

# ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF MASCULINITIES, CONFLICT, AND PEACEBUILDING

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## PASSING AS A ‘HARD MAN’

Regulating everyday queer (in)visibilities in  
the Syrian conflict

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# PASSING AS A ‘HARD MAN’

## Regulating everyday queer (in)visibilities in the Syrian conflict

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### Introduction

The impacts of conflict on persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) have slowly gained more prominence in conflict and peacebuilding (Hagen et al., 2021; Serrano-Amaya, 2018). That increased prominence has, however, been uneven, as we also discuss elsewhere, often giving more prominence to men of diverse SOGIESC than to persons of other gender identities, such as women of diverse SOGIESC or those identifying as non-binary (Erdem et al., 2024; Maydaa et al., 2020). Here, too, we focus on this group and their performances of masculinity, given the overall focus of this volume, but we are very much aware that all too often, it is women of diverse SOGIESC whose life experiences are particularly neglected. We will give some mention to the latter group’s experiences here as well but have explored these in more depth elsewhere (Erdem et al., 2024). Further, though we focus here on risks and vulnerabilities, we want to stress that there is, of course, much more to the lives of persons of diverse SOGIESC – joy, love, solidarity, agency – than only victimisation and suffering (see also Saleh, 2020; Onen et al., 2024).

In Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey, persons of diverse SOGIESC are subjected to various forms of violence and discrimination, especially if they are deemed by others to be visibly gender-non-conforming (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Maydaa et al., 2020; Moussawi, 2020).<sup>2</sup> Violence against them often increases in conflict and displacement, as pre-existing gendered vulnerabilities and risks become more acute (Human Rights Watch, 2018; Daigle & Myrntinen, 2018; UNHCR, 2011). It is important to underline that this vulnerability is not innate to the persons in question but rather is constructed by discriminatory social norms regulating what is deemed ‘appropriate’ or not and the violent policing of these written and unwritten rules (see also Turner, 2016).

We examine here the role of visibility, its effects, and consequences on persons of diverse SOGIESC in conflict and displacement as well as how these differ based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. With visibility, we refer to the degree by which others in society ‘see’ a person as being ‘visibly’ non-heterosexual, non-gender-conforming, or non-cis-gender, regardless of what the person in question thinks or feels about their own sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. This links with broader discussions in gender studies, drawing on the foundational work by Judith Butler (1990) on gender as performance, on how we as humans enact our gender

identities referencing a script, as it were, of what is expected of us in a given social situation. These socio-culturally constructed scripts are based on how we and others read our gender identity and what is deemed appropriate for a given situation. These scripts are ones that we can accept, modify, or reject, the latter often at a cost, but which are difficult to escape.

Visibility plays multiple roles in the lives of persons of diverse SOGIESC in terms of their inclusion and exclusion to the political and societal sphere (Edenborg, 2019; Myrntinen, 2025). For persons of diverse SOGIESC, visibility is a paradoxical issue, or what Oluoch and Tabengwa (2017) call a “double-edged sword.” Being visible is a pre-condition for political participation, and it can be an important assertion of their identity and right to belong to a place or society. Furthermore, being seen as ‘LGBTIQ+ enough’ in the eyes of bureaucrats in charge of judging asylum applications can also – problematically – be essential for successful relocation, as it depends on living up to the stereotypes said decision-makers have of persons of diverse SOGIESC (Shakhsari, 2014). However, at the very same time, visibility is a risk factor which increases their vulnerabilities to violence and discrimination. Others, including both armed actors and civilians, may seek to forcibly visibilise and ‘out’ them – or blackmail them with the threat of doing so – and thus expose them to violence, including death (Edenborg, 2019; Myrntinen et al., 2017; Wilkinson, 2017). Therefore ‘adjusting’ their visibility and performance of gender expressions to expected heterosexual norms can become a necessity for survival (Edenborg, 2019; Myrntinen, 2025; Oluoch & Tabengwa, 2017).

