



كلية العلوم الصحية  
مجموعة البحث للحد من التدخين



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **a new victory for civil society**

#### **Lebanese parliament approves smoking ban in closed public places**

**Beirut, 17 August 2011:** Two years after starting its campaign to prevent smoking in closed public places; the coalition formed by IndyACT, Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) and the Tobacco Control Research Group in the American University of Beirut congratulated all Lebanese on the adoption of the tobacco control law during the Lebanese parliament meeting today.

The parliament has included the tobacco control draft law on its last agenda after a this coalition of civic organizations carried out a long campaign to achieve this result. During this campaign, tobacco companies constantly tried to influence the law by either delaying its adoption or by trying to weaken its content. Nevertheless, IndyACT and its allies were successfully able to prevent the intervention of these companies after making several direct actions on the matter.

Commenting on the adoption of the law, IndyACT Executive Director, Wael Hmaidan, said: “Today the parliament proved that it is out of its paralysis, and is now able to formulate and pass fair laws that protect citizens; this gives the Lebanese a ray of hope that the legislative process can return to its normal course after a long absence”.

In the period before the law was passed, the coalition worked for months with MPs to discuss the gaps that existed in early versions of this law. Now, the law contains many good provisions. The most important of which are: complete ban on in all closed public places such as restaurants, cafes and public transport; preventing all tobacco companies from conducting any kind of ad campaigns or sponsorship for their products; and placing a warning that covers 40% of cigarette packs. The gap that the coalition was able to modify in the last minute was to impose a fine on the owners of closed public places in the event of having someone smoking tobacco in them, as well as fining the smoker himself/herself. “Lebanese can be proud of this law which is considered progressive compared to the existing laws around the world; many told us that this achievement is impossible in Lebanon, but nothing is impossible, if you believe in change and work relentlessly for it”, said Rania Baroud from TFI.

The law gave the owners of tourist establishments and restaurants a whole year to prepare and adapt to the upcoming ban on smoking in closed spaces. During this time,

the coalition will carry out a campaign to make sure the law is implemented in a serious manner. “One of the urgent issues that the Minister of Health should work on is having a decree on pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs, owing to the effectiveness of these warning as shown by a number of studies and research around the world”, said Doctor Rima from the American University of Beirut. This law has the potential to enormously reduce health costs for the government and the citizen. Lebanon is losing more than \$ 50 million annually from treating smoke related diseases, and more than 3000 Lebanese die each year due to smoking.

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