

ORGANIZATIONAL ACTION REPORT MA3AZEF PUBLISHING LTD PUBLISHED IN AUGUST 2023

ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYM GUIDE:

Ma3azef: Ma3azef Publishing Ltd.

CTDC: Center for Transitional Development and Collaboration

CTDC Report: Accountability and Safeguarding Assessment for Ma3azef (CTDC, 2022)

SEAH: Safeguarding against sexual exploitation and abuse and harassment

PSEAH: Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment

Action Report\Organizational Action Report: This document

Policies and Guidelines Kit/ Policy Kit: A collection of all of Ma3azef's policies, guidelines, and SOPs.

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1. A FORMAL STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF MA3AZEF:

Background. In June 2022, Ma3azef suspended its operations after receiving allegations of Sexual, Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) misconduct by performing artists in an event we were curating.

Organizational Response. Ma3azef recognizes the severity of the allegations made in Beirut, Lebanon (in connection to the SEAH safeguarding failure incident of 31-12-2019), and that these allegations warrant an action-based response within our organization and its wider ecosystem, and therefore, Ma3azef has been working towards addressing the allegations through internal capacity building, institutional restructuring, and incorporating protective and preventive safeguarding measures.

In October 2022, Ma3azef contacted the Center for Transnational Development and Collaboration ([CTDC](#)), an intersectional multi- and interdisciplinary feminist consultancy, with a transnational social justice agenda, to conduct an [organizational assessment](#) of Ma3azef's legal and operational infrastructure, and provide recommendations for developing thorough governance and accountability mechanisms. Starting from April 2023, we have taken proactive measures to implement, integrate, and establish the recommendations provided by CTDC.

As Ma3azef scaled up from a decentralized collective to an organization, we did not properly develop our structures to effectively accommodate for the scale of our diversified operations. Ma3azef's approach to operate as a decentralized pan-Arab cultural producer is in line with its guiding mandate and journalistic vision, which proved to be very challenging due to the ever-developing risks and hazards the further we evolved. However, we are confident with these changes firmly set, we will be able to prevent such unfortunate and unactable incidents.

Setting the Stage: Understanding the Context during the Event. At the time of the event (i.e., New Year's Eve 2019/2020), the size and type of Ma3azef's operations and experience was substantially smaller than it was at the time that the allegations surfaced in 2022. Ma3azef was operating solely, receiving funding, and employing staff as an editorial online magazine that focuses on written music-related content only. Regrettably, the institutional mechanisms available at the time did not, in any way, include standard operating procedures and guidelines for events.

As an independent SME involved in an informal event, Ma3azef does not have the legal capacity to perform disciplinary or grievance measures beyond the scope of our internal organizational structure - However, we do have the full capacity to reform and develop our organizational governing structures and systems. Ma3azef's Action Report and Policy Kit are some of the many transparent and proactive methods in which we are communicating our above stated commitments.

Notwithstanding the above, Ma3azef recognizes that, as an organization, it has a responsibility to protect its audiences, partners, collaborators, and employees from any form of harm.

Accountability and Feedback. While in this report Ma3azef focuses on our own chains of accountability and the mechanisms and policies that we are setting in place to control such incidents, including our institutional methods to deal with harmful incidents, we urge the public and our stakeholders to share their insights, feedback, and concerns to (feedback@ma3azef.com).

We encourage your participation in developing the policies, approaches, systems, and structures that allow Ma3azef to further establish safe, efficient, and creative environments and continue to produce the cutting-edge cultural content that we have been publishing for 11 years.

As we are evolving and growing, we are constantly open to change and developing to adhere to our standards, values and vision. This issue impacted the cultural scene as a whole, including artists, collaborators, Ma3azef team, readers, activists, thinkers and practitioners alike. As a collective in its nuclear form, all our stakeholders are an integral part of our self-perception. Ma3azef aims to use our learnings from the past year and play an active role in promoting a new standard for safety for our audience and the music lovers in general.

This experience has served as a valuable lesson, prompting us to evolve from an informal grassroots collective into a well-structured institution. With these changes firmly in place, we are delighted to resume our operations and thrilled to continue sharing our passion for music. Ma3azef seeks to use the lessons gained and learned to play an active role in promoting a new standard for safety for our audience and music lovers.

YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MA3AZEF'S NEW STRUCTURES AND OPERATIONAL POLICIES BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE AND DOWNLOADING THE “MA3AZEF ACTION REPORT” AND OUR OPEN SOURCE POLICIES ([HTTPS://MA3AZEF.COM/INSTITUTIONAL-RESOURCES/](https://ma3azef.com/institutional-resources/)).