This chapter is based on multi-sited fieldwork in Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey, mainly conducted in 2019 to 2022 under the UKRI GCRF-funded Gender, Justice, and Security Hub co-ordinated by the London School of Economics and Political Science.<sup>3</sup> The choice of countries came about organically, as it were, out of MOSAIC’s work as a service provider to the diverse SOGIESC community in Lebanon and the broader region. The Syrian Civil War has led to an influx of diverse SOGIESC refugees to Lebanon and Turkey, and responding to their needs required research. This research need has since snowballed from a handful of initial focus group discussions (FGDs) in 2016 into two fully-fledged multi-year research projects. The data used here was collected through 20 in-depth interviews and 9 FGDs in Aleppo, Ankara, Beirut, Damascus, Gaziantep, and Istanbul between 2019 and 2022. All data has been anonymised for security reasons. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, with informed verbal consent.<sup>4</sup> Where support services were available, research participants were informed of these, and those respondents who were already accessing MOSAIC’s services were informed that their participation or non-participation would in no way affect their access to these services.

We first provide some theoretical background to our findings, discussing expectations of masculinity in our case study countries, the paradoxes of visibility, and on the use of survival tactics. We then explore these themes in the presentation of our data from Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey, ending with concluding comments. While demonstrating the role of visibility for persons of diverse SOGIESC, we particularly focus on its relation to the notions of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ masculinity in the context of the Syrian civil war to highlight the importance of nuanced approaches in masculinities research. Through illustrative examples of how persons of diverse SOGIESC regulate their gendered (in)visibilities as a survival tactic in conflict and displacement settings, we underscore the need for researchers and scholars to better understand the intersectionality between vulnerabilities and agency of persons of diverse SOGIESC. Focusing on these aspects of the lived realities of refugees with diverse SOGIESC offers insights into the ways in which gender and sexualities shape everyday experiences of conflict and displacement. The findings highlight the need to think beyond a focus on gender and other identities in conflict and peacebuilding research to also how these are expressed, enacted, and embodied. Further, researchers and practitioners seeking to work

with persons of diverse SOGIESC need to be cognisant of the everyday work which goes into calibrating these in order to safely navigate precarious environments, as well as of the emotional, social, and psychological costs of this labour.

### **Masculinities and queer survival tactics – a theoretical backdrop**

One of the central themes of this chapter is the navigation of dominant expectations of what it means – and looks like – to be a man in contemporary Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey. There is no one absolute set of expectations of masculinity, and there are important variations based on class, age, ethno-religious background, disability, degree of religiosity, and other factors, and these may vary situationally (Ghannam, 2013; Gökariksel & Secor, 2017; Suerbaum, 2020). As Moussawi (2020) notes, men not living up to gendered behaviour, including especially in terms of mannerisms and demeanour, risk losing their male social privileges – but may also expose them to violence, as we explore in this chapter.

In spite of variations, some key elements associated with respected masculinity in the three countries include having gainful employment and being a breadwinner, having social standing, entering heterosexual marriage and procreation, being the head of one's family, but also attending to filial and community obligations (Moussawi, 2020; Muhanna-Matar, 2020; Suerbaum, 2020; Huizinga & van Hoven, 2021). Importantly for the broader context of this handbook, even though individual 'martyrs' and military leaders may be celebrated, especially by their respective sectarian communities, on the whole, militarised masculinities can not necessarily be considered as being a broadly celebrated and socially respected way of being a man and earning one's living in Lebanon or Syria (Haugbolle, 2012; Khattab & Myrntinen, 2017; Myrntinen, 2020).

Apart from masculine role expectations, the public performance of 'manliness' is also important. Moussawi (2020: 131) notes for Lebanon that a *rijjal* (real man) should be "strong, well groomed, loud, and proud of his sexual prowess." However, as Jean-Klein (2000: 15) notes for Palestinian men who participated in the Intifada, 'humility and modesty' can also be coded masculine. An ill-defined 'softness' (ناعم – *naim*), however, is often seen as unmanly and problematic, especially if one's voice or mannerisms are deemed by others as being 'too feminine.' As Merabet (2015) and Moussawi (2020) note, 'effeminate' behaviour is also broadly shunned by cis-gender gay men in Lebanon.

The forced calibration of one's gender performances to the expectations of others is in many ways disempowering, but it is also agentic to a degree. To borrow Ghassan Moussawi's (2020: 79) term, it is one of many queer tactics and strategies of survival employed by queer and non-queer people in everyday life amidst the constant crises in Lebanon, but:

Queer strategies [of navigating everyday anxiety and disruptions] are not simply rational or calculation-based; rather, they are embodied and affective experiences, . . . [they] occur in complex, non-linear and contradictory ways.

