were facilitated by the Master Trainers who were trained and received capacity-building support in the initial stages of the same project.

Sri Lanka



"Joining the Master Trainer network opened-up me to a new world with new opportunities (...) I decided to resume my education and move forward in my career path. Fast forward four years, I am now a Senior field officer at an INGO, a diploma holder on my way to obtain a bachelor's degree and an expert community trainer being called to train state officials and local policy makers. Joining the Master Trainer group changed my life. It gave me purpose and direction. And it gives me great pleasure to do the same for so many others in my community through the project."

(Master Trainer)

In July and August 2021, LAW collaborated with C4Legal, a prestigious Sri Lankan law firm, to provide five educational webinars on human rights law.



Lebanon

We conducted 10 capacity building trainings on advocacy and the law. This included trainings at legal and para-professionals and sessions for police officers of the Anti-Human Trafficking and Morals Protection Bureau of Hbeish police station in Beirut.

The five sessions for police officers were designed based on the results of a capacity needs assessment and focused on the rights of the detained. They were part of a series of technical trainings aimed at improving the capacity of actors in the justice system to tackle discrimination and inequality and ensure the rights of targeted communities, including LGBTQI+, are respected. As a result of the training, police officers questioned their views about their roles as law enforcement actors, and applied their newly acquired knowledge to their day-to-day work with detainees. They also demonstrated their capacity to work with lawyers on legal issues specific to the vulnerable communities they serve.

South Sudan



In August 2021, LAW held the final retreat for the eight paralegals and four project coordinators working on its transitional justice and WPS project. The training examined transitional justice truth seeking mechanisms and looked at a comparative study of these mechanisms in other countries. It also included sessions on wellbeing with a psychologist, an update on the current domestic legislation and the content on the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The training will allow LAW's partners to support victims before transitional justice mechanisms when they have been set up and to contribute to the establishment and running of the Commission on Truth, Reconciliation and Healing.

Bangladesh (Rohingya Crisis)



In May 2021, LAW delivered a seminar on the ongoing international justice proceedings related to the Rohingya to 28 humanitarian actors working in Cox's Bazar. The seminar covered the proceedings at the ICJ, the ICC investigation and the work of the Independent Investigative Mechanism on Myanmar. These trainings are critical in ensuring humanitarian actors have an understanding of justice efforts and are able to address questions or misconceptions raised by their beneficiaries. LAW plans further engagement with the humanitarian response in 2022.

We also conducted a new piece of research on SGBV against Rohingya men and hijra and the barriers survivors face in accessing essential medical, psychosocial and legal services in Cox's Bazar. The research found that male and hijra survivors have experienced very high levels of SGBV but their needs are largely unmet. A large majority of them do not have access to appropriate medical and psychosocial services, either because they are not available or do not cater for their specific needs, or because they worry about families, stigma, costs and accessibility. Survivors' barriers to accessing services are also exacerbated by movement restrictions imposed by the authorities in the camps, and over the past two years, COVID-19 related measures such as lockdowns and the deteriorating security. The research findings will be used to inform LAW's programmatic activities with service providers in the camps to increase survivors' access to the support and assistance they need.

“

The research found that male and hijra survivors have experienced very high levels of SGBV but their needs are largely unmet.”

Fighting impunity
Empowering communities
Promoting access to justice

SPOTLIGHT:

Fostering the capacity of women in the criminal justice system to support and manage cases of GBV in Somalia



Woman police officer receives training certificate

As part of its programme on empowering survivors of SGBV to access justice, LAW, in partnership with the office of the Attorney General (AGO), delivered a two-day comprehensive training on basic human rights and dealing with cases of sexual violence.

The capacity-building training was requested by the AGO's department on SGBV which handles most GBV cases in Mogadishu, during a high-level panel convened by LAW on addressing sexual violence in Somalia. It was aimed at women in the police force and in the legal sector (lawyers, prosecutors, CID investigators).

The training was particularly important as the role of women in the justice system is often undermined and was an important milestone for LAW's advocacy as we had been advocating for the increased inclusion of and effective support for women in the criminal justice system, including the lack of a survivor friendly environment in police stations.

"We need more of this to be honest, our system is not designed to support survivors and give particular attention to SGBV victims. We are not even prepared to deal with minor victims. I learned a lot from this initial training but much more trainings has to be done for us and for all other female officers serving under the department."

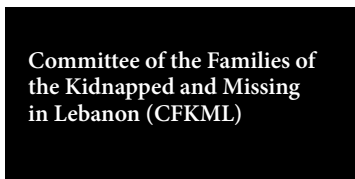
(Woman police officer)

“

...we had been advocating for the increased inclusion of and effective support for women in the criminal justice system...

LAW's Partners

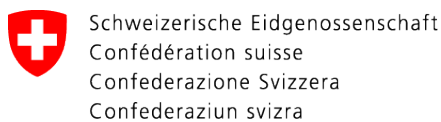
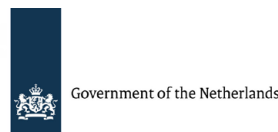
Thank you to our partners for their support in 2021.



LAW's Financials and Donors



We would like to thank all of our donors for their support which continues to make our work possible.



Norwegian Government



Thank You to
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