2. CTDC PREFACE TO THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND SAFEGUARDING ASSESSMENT FOR MA3AZEF (CTDC, 2022, P.1) :

“Although this report was produced as part of an organizational accountability and safeguarding assessment, as authors of the report we felt that this assessment cannot be carried out without interrogating the external conditions, including social, economic, political and contextual factors that led to the need for this work to be carried out. This approach has made our task both more difficult and emotional; as although maintaining impartiality was a must, dealing with abusive practices was inevitably emotionally triggering.”

“As authors of the report, we ask readers to read the report in its entirety and not partially, and to consider this report as only one step towards bigger accountability processes, which cannot be considered an end goal or the end. This is particularly important for the integrity of the information and analysis provided in this work, as this assessment is not a ‘fact-finding’ exercise, rather it is an exploration of factors, conditions, dynamics, gaps, processes, procedures, relationships, ethical dilemmas, difficult questions, and most importantly collective accountability processes.”

“We hope with this report that we are opening the door for more constructive conversations around how collective accountability processes can be carried out without causing harm to victims and survivors, and we hope that this will be taken as one small step towards restorative and transformative justice for all. Finally, we want to express our understanding that many of the topics addressed in this report might trigger difficult feelings and emotions, and we want to express our solidarity with all those who have been subjected to abusive practices, violence, and violations, whether in the workplace or in daily life.”

In Solidarity, CTDC Co-Founders and Co-Directors: Dr Nof Nasser-Eddin - Dr Nour Abu-Assab

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - MA3AZEF'S RESTRUCTURING PROCESS BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS ABSORBED FROM CTDC (PAGE 25, CTDC):

The restructuring, capacity building, and institutionalization process entailed within this Organizational Action Report is informed by: (1) Ma3azef Specific Findings through the CTDC's assessment of the organization's legal, operational, managerial structures. (2) The CTDC's general findings and assessments on Ma3azef's wider ecosystem, and the ways in which the safeguarding failure incident unfolded. (3) Industry Standards. (4) Civil and Labor Laws of Jurisdictions in which Ma3azef Operates.

3.1. Management

As outlined in Ma3azef's management response letter in December 2022, to the CTDC assessment report, Ma3azef is redrawing its organizational structure.

The Ma3azef team will now be formed of two departments: Content and Operations. The Director of Content and Director of Operations will be guided by clear TORs, a separation of power, and systemic checks and balances. The organization as a whole will be shadowed by an Advisory Board of Directors.

The editorial team will report to the Director of Content while fundraising, business development, HR, web design and development, events, and accounting personnel will report to the Director of Operations.

3.2. Institutionalization and Capacity Building

3.2.1. Policies, Procedures, and Systems

Ma3azef has embarked on a process of capacity building, development of policies, procedures and processes, as well as strategy development. We were fully immersed in a self-reflective process on how to develop and reorganize Ma3azef, collectively asking ourselves: what should be done now? And, how can we develop real and tangible policies and implement them in a new, accountable structure? We embarked on an action-based response in an effort to answer these questions as a team, and to realize a vision of Ma3azef that reflects our values and aims.

Our values are rooted in proactivity, accountability, community-oriented action, sustainability, independence, and inclusivity.

Starting in April 2023, we proactively integrated the CTDC's recommendations by restructuring the organization, and creating thorough governance and accountability mechanisms. We took the decision to learn from this experience, and we used this time to mature from a grassroots informal collective into a structured institution.

Ma3azef has developed a set of policies and systems that introduce checks and balances, clear lines of management, disciplinary and grievance methods, feedback through formal and open channels of communication, codes of conduct, vetting processes, and standard operating procedures.

While these Policies are a work in progress, constantly being updated, amended and re-published, below is a breakdown of Ma3azef's scope and approach to developing our systems;

1. MA3AZEF'S ADVISORY BOARD OF DIRECTORS POLICY

Strategic Roles and Influence on Key Decisions

- Strategic advising, opportunity identification, and objective establishment.
- Higher engagement during crucial occasions beyond regular advising.
- Advocate for Ma3azef's projects, adhere to policies, and promote partnerships.

Collaborative Strategy Development

- Collaboration between internal executive directors and external Advisory Board on goal setting, project pitching, metric development for success measurement.