The term can also be applied to Syria and Turkey (see, for example, Gökariksel & Secor, 2017), which have been equally beset by multiple crises in the past years, though to different degrees. These strategies are highly contextual and situational and are often seemingly banal (e.g. the way one stands or walks) but can literally become a question of life or death (see also Erdem et al., 2024; Wilkinson, 2017). They often involve conforming, at least superficially, to the normative expectations of heterosexual masculinities and femininities, be it in terms of dress, demeanour, or getting married with a person of the opposite sex.

### **'Living with different masks' – regulating gendered visibility/invisibility**

In this section, we explore how these expectations of particular displays of 'manliness' and the different tactics and strategies of regulating one's SOGIESC visibility were reflected in the lives of our respondents in the Civil War in Syria, as well as in displacement in Lebanon and Turkey.

#### ***Syria***

Persons of diverse SOGIESC have been subjected to discrimination in the private and public spheres by community members and state actors long before the Syrian civil war began in 2011 (Bobseine, 2013; Khattab & Myrntinen, 2017). This included violence from family members; repression, violence, and extortion from security forces; and for men of diverse SOGIESC 'seen' as 'too soft,' often sexual abuse and violence during their mandatory military service (Human Rights Watch, 2020; UNCHR, 2017). Yet in certain areas such as Damascus, Aleppo, or Latakia, they were somewhat tolerated if they did not 'politicise' their sexuality or gender, though these spaces and performances were differently accessible based on one's class, gender, and ethno-religious identity (Saleh, 2020; Maydaa et al., 2020).<sup>5</sup>

With the Syrian civil war, discrimination, exclusion, and violence against persons of diverse SOGIESC increased, along with the escalating violence in general (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Independent International Commission of Inquiry, 2018; Maydaa et al., 2020; UNHCR, 2017). This resulted in the hyper-visibility of persons of diverse SOGIESC, who became targets of state and non-state actors. The violence – sexual torture, rape, killings, sexual extortion, and so on – occurs at checkpoints, during house raids, in detention centres, and within the ranks of the Syrian army (on civilian masculinities and navigating checkpoints, see also Ní Aoláin & Campbell, this volume). Persons deemed as not conforming to rigid gender norms have also been directly targeted by various Islamist militias, most notoriously by Daesh/Islamic State (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Myrntinen et al., 2017; Maydaa et al., 2020; Saleh, 2020). LGBTIQ+ Syrians also continue to face violence and discrimination from other civilians, often including family members. They are rejected, ostracised, and subjected to violence for bringing 'dishonour' to the family name, including beatings, sexual violence, death threats, 'honour' killings, and being 'outed' to militias, which can result in death (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Maydaa et al., 2020; Myrntinen et al., 2017). The violence faced by family members is a compounding factor to the already existing and heightened vulnerabilities, greatly reducing the informal support networks that they can access.

In our interviews and FGDs, the risk of violence against men perceived as being 'soft' or 'effeminate' came up repeatedly, which is consistent with other reports on Syria (Human Rights Watch, 2020; UNHCR, 2017). In order to protect themselves from being targeted at checkpoints or within the army, gay and bisexual men and trans women adopted self-censoring behaviour to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity and to conform more with expectations of masculine behaviour (Syrian gay man, quoted in Human Rights Watch, 2020: 27):

When I was at checkpoints, I acted like a 'real man.' I act straight so they don't [suspect] I'm gay. . . . At checkpoints, they generally stop people who are dressed differently or people who take care of their appearances . . . people dress in Syria, somehow in a conservative way. So, wearing tight pants, wearing lots of perfume or fixing the hair – these are practices only for gay and trans people. [The police] also look at gestures. The way we sit and move our hands, body language. They target gay and trans people.

