



Stories about homophobia and Transphobia

*From North-Africa
Egypt, Sudan, Algeria*

TOGETHER OUR VOICE IS LOUDER



ENSEMBLE NOTRE VOIX EST PLUS FORTE



“Together our voice is louder” is regional campaign launched by Bedayaa Organization for LGBTQI in the Nile Valley Area (Egypt & Sudan) , Mesahat Foundation for Sexual and Gender Diversity and Trans-Homos-DZ Organization from Algeria on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia and Trans phobia - 17 May 2016.

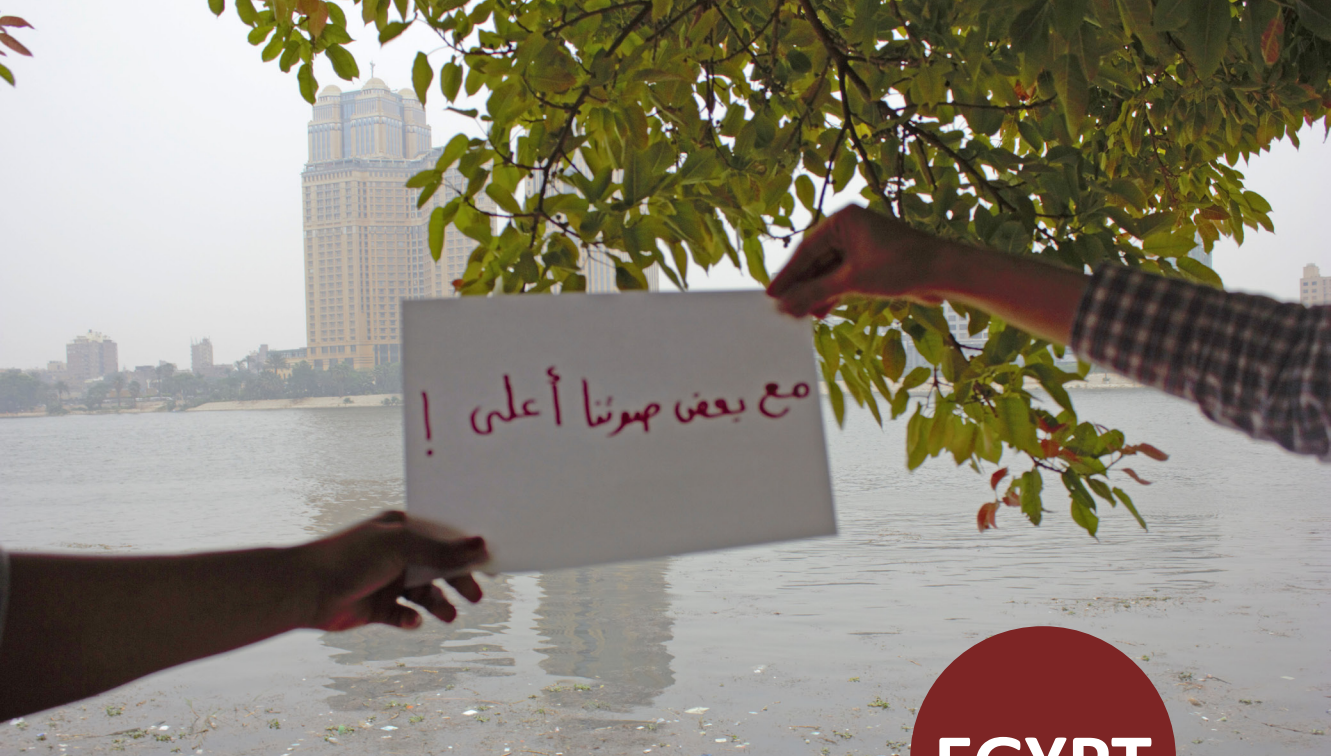
The campaign aims to shed light on the violence based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity against LGBTQI in North-Africa (Egypt, Sudan, and Algeria).

This booklet includes stories about homophobia and Trans phobia against number of people from different sexual orientations ,gender identities, and racial, class, cultural, and social affiliations ... etc.; telling their daily struggles and experiences while they are trying to live in societies that refuse difference and believe in hetronormativity as the only acceptable life style. Anyone who tries to deviate from this pattern will be doomed to the same bad destiny of those young men and women, who found the courage and bravery to share their stories in order to raise awareness on sexuality and defend the rights of sexual and gender minorities in North Africa.

Our thanks go to all those who participated and shared their stories or those who helped in the production of this booklet with efforts, time, money, or technical support.

Together our voice is louder!

Greetings
Campaign's team



EGYPT

I am **Soha**

A Trans woman from Egypt.

Apart from the harassment I face in the streets by being a woman like any other woman, mostly psychological and verbal harassment, mental and physical violence, but often the violence I encountered was at home, where my family knew I was born as a boy, but for them the way I look was very effeminate, especially my older brother, who had traveled now. The fear that this harassment would happen again always makes me think of suicide.

I say to everyone in our queer community

“Be kind, successful and generous person, be a special person in the society, do not settle for being an ordinary person, so people know who you are and respect you and your sexual orientation. And I would like to ask everyone to judge people by their characters, not by their sex, or their sexual orientation. The reason that humans are not always receptive to this because they are scared from the one thing that they do not understand, the highest form of ignorance is when we refuse anything because we do not know about it”.

We have to help people to understand if they are willing to do so....
Believe me, the new generation is very different from the old one, but if they are afraid of us; the only solution is to confront them and raise awareness among them because there is no way to jump over this phase and we cannot avoid people permanently.