Operational Accountability and Crisis Mitigation

- Oversight for accountability and crisis resolution in Ma3azef's operations. The advisory board will be handling high-level complaints through committees, to address any financial and SEAH misconduct issues.

Advisory Board Composition and Expectations

- Seven members: 5 external, 2 internal (Operations and Content Directors).

Timeline

- Interim Advisory Board of Directors: Starting from the beginning of September 2023 until the end of March 2024, Ma3azef will work with an Interim Advisory Board of Directors to support during our transitional phase and assist in developing the final form and structure of the Advisory Board as an entity within our organization.
- Starting from the end of Q1, 2024. Ma3azef's Advisory Board of Directors will be selected on a fixed 3-year basis.

You can read the full policy here (<https://ma3azef.com/institutional-resources/>)

2. MA3AZEF'S POLICY ON FRAUD AND CORRUPTION: PREVENTION, AWARENESS, REPORTING, AND RESPONSE

2.1. Digital and In Person Incident Reporting Mechanisms

Fraud and corruption awareness, prevention, reporting, and response are critical parts of the accountability and compliance culture at Ma3azef and are of great importance to our impact, employees, partners, donors, counterparts, and other Ma3azef stakeholders. We aim to conduct all our activities abiding by the highest ethical standards.

This policy sets out the minimum standards and procedures that Ma3azef personnel and external service providers are obliged to follow.

This policy addresses the awareness, prevention, identification, reporting, investigation, and handling of fraud and corruption at Ma3azef.

In addition to upholding legal and contractual obligations towards donors, Ma3azef is keen to adhere to rigorous ethical standards and to demonstrate commitment to preventing fraud and corruption.

Ma3azef staff are required to be watchful for fraud, bartering services, corruption, or any suspicious behavior, and report it to competent management. All reported incidents will be appropriately investigated, disclosed to competent management, governance body, and the donor, and remediated and closed out.

3. MA3AZEF'S HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY

At Ma3azef, a dynamic and nurturing environment is diligently cultivated to offer our employees a creative space where they can thrive. As a company operating in the cultural and art industry, we understand the significance of fostering a flexible, open, and safe atmosphere that encourages innovation and collaboration. While we are a small team, we highly prioritize employees' insights and contributions in shaping Ma3azef into a sustainable institution. Ma3azef is implementing a written HR policy, including code of conduct expectations from staff. However, it is essential to recognize that the success of this policy hinges on each individual work ethic, seriousness, and dedication to establishing a flourishing working infrastructure.

This Policy establishes human resource policies, procedures and service rules applicable to all categories of employees and staff of Ma3azef. The purpose of this Policy is to establish Human Resource guidelines and practices to govern relations between Ma3azef and its employees, allowing for open channels of communication, leadership rotation through serving in committees, clear lines of management, incident reporting mechanisms and clear metrics of measuring performance.

You can read the full policy here (<https://ma3azef.com/institutional-resources/>)

4. MA3AZEF'S PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE, AND HARASSMENT POLICY (PSEAH)

- 4.1. Digital and in person incident reporting mechanisms for employees (via email or website portal)
- 4.2. Digital and in person incident reporting mechanisms for the general public (via email or website portal)

Ma3azef has zero tolerance for all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. Issues pertaining to PSEAH are taken very seriously and Ma3azef is committed to remedy any harm, when possible, by pursuing available legal avenues.

The standards outlined in this Policy are applicable to all individuals associated with Ma3azef, including paid and unpaid staff members, freelancers, interns, board members, partnering entities, and hired consultants (hereinafter referred to as "Ma3azef personnel").

This Policy extends to Ma3azef's virtual and physical workspaces, any and all external events Ma3azef is involved in, work-related-travels, internal events and networking sessions, and all instances of representing Ma3azef in any capacity. This policy is to be observed at all times during any work-related activities.

Ma3azef personnel shall comply with this Policy in all countries where Ma3azef operates or its representatives undertake work-related visits. Ma3azef does not only aim to abide by legal requirements, but also seeks to establish a safe and equitable working environment for its staff and collaborators.

The Policy's Guiding Principles are: Shared Responsibility, HR considerations and Reference Checks, Accountability and Commitment to Transparency, Complainant Centered Approach, Confidentiality, No Harassment and Non-retaliation, Fostering Safe Working Spaces and Culture Through Awareness and Training.

You can access this open-source policy through Ma3azef's website, under the Institutional Resources Section (<https://ma3azef.com/institutional-resources/>). For employees, consultants, and service providers, the policies are found annexed to all contracts and service agreements.

5. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL EVENTS

These Standard Operating Procedures for Internal and External Events apply to all staff and contractors of Ma3azef (herein referred to as "Events SOPs" or "Policy"). This includes temporary and occasional staff, private contractors and consultants engaged by the Ma3azef to perform roles and responsibilities for public and private events.

The Events SOPs set out guidelines which event managers and/or organizers shall incorporate into the planning, implementation and evaluation of Ma3azef hosted, collaborated, or contracted, event projects. Events SOPs address

equitable access and safeguarding procedures for all audiences. This Policy also provides guidance on current practices, protocols and Ma3azef issued directives related to event management or co-organization.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to Ma3azef staff responsible for organizing or participating in hosted events and to ensure efficiency, equity, and safety for all stakeholders participating in and/or attending these events.

IN THE FOLLOWING PHASE, MA3AZEF WILL BE DEVELOPING:

1. Finance and Administration Policy
2. Procurement and logistics Policy

4. SUMMARY OF THE CTDC REPORT AND MA3AZEF'S INPUT:

4.1. Introduction

“Ma3azef approached CTDC, for its expertise in safeguarding based on recommendations from the field. Initially, Ma3azef had intended to carry out an investigation in response to the events, the severity of the accusations, and in response to the public calls posted on social media for an independent investigation. Some on social media also went as far as demanding that platforms, including Ma3azef, ‘punish perpetrators,’ forgetting that in fact that no one has the legal authority to punish the alleged perpetrators other than formal authorities.” (CTDC, 2022, p.6)

“It can even be argued that terminations of contracts, agreements, and professional canceling is also an illegal way to punish, if these decisions were not based on some evidence, or on a due process. Terminating people’s contracts and/or suspending their salaries without due processes can produce legal liabilities for the organizations that do so.” (CTDC, 2022, p.6)

It is precisely “for this reason, we use the word alleged throughout the report in reference to the victims, perpetrators and incident to protect ourselves from legal liability” (CTDC, 2022, p.6). It is not necessarily a reflection of Ma3azef’s perception of the safeguarding failure incident, the individuals involved, and the repercussions that followed.

The Center for Transitional Development and Collaboration (CTDC) conducted an assessment that “[provided] an independent and impartial third-party’s intersectional feminist analysis and interrogation of: A) Ma3azef’s internal accountability frameworks and B) Collective accountability and chains of responsibility beyond one or single institution and/or individual, specifically in relation to the alleged incident, the statements and reactions that followed it.” (CTDC, 2022, p. 3-4).

For a detailed breakdown of the series of events that triggered the need for this assessment report to be produced, kindly refer to pages 4-6 in the CTDC report (2022).

Delineated below are the key takeaways and the summary of the findings of CTDC’s assessment, which are the departure point and rationale for the structural and institutional changes to be introduced into Ma3azef’s operations and guidelines:

4.2. What is in a ‘Safe’ Space

The assessment of the party in which the alleged incident took place in Lebanon raised questions about the nature of 'safe', 'alternative', and 'underground' spaces. Collected from primary and secondary sources, the descriptions of the party painted a picture that emphasized: 1) The lack of governance and safety measures present in terms of security, safety, and health. And 2) The need to understand the political context surrounding the timing, 'the space' and 'the scene'.

At the time of the event (i.e., New Year’s Eve 2019/2020), the size and type of Ma3azef’s operations and experience was substantially smaller than it was at the time that the allegations surfaced in 2022. Ma3azef was operating solely, receiving funding, and employing staff as an editorial online magazine that focuses on written music-related content only. Regrettably, the institutional mechanisms available at the time did not, in any way, include standard operating procedures and guidelines for events. Notwithstanding, Ma3azef recognizes that as an organization (in the most basic sense) we have a responsibility to safeguard our audiences and employees from any harm. This could have also been taken into consideration through simply establishing legal agreements that clearly delineate the authority matrix of the event, the accountability structure within, and who is in charge of maintaining (non-negotiable) safety and security of the venue.

It is also important to mention that the party took place during a time of social upheaval/revolution in Beirut, characterized by a stark sense of permissibility and resistance to authority, and aggressively against “policing bodies and spaces”. The event had no door policy and served as an accessible space where entry was at a symbolic price (5,000 Lebanese Liras - equivalent to 3.6 USD at the time), wherein various activities, including chanting against the regime and the rule of law, were allowed. Ticketing is usually considered a key initial screening process for audiences attending any event. The informal party, where the alleged incident occurred, was set up as a ‘block party’ / ‘underground party’ wherein Ma3azef nominated a line-up of artists, and the two other co-organizers provided a venue and equipment.