The expected performances of masculinity thus include one's body language, mannerisms, way of dressing and hairstyles, and even having or not having a beard (Human Rights Watch, 2020; also see Ní Aoláin & Campbell, this volume; Campbell, 2023). However, the regulation of one's performances of masculinity goes beyond passing at checkpoints and enters the everyday:

In Aleppo, and especially nowadays, we have to live with different masks. We sometimes have to do things that we do not enjoy doing. For example, I'm scared to play too much with my kids so that I don't exhibit any feminine traits, and instead I'd make sure to keep the stern image of the father that everyone should fear.<sup>6</sup>

Discrimination and abuse can also be levelled against men who, regardless of their SOGIESC, are seen as not living up to expected standards of masculinity:

There's a poor unfortunate man who has a soft voice and everyone makes fun of him, from the youngest to the eldest one there. They call him names, call him shakar (effeminate man) just because of his voice, so imagine how it would be if it were his clothes or mannerism . . . I swear they'd offend him even more. And this guy's voice is like this just because of health issues.<sup>7</sup>

However, the degree to which being seen by others as deviating from the norms increases the risk of abuse and violence also depends on other, intersecting factors:

Anyone who exhibits feminine 'symptoms' [risks violence] but it also depends on a person's clan, parents, social status, and economic standings. If someone is 'soft' and poor, then consider this person wiped out of existence.<sup>8</sup>

For many of our interviewees across the LGBTIQ+ spectrum, living up to heteronormative expectations and getting married is a key way of invisibilising their SOGIESC. The fortunate ones find an understanding heterosexual partner or someone who themselves is LGBTIQ+ of the opposite sex, but often, heterosexual partners are abusive and violent, especially in the case of lesbian and bisexual women (Erdem et al., 2024). Trans women and lesbian/bisexual women further can blend in by dressing conservatively, for example by wearing a full niqab (Maydaa et al., 2020).<sup>9</sup>

Some of our interviewees were also able to have tenuous 'cover stories' for their mannerisms and gender expressions:

I keep trying to fix my behaviour and looks and still people talk about me just because I work as a women's hairdresser, so people think that it's because I am exposed to a lot of women in my field this is why I am 'soft'. . . so to them, I am not gay but simply feminine because of my work. Of course, what helps me is that I am engaged to a woman who is a lesbian.<sup>10</sup>

The emotional and physical work required to pass as a 'real man' and live up to community and familial expectations is, however, not just for the sake of one's own security, but can also be linked to a sense of duty and care for other loved ones. As a gay man who lives with three of his siblings' families, his mother, and father told us:

But believe me, I have to be like that [live up to expectations of 'hard' masculinity] sometimes – my siblings died during the war so everyone looks up to me as the responsible head of the family; and this is an image that he cannot ruin for them.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Lebanon and Turkey***

As a result of the civil war in Syria, thousands of persons of diverse SOGIESC have fled to neighbouring countries, though exact numbers are not available. Lebanon and Turkey, especially the cosmopolitan centres of Beirut and Istanbul, are often seen as comparably, but in no way absolute, safe havens, though many of our respondents were hoping for relocation to European and North American countries (CTDC, 2015; Kivılcım, 2017; Maydaa et al., 2020; ORAM, 2011; UNHCR, 2017). In both Lebanon and Turkey, refugees reported suffering from xenophobia, homo-, bi-, lesbo-, and transphobia, as well as class-based discrimination, in addition to having to cope with worsening political and economic crises (Erdem et al., 2024; Maydaa et al., 2020; Myrntinen et al., 2017). LGBTIQ+ Syrian refugees are subjected to discrimination and violence based on their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. The perpetrators include private and state security forces, local administrative officials, members of the host community, employers, landlords, cab drivers, and the refugee community, including family members (Erdem et al., 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2020; Kivılcım, 2017; Myrntinen et al., 2017; Maydaa et al., 2020; ORAM, 2011). This includes being subjected to sexual exploitation and blackmail by their employers to be able to keep their jobs as well as discrimination in the overpriced housing market, where they are denied housing and subjected to abuse by their landlords based on their real or perceived SOGIESC (Heartland Alliance International, 2014; Maydaa et al., 2020). Their escape to relative safety does not always mean that they are safe from potential death threats from other Syrians, including family members. As one respondent put it:

I was able to flee here, but my elder brothers fled here with me too. One day they took my phone and saw the messages in it. They locked me in a room . . . I managed to escape that house . . . They have been searching for me for days. They told my family back in Syria that I am dead . . . I had a friend in Istanbul, where I was heading to. My friend informed my elder brothers. I received a call from my brother. He said “I am waiting for you at the bus station. Did you think you had anywhere to hide?”<sup>12</sup>

