

“Combatting intolerance and hatred: what’s after the cancellation of “Mashrou’ Leila” ?”

August 2, 2019

Beirut- [Kulluna Irada](#) participated with 11 other civil organizations in a joint press conference on Friday, August 2, at the offices of [The Legal Agenda](#). The conference around “Combatting intolerance and hatred: the fundamentals of Human Rights”, came in result of the hate campaign that targeted [Mashrou’ Leila](#) and concluded in the cancellation of their concert scheduled at the [Byblos International festival](#).

The conference, attended by famous artist Marcel Khalife, came after the group of organizations filed a notice with the acting Cassation Public Prosecutor, calling upon the Public Prosecutor to prosecute those who not only launched hate speeches but also incited violence against an art group, a cultural festival and their respective audiences. The 11 civil organizations in question are: The Legal Agenda, “Kulluna Irada”, [The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections](#), [Samir Kassir Foundation](#), [SEEDS for legal initiatives](#), [Zoukak theater](#), [Maharat foundation](#), [SMEX](#), [Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality](#), [Amnesty International](#) and [Beirut Madinati](#).

The representative of the National Commission for Human Rights in Lebanon Bassam Al-Kuntar, stressed on the role that religious authorities should play to diminish hate speeches and promote the values to tolerance, openness and dialogue, instead of turning into censors of art.

“We recommend on the judicial authorities to take immediate actions and enforce the Law criminalizing torture in all its provisions”, he added in his opening remarks.

For her part, the Managing Director of “Kulluna Irada” Hala Bejjani, delivered a speech on behalf of the civil organizations, highlighting the importance of preserving individual freedoms especially freedom of expression and artistic creativity, and the organizations’ united stance against all actions motivated by hatred, which in this case led to serious damages at the security, social, political and human rights levels, in addition to harming Lebanon’s economy and tourism.

“We call upon the Parliament to establish through the Human Rights Committee or the Administration and Justice Committee, a parliamentary commission to question the laxity of the concerned Ministers, namely the Ministers of Justice, of Interior, of Culture and of Tourism, for they act in order to prevent the escalation of this matter”, she added.

In his speech, Marcel Khalife criticized the cowardly police measures taken against “Mashrou’ Leila”, urging their detractors to share the same courage as the band members do while expressing their opinions in their songs. In addition, he affirmed that silence is no longer possible with the transformation of Lebanon from the land of freedoms, refuge of the oppressed and meeting point of all contradictions to the country of fear.

“We ask for the secularization of the state, social justice, civil marriage, free education and that no person dies in Lebanon as a result of ignorance or poverty”, he concluded.

On another hand, Amnesty International representative Sahar Mandour reflected on the danger of normalizing with things previously seen as unusual in Lebanon. In fact, while the judiciary decision that cleared the band from any charges against them was not implemented, the Interior Ministry lacked as well in protecting the band, the festival and the city.

“We are surprised that the judiciary did not act to this day on the notice, or the complaint filed by the management of a huge festival such as the Byblos International Festival to the Public Prosecution despite the seriousness of the violations, while they responded in less than 48 hours to the notice filed against “Mashrou’ Leila” and summoned some of its members to an investigation concluded under unknown circumstances”, she said.

Unable to personally attend, the [Lebanese National Bloc](#) expressed in a statement their support to the notice filed to the Public Prosecutor, and their readiness to support by all necessary means any future actions, stressing the party’s support for public freedoms and the State of law.

“The party launched a petition to ask the Ministry of Interior to protect the concert on July 25, and condemns the persistence of the language of incitement and threat at the expense of the application of the law, which is the sole protector of the freedom of belief and freedom of expression. The party holds the political authority responsible for nurturing the language of incitement and threat to occupy the people away from their flagrant failure to address economic and social affairs”, stated the statement.

The conference concluded with the launch of the “[#Lil Watan](#)” campaign by the Samir Kassir foundation, inviting all people to broadcast the songs of “Mashrou’ Leila” during the night of Friday, August 9 at 9 pm, in addition to playing simultaneously the band’s songs in bars, restaurants and venues for one hour.

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For more information

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Kulluna Irada is a civic organization for political reform, engaged in setting the foundations for a modern, secure, efficient, sustainable and just state. It is funded exclusively by Lebanese citizens in Lebanon and abroad. Kulluna Irada believes transparency, accountability and citizen participation as major constituents of good governance. The organization’s goal is to raise awareness on public issues and engage constituencies of the Lebanese society: citizens, NGOs, experts, municipalities, and members of Parliament and Government in order to find and implement sustainable solutions. Kulluna Irada’s internal governance is based on collegial decision making and strict rules on conflict of interest: board members have vowed not to run for elections or participate in any public auction.