For the CTDC, It is intriguing to observe a common assumption that 'alternative' spaces are inherently safe, which is flawed since all spaces reflect the wider societal dynamics and are not immune to abusive practices. **“All spaces are reflections of the world we live in, and they do not operate in a vacuum away from politics, and they are not protected from abusive practices”** (CTDC, 2022, p.24). These circumstances prompt serious discussions about institutional, collective, and individual accountability, as we, as actors, contribute to the collective experience and its overall safety. It highlights the importance of creating solid and functional safeguarding structures on the institutional level, and practicing care for ourselves and those around us within such spaces.

4.3. Why this is an examination and not a investigation (Page 6 - 8, CTDC):

From the CTDC's "perspective as experts in safeguarding and accountability, an investigation is neither practically feasible nor viable" for the following reasons:

4.3.1. "No one has the legal authority to punish the alleged perpetrators other than formal authorities" (CTDC, 2022, p.6). Furthermore, "Assuming such power, without official authority, may be in some instances considered a crime in its own right" (CTDC, 2022, p.7).

4.3.2. "According to the UNODC (2006), "crime investigation is the process by which the perpetrator of a crime, or intended crime, is identified through the gathering of facts (or evidence)"(CTDC, 2022, p.6)

"In this particular case, and under the jurisdiction of most countries, there are at least four alleged crimes that could prompt a criminal investigation" (CTDC, 2022, p.7). Three of which will be addressed in this report:

a) sexual assault of the first victim at venue wherein the NYE 2019/2020 event took place, (b) sexual assault of the second victim at a private place, (c) defamation, libel, and slander against Ma3azef and its ED, which is treated as a civil offence under some jurisdictions and criminal under others.

4.3.3. In order to conduct thorough investigations into alleged crimes, and gather facts, investigators must be granted comprehensive powers.

These powers include the ability to detain suspects, seize property as evidence, conduct searches of premises and individuals, interview suspects while questioning their honesty and character, obtain samples like fingerprints and DNA, conduct identification procedures, interview witnesses (including victims), gather information from the public, handle and safeguard personal and confidential information, employ surveillance techniques and other intrusive methods to observe individuals (work undercover or employ informants, employ methods of forensic science, and IT and security) ensure the protection and relocation of witnesses, and engage in otherwise illegal activities such as possessing illegal substances, carrying weapons, forcing entry to properties, or monitoring illegal internet traffic. These powers are essential for investigators to effectively carry out their duties and uphold justice (CTDC, 2022, p.7).

4.3.4. Neither Ma3azef, nor the CTDC, are in a position to determine "which people are found guilty or not" (CTDC, 2022, p.8).

4.3.5. "State systems are the only parties with the authority to carry out criminal investigations" (CTDC, 2022, p.8).

Based on all logic within the points delineated above and our recognition of the severity of the allegations, and in line with our rights-based approach of seriously responding to allegations made by any individual or group regarding any organizational or safeguarding failures in projects Ma3azef is involved in, “the CTDC’s objective in this endeavor was solely to investigate the factors that may have contributed to the alleged incident and its subsequent events. The CTDC sought to explore and understand “what could have gone wrong” and resulted in the alleged incident and events in its aftermath. Additionally, the CTDC was interested in learning “**what could have prevented the alleged violations and their aftermath.**” For these reasons, the CTDC chose to undertake an assessment rather than an investigation (CTDC, 2022, p.8), and for the same reasons, Ma3azef saw the need and the opportunity to develop its accountability and governance structures.

4.4. Methodology, Consultations, and Gathering of information (Page 10, CTDC):

Between October 24 and November 30, 2022, CTDC, an intersectional and multi-disciplinary feminist consulting team, conducted an assessment of Ma3azef.

The assessment considered external and internal factors, including social, political, economic, legal, technological, managerial, and relational aspects. Primary and secondary data collection methods were used, such as consultations, media sources, and organizational documents. The information collected was categorized into factual, indicative, interpretive, and unverified.

4.4.1. Secondary Data:

The CTDC used an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from theories in “sociology, organizational and social psychology, moral philosophy, feminist philosophy, managerial and organizational sciences, criminology, legal studies, linguistics, and sociolinguistics, in addition to alternative, restorative methods for dealing with societal violence in the body of literature written by feminist women of color and Black feminist theorists.” (CTDC,2022, p.9).