The degree of discrimination is again dependent on how visibly a person stands out – however, this time not only in terms of SOGIESC but also as a refugee/non-refugee and in terms of socio-economic standing. As Qubaia and Gagné (2014) and Slavova (2015) have pointed out, Syrian men in general in Lebanon face a range of sexualised and racialised negative stereotypes, while as Allouche (2017) also highlights, there are particular negative ones employed within the Lebanese gay community. Paradoxically, while Syrian refugee men are generally typecast as aggressively sexually predatory, within the gay community, they are stereotyped as submissive – and thus less ‘manly’ than Lebanese gay men. As in the interviews in Syria, the issue of ‘softness’ more broadly came up again in displacement as well:

I feel the gays could get some comments too especially if they’re ‘soft.’ The comments become of a sexual nature, about appearance and the way they walk, the way they talk, their voice, everything comes to play. Plus sometimes it could get physical [violent]. If a gay man’s appearance implies that he is unable to defend himself, then things could get more physical.<sup>13</sup>

Ghassan Moussawi (2020) also notes the extreme antipathy and disdain of his Lebanese gay male interviewees for ‘feminine-acting’ men. Moussawi links this to a possible fear among his



interlocutors that the ‘unmanly’ behaviour of others might reflect poorly on themselves and their access to the privileges that performing normative cis-gender masculinity bestows upon them, especially if coupled with socio-economic class privileges. Merabet (2015), in his study of gay Beirut, has also highlighted the role of class, conspicuous consumption, and socio-economic capital in gaining acceptance within various social scenes, though paradoxically, being too conspicuously visible is also sanctioned.

Most of our interviewees, however, were socio-economically not well off enough to participate in the openly consumerist lifestyle of many upper-middle-class or diverse SOGIESC, were marginalised as refugees, and were reliant on trying to get a foothold in the precarious labour market. This in turn requires again a calibration of one’s gender performances:

I just wanted to say that sometimes a person may not be a queer person at all but he/she is soft spoken they might also discriminate against him. I certainly won’t go to apply to any job and just declare “Hiiii! I’m transgendered and queer!” I won’t tell them that.<sup>14</sup>

As in Syria, people in Lebanon also have to navigate checkpoints, and though these are usually less onerous and less likely to end in arrests, our interviewees nevertheless noted their trepidation and need to calibrate their appearance when navigating these.<sup>15</sup> Enacting diverse SOGIESC in-/visibility for authorities also plays a role in applying for refugee status and resettlement, as applicants need to ‘pitch’ one’s ‘queerness’ to bureaucrats (Shakhsari, 2014). Although at least UNHCR staff have been instructed not to do so,<sup>16</sup> many officials in the asylum application and relocation process will question the SOGIESC (and thereby the need for asylum) of the applicant if, in their eyes, the person does not look or act ‘queer’ enough to pass as an LGBTIQ+ person fleeing persecution. As Shakhsari (2014) notes, this can lead to paradoxical situations whereby the same officials caution applicants to ‘tone down’ their expressions of gender identity on their way to and from claims processing centres while expecting a performance of visible queerness once inside.

Queer visibility in Lebanon and Turkey nonetheless also takes on other, more positive aspects than in Syria as well. In both countries, national LGBTIQ+ rights activists and organisations have at times been able to tentatively carve out precarious political and social spaces for their voices to be heard through their political activism. This has included organising highly visible Pride Marches (e.g. 2014 Pride March in Istanbul, which hosted more than 100,000 people) and, in the case of Lebanon, playing active roles in the 2019 Revolution protests (Human Rights Watch, 2022; MOSAIC, 2020). As heavily contested as this increased social and political visibility has been, it has elevated SOGIESC issues onto the national political agenda, both for better and for worse, in terms of conservative backlash.<sup>17</sup> For refugees, participation in such social movements often comes at such a high potential cost that many do not participate, given their precarious legal position and the risks of violence.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter, we have reflected on the particular role of visibility and its links to notions of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ masculinity in the context of the Syrian Civil War. As noted, visibility acts both as a risk factor and a precondition to socio-political agency and broader social acceptance by others. We have focused here on men of diverse SOGIESC and want to reiterate that women of diverse SOGIESC and non-binary persons face partially similar and partially different challenges in terms of visibility. This includes the comparatively higher visibility of men of diverse SOGIESC and trans women in the research on the impacts of the Syrian Civil War, which we are aware of contributing