I'm **Mona**

An Egyptian lesbian woman

Sometimes I consider myself a Trans man, Female to male. When my family knew about my homosexuality they beaten me severely on the head until I bled and had concussion.

I say to the queer community “you are my real family, let us be steadfast in our unity; I’m certain that things will get better”.

I say to the society “I hope one day you will stop stigmatizing us and open your eyes to the truth; that we have the right to love and have the right to live. Nevertheless; we don’t care what you think about us anymore; we only care about our security and safety in this country”.



I'm **Elasad**

A gay man from Egypt.

I knew someone from an online dating application. He looked respectable and non-suspicious. I met him first in public, and when he came to my house he sneaked behind my back and opened the apartment door to let another person in. I tried to scream, but he silenced me and threatened me that if I did not co-operate, he would kill me. He began to steal everything; light stuff but very expensive. Afterward he tied me to the chair, gagged my mouth, and left. I couldn't tell the police, so they wouldn't arrest me because of my sexual orientation; this was the first time in my life I strongly wanted to leave the country.

I say to the members of the queer community in Egypt, "Do not allow anyone to make you ashamed of your sexual orientation".

I say to the members of the Egyptian society "embrace the difference".



I'm **Maryam**

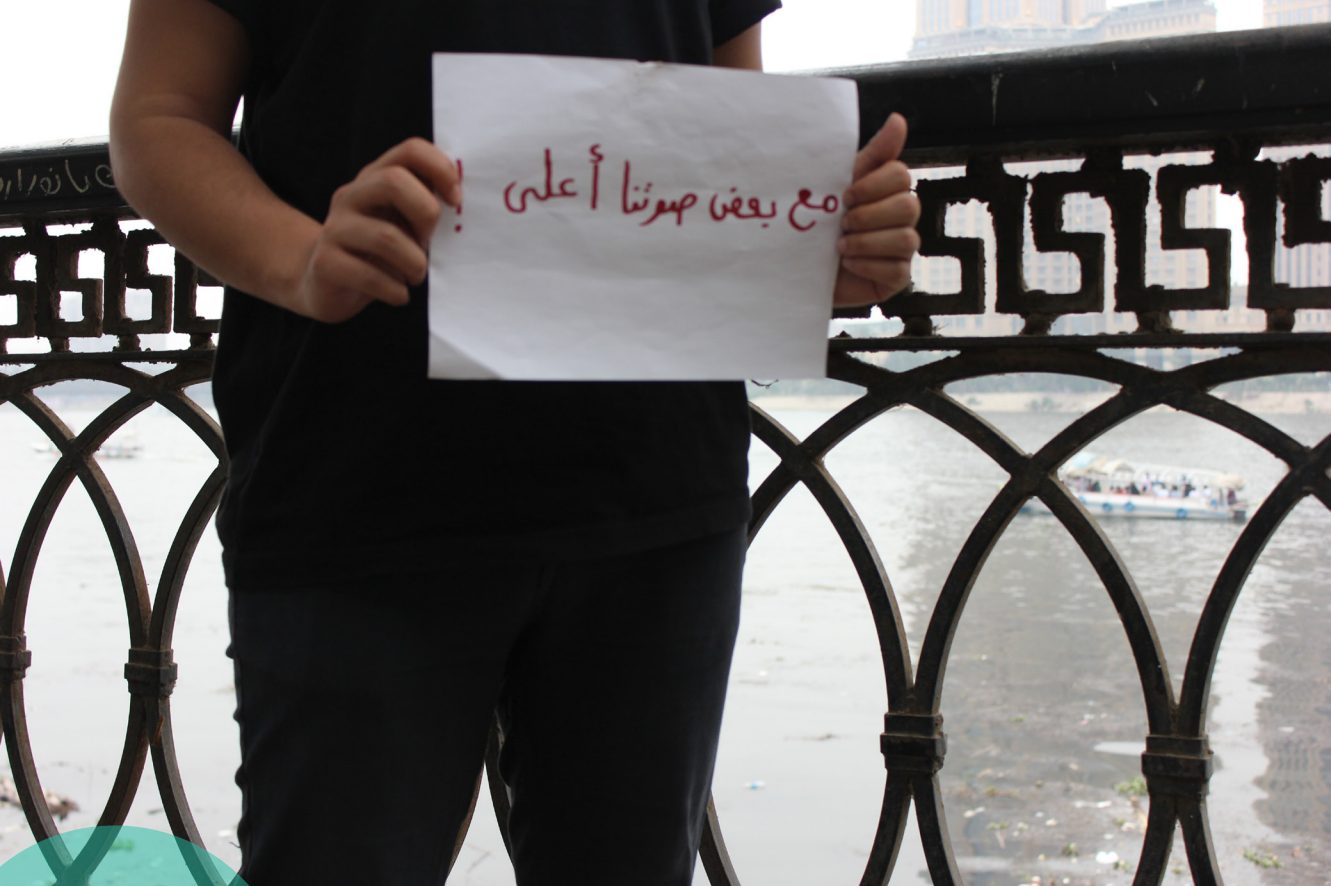
An Egyptian queer woman.

My father had died three years ago so now the people who are responsible of my sisters and I; are my mother and my uncle. My mother is an educated woman, but when she found out that I am a lesbian, she told my uncle. Of course they had beaten and insulted me, and told me I'm pervert. They locked me in my room and every mean of communication was taken from me. In the next day, I heard my mother speaking to my uncle that they should prevent me from going to the university, and they should circumcise and marry me to anyone to solve this problem. My education is the air I breathe and I cannot imagine a life of imprisonment. I could not think of any solution but suicide. After I attempted to suicide, my family did not know how to deal with me; so as a result they admitted me into a psychiatric hospital where I have been told that I suffer from an identity crisis...