4.4.2. Primary Data:

The CTDC conducted interviews via zoom that ranged from 45 minutes to 5 hours.

“The consultations were used as a space to think, reflect, and ask questions, as we treated participants as knowledge makers and not as informants. The consultations were in the form of discussions, where ethical dilemmas, difficult scenarios, and critical questions were brought up. The consultations were also a space where we also asked questions about diverging understandings of events, incidents, politics, and relationships.” (CTDC, 2022, p.10)

Internally: The CTDC conducted voluntary and confidential zoom interviews with Ma3azef's stakeholders (22 parties responded and agreed to participate);

1. 8 current employees
2. The interim director during the hiatus
3. The previous executive director (now in the position of content director)
4. 2 former employees
5. 6 former partner organizations (including the second organizer involved in the the event that took place on NYE 2019/2020 wherein the failure of safeguarding incident occurred)
6. 2 donors/funders
7. 1 former collaborator from the arts and cultural scene,

all participated in sharing information and insights (CTDC, 2022, p.10-12)

In terms of the alleged victim, the CTDC “did not send email invitations to the alleged victims, as [they] were hoping that [they] might be able to access them via their networks, because [they] did not want to trigger them or step on their boundaries” (CTDC, 2022, p.10), the CTDC aimed to respect her desire expressed in her second statement ‘final words about the drugging and the sexual assault at the 2019/2020 party’ (CTDC, 2022, p.11). The organizer who provided the venue in which the event took place did not participate in the assessment, and did not respond to the CTDC’s communication.

5 external consultations took place with “a number of feminists from different backgrounds on different topics that emerged during this assessment including; academics, legalists, journalists, and researchers” (CTDC, 2022, p.10).

Externally:

The CTDC used Social Media Material, Web Searches, Ma3azef’s Organizational Documents, and Records of Written Communications within Ma3azef’s team dating back to 2017 (via Slack, and emails).

For detailed information, refer to page 12-13 in the CTDC report (2022).

4.5. Limitations (Page 13, CTDC):

It is noteworthy to mention the limitations to collecting perspectives of key players such as the co-organizer providing the venue, the alleged victim, and some former employees are also **not** covered, as they could not be accessed or they refused to participate (CTDC, 2022, p.13). While limitations to taking legal-based/legally charged actions are delineated above in section 3.1 entitled “why this is an assessment and not an investigation”.

Both the CTDC and Ma3azef approach incidents of failures to safeguard or ‘abusive practices’ as ‘systemic and systematic problems’, rather than isolated incidents in their own right. **Therefore, the CTDC assessment is not an end goal, but the departure point of working towards finer tuned processes of safeguarding and accountability within organizations. Furthermore, through the interrogation of primary and secondary data, the CTDC noticed that “there was an assumption by the public that this assessment, also sometimes referred to as ‘investigation’, would bring the magical tools for attaining justice”** (CTDC, 2022, p.13).

For the sake of Ma3azef’s response in an organizational and evidence-based capacity through this “Organizational Action Report”, Ma3azef will focus on interrogating its’ organizational internal structures, processes, policies, and relationships to stakeholders and funders.

*The CTDC report delves in depth in discussing the other elements and parties involved (the cultural and music scenes, media platforms covering the alleged incident, the general public, and all individuals who engaged with the events). We kindly ask that you refer to their report for a comprehensive review of all points referred to in this report.

4.6. General Findings (Page 14, CTDC):

In this section, the CTDC explores collective accountability and chains of responsibility beyond one or single institution and/or individual, specifically in relation to the alleged incident, the statements, and reactions that followed it. In this assessed case, three victim groups were identified: alleged sexual assault victims, potential defamation victims, and those affected by poor management practices. Taking a [restorative and transformative] feminist accountability perspective [and framework] (CTDC, 2022, p.14).

Within this framework:

- (1) Punishing aggressors is not sufficient.
- (2) Affect tracing in the experiences of survivors and focusing on their needs is required¹.
- (3) Rethinking all the systems and structures that allow these abusive practices to occur is a part of the process.
- (4) Generating innovative solutions to address such practices is the goal.

¹ *Affect is usually a verb, and it means to impact or change. Effect, on the other hand, is usually a noun that you would use to indicate the result of a change.*

Though Ma3azef recognizes and agrees with points 1 and 2 above, they are sufficiently addressed in the CTDC Report. In this report, points 3 and 4 will be rigorously addressed, as this document is an “Organizational Action Report”.