to here. Therefore, more nuanced and careful thinking is required in peacebuilding research and policy frameworks, to avoid the invisibility of certain groups, such as women of diverse SOGIESC. Furthermore, more attention should be paid to cumulative risks and marginalisations arising not only from one's SOGIESC but also class, ethnicity, appearance, and seeing these not as being absolute but as situational. A further aspect of SOGIESC visibility that requires a broadening and nuancing of research approaches is that it is not tied to one's own sense of SOGIESC but rather to how others perceive it. Thus, the risks of violence and discrimination also extend to others who may be heterosexual and cis-gender but have the 'wrong' pitch of voice, gait, demeanour, mannerisms, clothes or haircut seen as too flashy, not enough facial hair, or any other facet of their gender expression others object to.

The calibration of one's gendered expressions and performances as discussed here is closely tied to situations, space, and time. While men of diverse SOGIESC in Syria, and to an extent in Lebanon and Turkey, have to be generally vigilant of how others see them, there are particular settings and moments when this becomes more acute, such as at checkpoints. Having 'cover stories' such as being married with children or doing feminine-coded work like hair-dressing can give a certain degree of protection, but even here, something as quotidian as a moment of tenderness with one's child can become a suspicious act in the eyes of others. For some, maintaining gender-conforming appearances is, however, not only about survival but also about living up to the expectations of family members who they care for. In Lebanon and Turkey, there are slightly more opportunities in some spaces (such as LGBTIQ+-friendly venues) or times (e.g. Pride Parades or in the exceptional space of the 2019 protests in Lebanon). However, these spaces are not fully accessible to refugees, and even when they are accessed, other facets of how one is seen (e.g. socio-economic class, or refugee-ness) may lead to exclusion, discrimination, and abuse. While these queer strategies and tactics are agentic, it is an agency persons of diverse SOGIESC are forced to rely upon to survive in hostile and discriminatory environments, often coming at a high emotional and psychological price.

## Notes

- 1 We would like to thank our co-researchers Caroline Chayya, Helene Berchtold, and Claire Wilmot, and above all the research participants for sharing their time, insights, and life stories with us.
- 2 In this chapter, we use the term SOGIESC and LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and others) interchangeably. It should be noted, however, that LGBTIQ+ as a way of self-identifying was rejected by some of our interlocutors and is seen by some in the region as a 'Euro-American' approach that does not reflect lived realities (Moussawi, 2020).
- 3 See <https://thegenderhub.com/>.
- 4 Given security concerns, obtaining written consent would potentially have placed research participants at risk.
- 5 Generally speaking, men had and have far fewer restrictions on mobility and socialising in public spaces than women, especially if men can pass as cis-gender and heterosexual. Being of a higher class standing and having *wasta* (connections) further increases one's mobility and security.
- 6 Gay man, FGD in Aleppo, 2019.
- 7 Lesbian woman, FGD 1, Aleppo, 2019.
- 8 Trans woman, FGD 2, Aleppo, 2019.
- 9 This is, of course, not only – or not necessarily even mainly – done to blend in but is for many a personal choice based on their religious and cultural beliefs.
- 10 Gay man, FGD 2, Aleppo, 2019.
- 11 Gay man, FGD, Aleppo, 2019.
- 12 Trans woman, Interview, Ankara, 2022.
- 13 Trans woman, FGD, Beirut, 2019.

- 14 Trans woman, FGD, Beirut, 2019.
- 15 On queer experiences of navigating checkpoints in Beirut, see also Moussawi (2020: 77–78).
- 16 Personal communication.
- 17 In Turkey, Pride Marches across the country have been banned since 2015, based on reasons such as protecting “public order” and “public morality” (Human Rights Watch, 2022; Öz, 2019). Despite these bans, people continue gathering during Pride Month, where they also meet with police violence, including beatings and arrests (Human Rights Watch, 2022). In Lebanon, political parties, authorities, and sectarian militias have increasingly targeted both persons of diverse SOGIESC and their rights since 2019 (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

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