But I do not! ... I know exactly who I am. What helped me to cope after my release from the hospital was the support I received from my friends who accepted me as I am from the beginning. I know that my mother loves me a lot and she was trying to help me in the only way she knew and was raised with, but I cannot come to terms with the psychiatrists who embrace narrow-minded ideas.

I would like to say to everyone who is different "difference is not so bad thing and the concept of similarity is unreal and doesn't exist". In addition I love to give my gratitude and thanks to each member of the queer community for their support and love for each other.

I do not wish for acceptance and support, instead I hope that the whole social system would change and grant right of freedom to all people no matter what their sexual orientation or gender identity is. My freedom and privacy are not yours to give; it's my right as an individual in this society. I do not do harm to anyone and you don't have the right to take away my freedom, and for that I will stand and fight until the end even if I am sure that it will cost me my personal safety. I am a human being just like you.



I'm **Ahmed**

I identify myself as a queer man from Egypt.

During school time no one spoke to me at all because everyone knew I was gay. I was insulted constantly, they knew about my sexual orientation because it was so obvious; the way I look, my voice and I was not trying to hide anything.

I say to the queer community “stop being afraid and stop running and fight for your rights”.



I'm **Miryam**

A Bi-sexual woman from Egypt.

I was forbidden from leaving the house and I was visiting a psychiatrist against my will. The psychiatrist was asking me bizarre questions, and he suggested that I should try to have sexual encounters with men therefore this experience might possibly “relieve my condition” he said.

I say to the queer community “do not let society restrain you; you are able to achieve your ambitions.

And I say to the Egyptian society “we are all humans and we must treat each other with love and brotherhood without discrimination or biases”.

I'm Omar

A gay man from Egypt.

When my parents knew about my sexual orientation I suffered from all sorts of violence; verbal and physical cruelty. We were arguing all the time and sometimes it would escalate to physical assault.

I say to the members of the queer community “you should accept yourself the way you are ; you are not wicked as people think; so try to improve the community you live in.

I say to the Egyptian society “we are not evil as you think, we did not and would not hurt anyone therefore let us be”.





I'm **Huda**

A lesbian woman from Egypt.

When I was at school my friends used to insult me, they used to see me as a corrupt girl because I'm a lesbian. They sometimes try to grab me by hands or treat me as if I am not a person.

I say to the Egyptian queer community "I wish we could help each other within the community, to stand by each other and think positive about each other so that the people would look at us from the same perspective".

I would love to tell the Egyptian society that "we are not different and we do nothing evil, we are human beings like you, I wish you could understand our sexual orientation and get the sense of us as we appreciate you and respect your orientation. Give us a space of freedom



I'm **Mohamed**

A Bi-sexual man from Egypt.

The incident that I am most upset about is that one day I was sitting with a group of friends and they were mocking and condemning homosexuality while I was sitting among them; and when I tried to advocate for the issue they attacked me so I had to be silent.

I say to the queer community that “you live once, so live it in peace as you wish as long as you do not cause any harm to anyone.

I say to the Egyptian society that “no one is free from errors and flaws; live your lives and let people live theirs as long as they do not cause any harm.



I'm Hanfi

A gay man from Egypt.

I think the fact that I hide my identity throughout the time is itself violence against me. When people continuously ask me, "when will you get married? When will we see you settled in and happy?" Although deep inside they know, but they rather believed that my sexual orientation as a gay man is just a phase; it will go away or it's a deviation that would ultimately vanish.

This was an insult to me and violence against me. But the thing that upset me more than anything else is what happened at work. I was working as a doctor in a hospital, and I was satisfied with work and my colleagues were very happy with my performance, one day someone told the hospital's manager that I'm gay and I have suspicious encounters and recommended that the manager should fire me.

After 3 weeks, the hospital's manager summoned me to his office and told me that there is a security agent who told him that I'm "deviant" and I will be arrested soon and this would be a scandal for the hospital which will have negative effect on its reputation.

I am not proud of myself, because I refuted nervously and I told him that is merely false allegations, I started to condemn homosexuals, although I am one of them. I confirmed that I never acted inappropriately during my all period of work in that last year.

If I had succeeded in keeping my employment I wouldn't be that much angered but I had refuted and also lost my job. The reason why the hospital's manager waited for 3 weeks, not to test me, but to have enough time to find an alternative doctor who can work in the outpatient clinic. I was fired without even a notice and without receiving an experience letter from the hospital.

I felt at that time that life is unjust and unfair. I was horrified that I would be arrested any time, but until now after more than a year, nothing happened.

Until now I do not know who told the manager of the hospital.

I'm **Nader**

A transgender from Sudan.

Ever since I realized that I'm more feminine than masculine I was suffering, I was suffering in my life, although I accepted my biological sex. I work as a chef and because of that I had to deal with a lot of embarrassing situations. The most humiliating one took place when I was catering in a wedding. I was working hard on preparing the food and the drinks and so on. People kept giving me stares I knew what they meant but I was used for them by then. What was really hard for me was when someone actually insulted me and started calling me a faggot because of my attitude; but because of my strong personality I never hesitated to respond and tell him words he never heard before in his entire life.

I would like to say to our queer community that “we need to be stronger so we can face everything”.