4.6.1. Chain of Accountability: Evading Responsibility

Quoting from the CTDC Report: “SEAH cases are not isolated incidents, they are a reflection of the societies and communities we live in, and when a SEAH case emerges this does not make one organization ‘bad’, and the others become ‘good’. In fact, we need to interrogate chains of responsibility and accountability at all levels, and look into anyone who could have prevented the incident.” (CTDC, 2022, p.14).

“This tendency to evade reflection over one’s responsibility was evident through our assessment. We noticed that fingers were pointed towards one organization and one individual within that organization, who was not present and who never received a formal complaint, without interrogating all other circumstances” (CTDC, 2022, p.15).

This is not to suggest that no responsibility falls on Ma3azef as the curator of the lineup for the event, quite the opposite, it suggests that it is problematic that firstly, Ma3azef lacked a vetting process for selecting venues. Secondly, there was no vetting process in place for staff members, including those present at the party. Thirdly, Ma3azef did not establish codes of conduct, organizational readiness for risk, security and risk mitigation plans, or policies for behavior at parties. Additionally, Ma3azef failed to have written contracts and agreements to regulate the relationships between different organizers. Moreover, Ma3azef did not have mechanisms in place to handle complaints effectively. Lastly, during the time of the event, there were no clear lines of management within Ma3azef, making it unclear who was responsible, especially considering the Executive Director's three-month sabbatical leave from December 2019 to March 2020 (CTDC, 2022, p.16).

Gaining insight into the sequence of accountability and responsibility within this scenario aids in pinpointing existing deficiencies and determining potential actions to mitigate the likelihood or danger of a similar incident happening in the future. By asking these questions, we foster an environment that discourages singling out and accusing a single person or organization for their failure to adequately address instances of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) (CTDC, 2022, p.16).

In sections 3 above, we demonstrated the mechanisms and methods through which we will introduce safeguarding mechanisms internally within Ma3azef as an organization, and in terms of external events.

4.6.2. Lack of Reflection

While in this report Ma3azef focuses on our **own** chains of accountability and the mechanisms and policies that we are setting in place to control such ‘preventable’ incidents, and our institutional methods to react to them, **we** will not be delving into how the two other co-organizers of the event and stakeholders responded to the incident, nor how they positioned themselves “**outside the chains of accountability**” (CTDC, 2022, p.18). For the CTDC’s assessment and insights on this topic, kindly visit the section entitled “lack of reflection” in pages 17 and 18 (CTDC, 2022).

“In this particular case, there were many instances of the lack of self and collective reflection, and of evading responsibility” (CTDC, 2022, p.17). Generally, In cases of sexual violence, assault, abuse, harassment, and rape, there is often a reluctance to view accountability as a shared responsibility or to ask the necessary and challenging questions. These questions include examining personal and collective responsibility, exploring prevention measures, identifying contributing factors, and seeking ways to prevent similar harm in the future (CTDC, 2022, p.17).

Ma3azef’s mandate as an independent music journalism platform whose work is entrenched in providing high quality content and fostering ‘alternative’ and ‘democratic practices within the cultural and artistic scene in the region. “We positioned [ourselves] within the chain of accountability and allowed for an independent impartial assessment to take place” (CTDC, 2022, p.18).

4.6.3. Moral Absolutism

Through the consultations, social media analysis and analysis of different statements, the CTDC noticed that reactions to the incident selectively adopted absolutist condemnations in particular towards the company and its management, without attempting to understand the circumstances that led to the alleged incident, the different relational factors that came into play, and the socio-political context (CTDC, 2022, p.19).

Sadly, due to this moral absolutism even junior employees were targeted, shamed and blamed, and in some instances called ‘rapists’ based on unsubstantiated assumptions that the company as a magazine covers up ‘rape’ (writers, designers, admin officers, directors ..etc).

