



Waste Management Demonstrations

Documentation of main human rights violations committed.

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Background Notes

With the start of the waste management crisis in Lebanon on July 17, 2015 and with the accumulation of household, industrial and medical waste on the streets and between houses, a spontaneous movement of activists under the name of " () ريحتكم " (you stink) took the streets protesting against the alleged mismanagement of the crisis, and the delays in finding solutions. With additional delays on prospective solutions to the crisis, demonstrations of the movement escalated and united a large portion of concerned citizens. On Thursday August 19, a demonstration constituted a major turning point in the flow of events, especially after the law enforcement agents violently dispersed the demonstration. In response to those acts the campaign organizers invited their supporters to join the protests on Saturday, August 22; and again on August 23.

Events and Findings of August 22 and 23, 2015

In response to the violent dispersion of protesters, and the still unsettled waste management crisis, protestors called again citizens to demonstrate at 18:00 on Saturday August 22.



Protesters of You Stink campaign demonstrating in Riad el Solh square © Daily Star/Hassan Shaaban

Demonstrations which started as a peaceful protest, quickly turned violent after reactions and counter reactions by Internal Security Forces (ISF) and protesters. Protesters, mainly formed of young people and families with toddlers and children, were dispersed with water cannons, batons and sticks in addition to rounds of tear gas canisters. Protesters initially wanting to access the Nejmeh Square got divided into two groups. Groups remaining in Riad el Solh, repeatedly tried to cross the barbed wires and were consequently been exposed to water cannons and tear gas, eliminating chances of reaching the Nejmeh Square. On the other hand, protesters escaping the Riad el Solh square tried to enter the Nejmeh Square from the side of Martyr square where they have been blocked by Lebanese Armed Forces belonging to the Parliament security battalion shooting live bullets in the air.

Nejmeh Square from the side of Martyr square where they have been blocked by units belonging to the Parliament security battalion shooting live bullets in the air.

Clashes between the ISF and protesters continued until late hours at night. ISF consistently used tear gas canisters, live bullets, rubber bullets and water cannons to disperse protesters, pushed consistently until reaching the Martyr Square/Paul Gemmayze intersection.



Protester chest showing bruises of rubber bullets © Daily Star/ Hassan Abbas

ALEF's monitoring and reporting unit followed closely the events of August 22, and collected evidence of the use of live bullets and tear gas. LBC and the "طلعت ريحتكم" Facebook page also reported on the utilization of live bullets.



.223 Remington bullet collected from Martyr Square



Lacroix-Alsetex Lacrimogen Gas Canister "Tear Gas"



Photo showing bullet shells and Shotguns shells from Saturday's protest – Facebook via "طلعت ريحتكم"

After pushing Protesters to the "Paul" intersection, ISF intervened and arrested many of the remaining protesters completely dispersing protesters. Following Minister Machnouk statement and the call for calm, organizers of the "طلعت ريحتكم" announced an open ended demonstration. Tents were elevated in the Riad el Solh Square and citizens were invited to join the protest again on Sunday August 23. The monitoring and reporting unit of ALEF proceeded in visiting hospitals in Beirut and documented cases of wounded protesters. Many hospitalized individuals had minor injuries after being hit by police batons. Some hospitalized suffered minor suffocation necessitating airway management. A severe case of bleeding necessitating blood transfusion was admitted to Clemenceau medical Center (CMC). Many other individuals were treated on site by the Lebanese Red Cross EMS team.



Protester with an open wound in the forehead via Twitter

In response to the "طلعت ريحتكم" invitation for an open demonstrations calling for the resignation of the government and the accountability of the ISF officers committing violations, demonstrators started to fill the Riad el Solh square starting 11 AM. Protest initially peaceful shortly turned violent as protesters insisted on crossing the barbed wires. ISF units responded similarly to Saturday's events with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons. Violence against protesters intensified increasing the number of hospitalized individuals to more than 49 according to Lebanese Red Cross officials.

Following violence and uncontrolled rioting the campaign organizers invited protesters to leave the streets expressing that the movement does not support violent riots, many protesters remained in the Riad el Solh and Martyr Square clashing with ISF units. Groups of protesters were pushed to the "Paul" intersection stopping the traffic and requiring cars to use alternate roads. Other groups of protesters infiltrated -in smaller groups- different streets of Downtown Beirut in particular the surroundings of, Azzariye building and ESCWA where they violently clashed with ISF units. Protesters broke into private property putting fire to trash cans, while breaking public property such as traffic lights and park meters. ISF units failed restore order utilizing rubber bullets and tear gas. Away from the protest and riots, and in the proximity of the Kataeb Headquarters in Saifi, a Lebanese citizen was violently arrested by armed policemen in civilian clothes claiming to be from the judiciary police. Four policemen forced the suspect on the ground trying to make him face the floor and applied handcuffs on his wrists. The suspect repeatedly informed the policemen to stay calm and will cooperate. Passers were asked to leave the premises instantly or they will get arrested themselves. While following up on the case, ALEF documented the suspect was not allowed to communicate his arrest with relatives and eventually was released on Monday morning. Around midnight heavy LAF support reached downtown carried out arrests and stabilization interventions and restored calm to the area.

"طلعت ريحتكم"
organizers suspended their street actions waiting further planning. As of Monday morning, Daily Star reported quoting a medical source a total of 402 wounded individuals (ISF and protesters) and 1 dead. Additional verification through Monday, indicated that the victim is still being hospitalized and information about his death is false.



Army deploys in downtown Beirut, via Twitter @JWoodJourno



Protesters start a fire during a protest against corruption and against the government's failure to resolve a crisis over rubbish disposal, near the government palace in Beirut, Lebanon August 23, 2015 © Mohamed Azakir / Reuters

Concluding Observations

ALEF considers that the tactics used by law enforcement officials on both 22 and 23 of August have been focused on the dispersion of protesters rather than on the principle of maintaining order and protecting the freedom of assembly. On that note ALEF would like to highlight the following concerns:

- The use of batons and sticks on unthreatening, non-aggressive groups such as women, parents with children, and individuals with disabilities, among others, is a clear representation of an unlawful use of force. When unavoidable, batons and sticks shall only be used without causing serious injuries to vital parts of the body. Documented injuries and news reports clearly illustrate no commitment to such principle.
- Firearms and Shotguns have been used in a widespread manner leading to unnecessary injuries and resulted in a destructive situation rather than a situation of order and peaceful assembly.
- The type of equipment used failed to be carefully considered in a proportional and lawful manner. Less-lethal weapons such as rubber bullets and tear gas were excessively utilized in closed streets, in a proximate range and sometimes directly on protesters.
- Police officers could not be identified by name or number tag, resulting in close to impossible ability to complain in front of an impartial investigative body.
- ISF officials failed to effectively communicate with protesters; the decision to disperse must have been clearly communicated and feedback of understanding should be granted, while reasonable time should be given prior to dispersing.
- Organizers were unable to communicate with operational officers of the ISF to prevent violence outbreak.
- Police and judicial authority have failed to announce the overall number of arrested individuals and their place of detention.
- Statements by Minister Machnouk allured that the decision on the use of force lacked a proper review and accountability structure.
- The military court's prosecutor opened an investigation probe into the events of 22 August. Investigations in such incidents have to be prosecuted by an independent and an impartial tribunal, yet the military court in its structure and mode of operation fails to satisfy such principles.
- On the other hand, medical assistance was granted without delay.



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