For the Sudanese community “Please accept people the way they are, and try to understand their situation and respect it”.

SUDAN



I am **Khalid**
A gay man from Sudan.

In my family I was exposed to all forms of violence at a young age and adulthood, especially by my father. He was treating me violently because I'm gay. All my physical and psychological features were very feminine to a big extent and it was very clear to him. My father used to mistreat me because of my voice, my appearance, even my clothes. He used to oppress me for taking care of myself so I deliberately had to neglect myself, and stopped showing any kind of vanity in my appearance so as to avoid drawing attention to my humble self, and to escape any violence. That was my mean of personal protection and defense.

I wish that all members of our queer community can enjoy peace and safety, and I call for the Sudanese society to understand that my sexual orientation does not determine my morals.



I'm Donia

A lesbian woman from Sudan.

I faced a lot of horrible situations because I look more masculine than feminine. I hear the word "Dyke" a lot while walking in the streets. People start staring at me because I don't look normal to them but I never care about what they think and I always live the way I want.

I would like to say to the queer community "Be what you want to be but be careful of others in your society".

And to the Sudanese community "Accept us the way we are or just leave us alone because we are fed up with your harassments".



I'm **Mohamed Ahmed**

A Sudanese gay man.

I used to live with a group of young people, who already had known about my sexual orientation. One day I was surprised that one of them had asked me to leave the house immediately because I'm gay and that I'm not welcome among them anymore. This attitude had a major psychological impact on me, and I had to leave the house.

I say to members of the queer community in Sudan be who you are; do not change anything in your nature so that the society would accept you.

I express to the Sudanese society that homosexuality is very natural phenomenon and society should not judge it from a moral point of view.



I'm Emmy

A bisexual woman from Sudan.

I had to deal with a lot of situations due to my sexual orientation. I cannot come out of the closet because I know the society will never accept me. I always have the fear of losing everyone and being isolated from the society. I lost my partner before because of the society and because of the way people gossiped about my sexuality. I got very depressed about it.

I would like to say to the queer community "We should never be ashamed of who we are; it's our lives and our choices. What we really need is our personal strength and a group of trusted friends who can support us. We should always try to help each other and we should always be proud of who we are".

And for the Sudanese community "If you can't accept us, just try to look at us from a different perspective; we are not trying to harm anyone, we are just trying to live in peace. Please try to understand that it's our life and our personal freedom."



I'm Rose

A bisexual woman from Sudan.

One time I had a gathering with some of my friends and I wanted to ask them indirectly about their opinions on homosexuality so I started asking them «what would you do if I were lesbian?» their response was that they wouldn't even be my friends. That was a real life test about how would my friends react to my hidden identity.

I would like to say that «homosexuals are not different from any other humans' shouldn't be scared of them. I hope one day we can all be just equal»

I'm Roni

A gay man from Sudan

I was exposed to many types of violence, during my college study, especially by my colleagues at the college because of my appearance and behavior. A lot of them had a clear and explicit opinion about my character. Most of them used to talk behind my back whenever they see me; that I'm gay and it seems that I'm sodomized.

My message to the members of our queer community in Sudan is «Be steadfast!»

And to my Sudanese society "Take us off your heads please».

I'm **Elnoor**

A gay man from Sudan.

I was exposed to many forms of violence at different levels of my life, starting from the house and through the street, the school and end at the public sphere. All this was because I looked different, which seemed to others more open and liberal. I remember that I was subjected to violence in my childhood because I was entirely different from my male peers. It destroyed me psychologically whenever I heard people yell at me and tell me (Be a masculine boy!).

I say to members of the Sudanese queer community “We need to learn about ourselves appropriately so that the society fundamentally accepts us.

And I tell the Sudanese society “homosexuality and Trans sexuality are human natures, accepting it is a respect to our humanity in this life.





I'm **Somiya**


A lesbian woman from Sudan.

Hiding my sexual orientation all the time from people around me and being scared and terrified that people would find out about it; that itself is kind of psychological pressure and violence which have had bad effects on me over the years.

I would have been subjected to verbal abuse in the street most of the time in case I would have decided that I wanted to have a masculine appearance. Once I was beaten along with a group of friends in the street because people did not like our appearances; which led to provoke them.

I say to my little LGBT community
"You are my true family, we should stand by each other; support will strengthens us."

I say to the Sudanese society
"Open your eyes to the truth, and accept the other who is different."



I'm **Emmy**

A transgender from Sudan.



It's so hard to choose just one of my many embarrassing stories to tell but one of them is more powerful than the rest. It can show you how it is like for someone who is different, who lost all forms of family, tribal and legal protection.

I will tell you a story about when my boyfriend tried to get me out of the bubble I was living in. It was my birthday so he wanted to take me out at night to the place where our relationship started, at the Nile St. Even before sitting down we noticed two guys coming towards us in a very suspicious way and one of them was shouting "is that a boy or a girl?" while the other asking us in a very rough way "why are you standing here in this dark spot and what are you doing?".