“It was also clear that these reactions, which are also reflections of the societies we live in, focused more on the organisation, rather than the alleged ‘rape’ itself and/or the alleged perpetrator” (CTDC, 2022, p.19). **This tendency towards moral absolutism is risky because it makes us overlook chains of accountability and responsibility and does not allow us to think of the difficult questions around the alleged incident. Reactions were in fact tone-deaf and created a fertile environment for evading responsibility.**

4.6.4. 'Hearsay' from a Feminist Perspective

The dismissal of second-hand stories as 'hearsay' evidence in courts reflects a gender bias that disadvantages women and marginalized groups. **Ma3azef believes that 'hearsay' should not be dismissed outright, as it can indicate larger issues and problems, particularly in terms of safeguarding.** Cases of sexual violence often go unreported due to social stigma, leading people to share their experiences informally. This may result in 'hearsay' accounts that lack material evidence but should not be disregarded (CTDC, 2022, p.19). While blindly accepting 'hearsay' is not recommended, completely dismissing it can perpetuate exclusion and marginalization without proper verification.

4.6.5. Bad Journalism and Sensational Reporting

*The CTDC extensively discusses practices of bad journalism and sensational reporting in section 3.5 (2022, p. 21, 22, 23), for their critical and intersectional insights on: sensational reporting, media bias, selective offering of support to victims, power dynamics, absolutist condemnations, and readership engagement and how it affects the journalistic process, we urge you to read the referenced section in the CTDC report.

In terms of Ma3azef's formal response, and pertinent to this report focused on organizational strengthening and developing internal institutional mechanisms, our input on this section is brief and as follows:

- a. We are dealing with an issue pertaining to an organizational response to an organizational safeguarding failure, and not "cancel culture" as a mechanism of accountability.
- b. Regrettably, the reporting surrounding this case relied on sensationalism and using scandalous content as an editorial strategy, rather than prioritizing the integrity and trustworthiness of the information. The integrity of reported information should be assessed based on the accuracy, consistency, and reliability, not only of the information itself but also of the methods employed to obtain and verify it. *Megaphone's second statement issued as a self-revision of their journalistic and editorial approach to cover this issue was greatly indicative of the need for a nuanced and accountable approach in covering such topics.*
- c. While the widespread media coverage of the initial statement made by the alleged victim signifies a notable advancement in both Arabic-speaking news media platforms and foreign outlets reporting on Arabic-speaking news, as it highlights women's narratives and stories pertaining to sexual violence, a subject that is typically disregarded. Such progress is attributable to the commendable endeavors of feminist organizations, transnational feminist movements, and individual feminists within the region. Consequently, there is a discernible shift taking place wherein discussions surrounding sexual violence are gradually shedding their taboo status.

5. MA3AZEF'S OPEN-SOURCE POLICY KIT

Access our Revised Policies, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and Incident Reporting Mechanisms through the section entitled “Institutional Resources” in our website (<https://ma3azef.com/institutional-resources/>)

- 5.1. Ma3azef's Advisory Board of Directors Policy
- 5.2. Ma3azef's Policy on Fraud and Corruption: *Prevention, Awareness, Reporting, and Response*
 - 5.2.1. Digital and in person incident reporting mechanisms
- 5.3. Ma3azef's Human Resources Policy
- 5.4. Ma3azef's Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Policy (PSEAH)
 - 5.4.1. Digital and in person incident reporting mechanisms for employees
 - 5.4.2. Digital and in person incident reporting mechanisms for the general public
- 5.5. Standard Operating Procedures and guidelines for external and internal events

6. FEEDBACK AND PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS:

While in this report Ma3azef focuses on our own chains of accountability and the mechanisms and policies that we are setting in place to control such incidents, including our institutional methods to deal with harmful incidents, we urge the public and our stakeholders to share their insights, feedback, and concerns to (feedback@ma3azef.com).

We encourage your participation in developing the policies, approaches, systems, and structures that allow Ma3azef to further establish safe, efficient, and creative environments and continue to produce the cutting-edge cultural content that we have been publishing for 11 years.

As we are evolving and growing, we are constantly open to change and developing to adhere to our standards, values and vision. This issue impacted the cultural scene as a whole, including artists, collaborators, Ma3azef team, readers, activists, thinkers and practitioners alike. As a collective in its nuclear form, all our stakeholders are an integral part of our self-perception. Ma3azef aims to use our learnings from the past year and play an active role in promoting a new standard for safety for our audience and the music lovers in general.

This experience has served as a valuable lesson, prompting us to evolve from an informal grassroots collective into a well-structured institution. With these changes firmly in place, we are delighted to resume our operations and thrilled

to continue sharing our passion for music. Ma3azef seeks to use the lessons gained and learned to play an active role in promoting a new standard for safety for our audience and music lovers.

You can find out more about Ma3azef's new structures and operational policies by visiting our website and downloading the "Ma3azef Action Report" and our open-source policies (<https://ma3azef.com/institutional-resources/>).