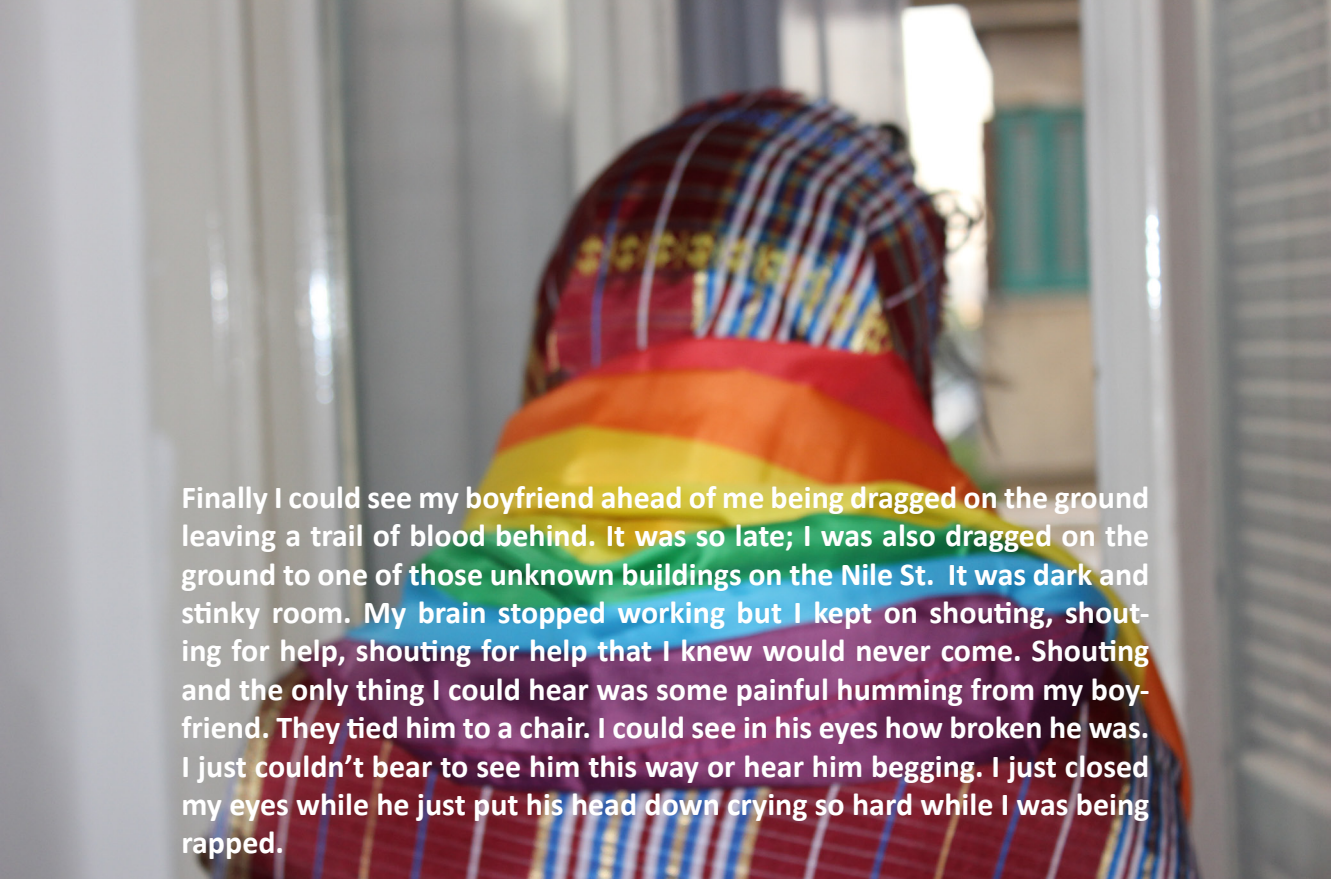
My legs started shaking so hard while the other man came back carrying a walkie talkie and pointed at me in a very sarcastic way "Hey lady boy, are you married or just getting fucked for free". I didn't know what happened after; things escalated quickly.

Suddenly I found my boyfriend on the ground fighting with one of them while the other is calling for help on the walkie talkie. Soon they were joined by three men with the same appearance on motorcycles as if they were just around the corner. They looked like the people we would avoid to stimulate their inferiority; they were directed by the authorities to arrest any of us.

People gathered to see what was happening and one of them asked “what is wrong with those guys?” and someone shouted “these bitches were sodomizing.” Another one followed him denouncing “right in the streets? Aren’t they are ashamed of the public and the families?”. I saw one woman from the people who had gathered calling for God’s wrath upon us and cursing us with the worst words.

Crowds started surrounding us, women, men and boys all came suddenly from nowhere. Their voices made me feel dizzy; my legs couldn’t carry me anymore. I fell down and people’s bodies kept pushing and pushing. I was alone on the ground and I couldn’t see my boyfriend anymore. My feet couldn’t touch the ground; my body was just flowing with the crowd. I didn’t know where they were going. Some people were asking and some were answering; answering with the worst words ever, answering with all what they could find in their dirty dictionary. I don’t know how long I stayed like this until the crowd at last let me out.





Finally I could see my boyfriend ahead of me being dragged on the ground leaving a trail of blood behind. It was so late; I was also dragged on the ground to one of those unknown buildings on the Nile St. It was dark and stinky room. My brain stopped working but I kept on shouting, shouting for help, shouting for help that I knew would never come. Shouting and the only thing I could hear was some painful humming from my boyfriend. They tied him to a chair. I could see in his eyes how broken he was. I just couldn't bear to see him this way or hear him begging. I just closed my eyes while he just put his head down crying so hard while I was being raped.

A word to my queer community:” Communities differ and vary in their dealings with; there are various justifications they use to fight us. Some of us see the solution in raising awareness, in a fair and just legal system, and the reinterpretation of religious references. I see the change for better through familiarization, frequent appearances, art, literature, and more visible LGBT icons and role models in the world. I believe that man is an enemy to what he fears and does not know.

A word for the Sudanese community “Homosexuality is just a sexual orientation .Homosexuals come in different shapes. You can find a very masculine gay man and a very feminine lesbian woman”. In the minds of our society, homosexuality is reduced to the stigmatization of the passive ones; where the active ones considered men to the fullest. The society blames the existence of homosexuality on late marriage and suppressed sexual energy.

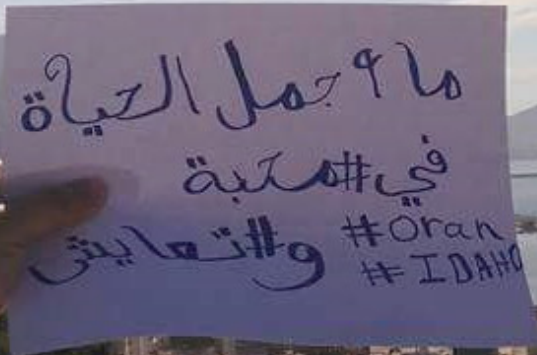
They forgot that they are the main reason behind what happens to their children as they push them to what they would later condemn. How many children were different from their peers? How many children made someone else sexually aroused? how many children carried some kilograms in his butt and was denied their childhood because of their families and then when they grow up they came and asked them for their full manhood.

I'm Ainar

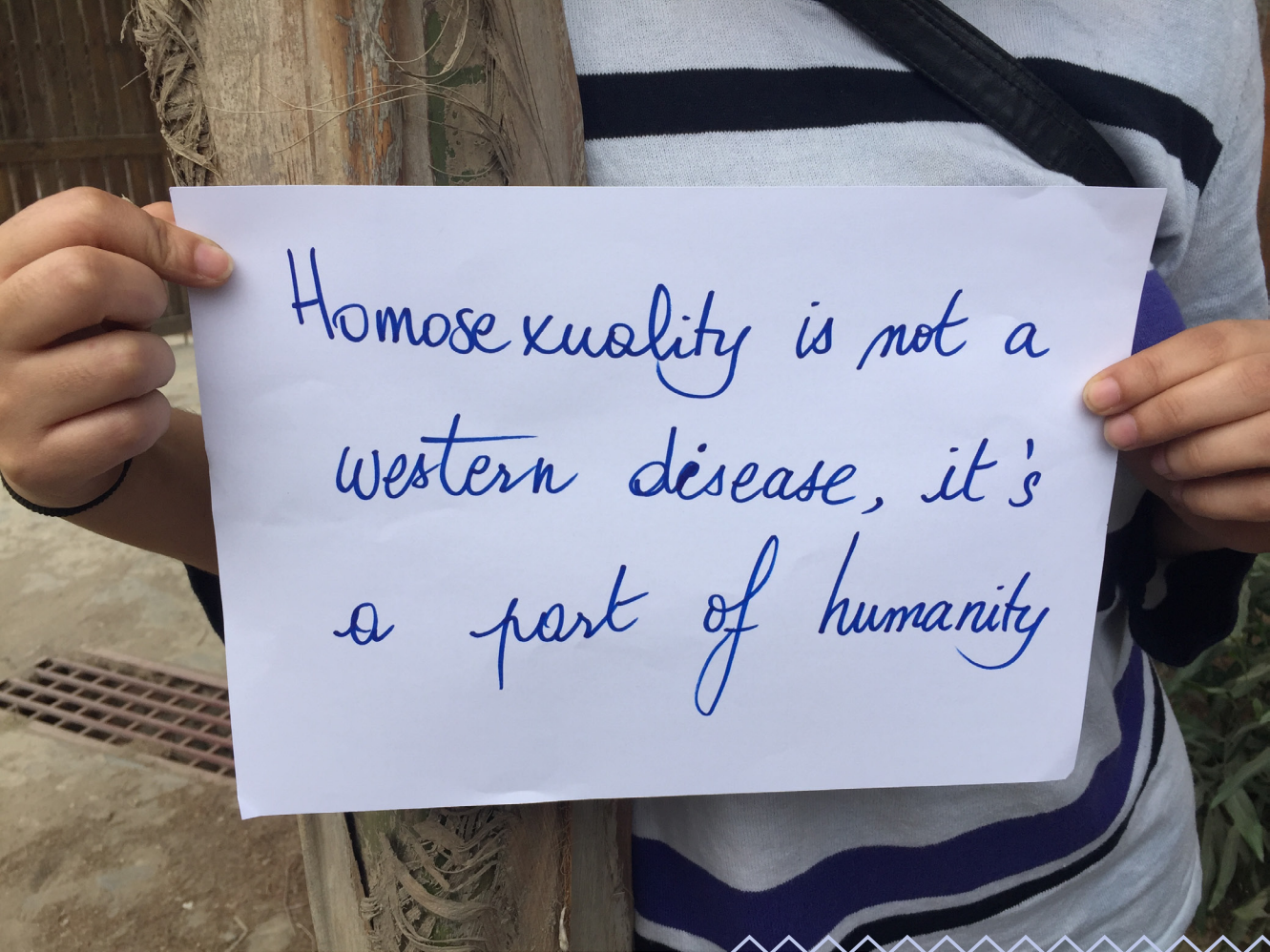
A lesbian woman from Algeria.

The real violence is to live a hidden life, that's why; I do not really expose myself in public because I know how it goes in Algeria. So, I discriminate against myself before others do. Lesbianism is not accepted at all.

When I see the progress of other countries and how LGBTQ rights are protected, I say to myself why can't we do the same in Algeria then I remember "RELIGION" pressure. Yes, in the minds of my society, lesbians will burn in hell. No one wants to go to hell. My message to the Algerian society is "let's learn what love is".



ALGERIA

A person wearing a grey and black striped sweater is holding a white piece of paper with handwritten text in blue ink. The person is standing outdoors, with a wooden post and a metal grate visible in the background.

Homosexuality is not a
western disease, it's
a part of humanity

I'm **Dash**

A lesbian woman from Algeria.

I have been verbally and physically abused for being a tomboy at first, but then as they became hopeless in my condition they let it go, but still I hear the words "you're a girl and you should let your hair grow and seek a husband".

On the International Day against Homophobia and Trans phobia I would like to say to Queer community "LGBTQI!" it's not a phase, you're not a freak, and definitely not a monster! Be yourself and stick together, good things never come easy"

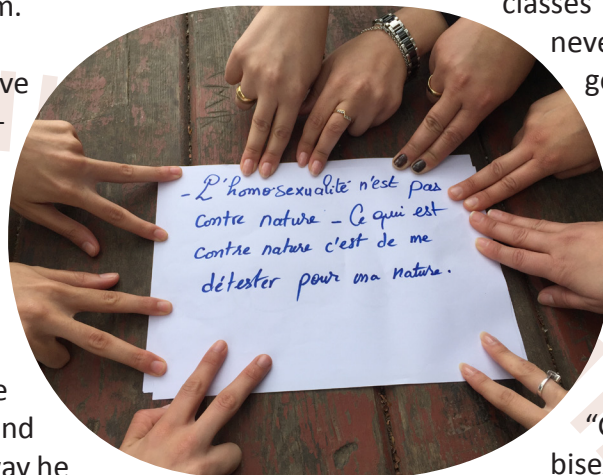
And I say to the Algerian society "Being a homophobic person is stupid! It's not even a word! It's not a phobia, you're not scared, and you're an asshole! You're not defending "human rights" by saying no to homosexuality, No! You're killing people".

I'm Elyes

A gay man from Algeria.

As I live in Paris things are a bit different than they used to be when I was in Constantine, Algeria, I came out to my friends and family when I was 18 years old. Overall it was not a big deal. A bit of disappointment of course for my closest friends, but they chose to continue be friends with me and accept me as I am.

The only negative thing that happened to me was at the university, there was gay man walking in the hallway and some guys were insulting him and laughing at the way he walked. I could see tears on his face, as he walked away and I got angry at them, I told them they had no right to treat him this way, and all of the sudden the attention was on me, they treated me as a faggot, just because I was defending him, I got into a fist fight with the three of them and luckily some of my friends were nearby so I didn't get beaten up.



On the International Day against Homophobia and Trans phobia I would like to say it to my Queer community "LGBTQI "Just hang on, it is difficult to wake up every morning knowing we are different and could be discriminated against. But we're just different because we are also unique, creative, and innovative and as Lady Gaga say "Born this way". Be nice to each other, and spread positive energy. Don't be weak, be strong and stubborn. Take self-defense

classes if necessary, but never surrender to get abused physically; it only gets worse over the time! And seek help whenever you need it!"

And I say to the Algerian society "Gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals are all born in Algeria just like everyone else, and we should all have the same rights. It could be your brother, your sister, your cousin, your teacher... If you know an LGBT person even remotely, and happen to like that person for who they are, then don't hesitate to defend LGBT rights in public, I did it, I'm still alive and people respect me for it, it won't kill you!"

I am **Akila**

A lesbian woman from Algeria.

I'm in the closet like most of the people around me, so I rarely face direct Lesbophobia.

The only time I was attacked was in France. I often face insults related to the fact that I am not very feminine; short hair, masculine clothes.... etc.

I say to my members of the LGBT community on the international day against homophobia and Trans phobia "This day should be a day for lesbians, where we dance and sing. Difference is a blessing!

I say to Algerian society "Heterosexuality is a treatable disease! Talk to your LGBT friends'!



I am **Walid Liamimi**
A gay man from Algeria.

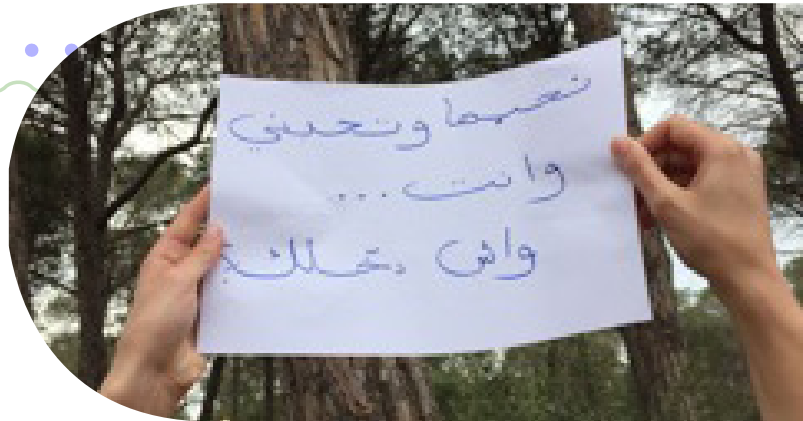
I was always abused and mocked by my peers for my clothing or my hair cut, they never accepted my uniqueness.

On the International Day against Homophobia and Trans phobia I say to LGBTs “your fight is not easy, you must be committed, courageous, and ambitious to fight and defend each other.”

And I say to the society “accept the differences, be tolerant.”

I am **Belkis**

A lesbian woman from Algeria.



My mother asked me to go and see a shrink (psychiatrist), it certainly had a negative effect on my psychology, but it's still relatively less of an impact than other people. I'm not publicly “out” , the only complaints that I get are due to my appearance; because I don't shave my legs, I don't put even little makeup, and I have a short hair.

I say to my LGBT community members “we need more visibility of lesbians.

And I say to society “Viva women and long live to the lesbians!”

I'm PIK

A pansexual from Algeria.

I'm Pansexual, I have no preference; I love people for who they are and not for their sexes. When I was in high school, I told a classmate that I had once kissed a girl and I liked it. At that time I was questioning and still looking for myself. The next day the whole school knew and all people in the course called me a dyke, I noticed the curious looks and insults, all girls avoided me and the boys laughed at me, I was uncomfortable and I wanted to drop out of school, I was ashamed, I was wrong. Fortunately that was temporary, I had my high school diploma and I went to the university, and since that incident I chose the discretion.

On the International Day against Homophobia and Trans phobia I would like to say it to Queer community "LGBTQI" We must remain united and supportive, and work on the image of the community, to enforce it. Do not be ashamed of who we are".

And I say to the Algerian society "Your strikes will forever scar but will not hinder me. Moreover, they will make me stronger, so your homophobia cannot hurt me, change your way; it would be better for you.



I'm Alyiza

A bisexual women from Algeria.

I was in the car with my girlfriend and two guys passed and said some offensive words.

On the International Day against Homophobia and Trans phobia I would like to say to my Queer community "LGBTQI "We are who we are; don't believe people who say that we're crazy, we are just different".

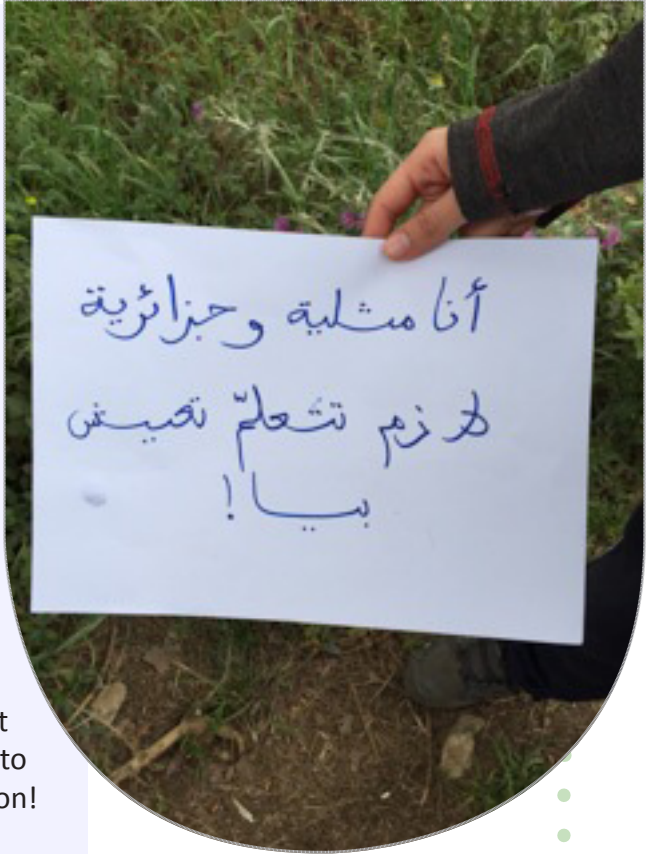
I would like to say to the society "We don't choose who we love so be respectful and don't judge people about their sexual orientation. What's important is not to whom we are attracted to but how can we have respect to everyone".



I'm **Amy**

A lesbian woman from Algeria.

Most of the time, I feel that violence happens to me because I'm a woman. Some people talk to me as a man just because of the way I dress or walk, for me this is aggression. When I was younger I never accepted the fact that I'm abnormal, which what being bi-sexual or lesbian meant to me at that time, because of religion!



I prayed every day to become normal, until the day that I got raped. I told the man who raped me that I like girls, but it's not normal for me, so he promised to help me! I was young, virgin and desperate!

We flirted, then I asked him to stop because I was scared, but he didn't, I lost my virginity, I was alone, not in my country. I told this story to only one of my friends there, but she answered "it's your fault"! I had to deal with it alone. Few years later, I stopped lying to myself; I decided to live my life the way I am; no matter who I like.

I say to LGBT people "We have to expand our network and work together; often; women are going through a double fight". And I say to the Algerian society "I know that you are afraid of difference, but life is created this way; that's why it's beautiful! Don't be scared, try to know us and then you'll find that we're just humans and like you: NORMAL".



I am **Houria**

A Transgender woman from Algeria.

For ten years, I was in love with a man and he seemed to like me as much. He offered to live with him because I was in the streets. In public, I used to dress as a man and I acted as such and as soon as I get back home, I was a woman, HIS WIFE.

One day I decided to go shopping in the neighborhood by being natural, which is means to be a female. He realized this and had beaten me. When I told him I could not stay on his terms, he locked me in the house.

I was his prisoner for 9 days until I finally succeed to escape. This experience was horrible having to choose between my identity and the love of my life.

I would like to say to LGBT community members “You are quite discriminated against; Do not do the same against those who are different within your community. There is nothing worse than being hated because of your difference by someone who also suffers from the same hatred”.

I say to the Algerian society “We have the right to breathe the same air as you, to drink the water and exploit the same land without making our lives less valuable, so please, let us have our path on this earth without hurting us”.