

ALEF – act for human rights

Situation Report 2024

The Situation of Human Rights in Lebanon

Acknowledgement

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Disclaimer

While the team made all efforts possible to cross-check information and reproduce facts and events accurately, this does not overrule the possibility of inaccuracies or oversights, for which ALEF hereby expresses its regrets.

Contents

Acknowledgement	2
Disclaimer.....	3
Fundamental Rights	6
Non-Discrimination	6
Right to Life, Liberty, and Security of Persons	10
Prohibition of Slavery or Servitude and Slave Trade	15
Judicial Rights.....	21
Prohibition of Torture or Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment	21
Equality before the Law and Protection against Incitement	24
Right to Effective Remedy by National Tribunals for Violations.....	27
Prohibition of Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile	31
Right to Fair and Public Hearing by Independent and Impartial Tribunal	33
Right to Presumption of Innocence and Non-Retroactivity of Laws	37
Civil and Political Rights	39
Protection from Arbitrary Attacks on Privacy, Honor, and Reputation.....	39
Freedom of Movement and Residence and Right to Leave the Country	41
Right to Seek and Enjoy Asylum from Persecution for Political Crimes	43
Right to Nationality	50
Right to Marry and Protection of Family	52
Right to Own Property	56
Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion	59
Freedom of Opinion and Expression.....	61
Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association	65
Right to Participate in Government, Public Service, and Elections.....	67
Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights	71
Right to Social Security.....	71
Right to Work, Protection against Unemployment, and Join Trade Unions.....	74
Right to an Adequate Standard of Living for Health and Livelihood, Special Care and Assistance to Motherhood, and Social Protection of Children.....	77
Right to Education.....	87
Right to an Adequate Environment	89

Fundamental Rights

Non-Discrimination

Gender-Based Discrimination

In 2024, Lebanon's ranking in the Global Gender Gap declined from 132 to 133 out of 146 countries¹ as several cultural norms and legal provisions still perpetuate severe gender-based discrimination in the country. Women in Lebanon still cannot pass on Lebanese citizenship to their children, as the Nationality Law restricts citizenship only to children born to a Lebanese father. A draft law proposed by the National Commission for Lebanese Women in 2019 would allow Lebanese mothers to pass on citizenship to their children, with some restrictions based on the children's age.² Nevertheless, Parliament has not yet discussed the proposal since it was submitted in 2019.

Many laws, regulations, and practices discriminate based on gender in Lebanon. For instance, although the Lebanese labor law specifically prohibits gender-based discrimination in the workplace, one section, of the law, engages in such discrimination by banning women from operating machinery with extremely large engines, working underground in mines, slivering mirrors, or occupying 16 other stereotypically male jobs.³ Similarly, the National Social Security Law allows unemployed wives of men registered with the National Social Security Fund to benefit from unconditional social security coverage in illness or maternity. However, it prohibits unemployed husbands of registered wives from doing so.⁴ In the informal sector, workplace discrimination is a normalized practice.

Furthermore, personal status courts contribute to gender inequality as they do not guarantee women their basic rights, especially on issues such as divorce, property rights, custody and guardianship of children, and inheritance.⁵ Other institutional barriers widen the gap between men and women in public service in Lebanon, including prohibiting women in headscarves from joining the judiciary and military.⁶

Lebanon continues to grapple with persistently low levels of women's political representation. As of 2024, two draft laws introducing gender quotas remain stalled in Parliament. The first, proposed in 2021, called for reserving 24 seats for women in the legislature, equivalent to 18.75 percent of the total.⁷ The parliamentary initiative faces ongoing political disagreements, particularly around compatibility with Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system. Second, a 2023 municipal council draft law that would require 30% to 50% of seats to be reserved for women, depending on the council's size.⁸ Neither has advanced through the legislative process as of 2024.

1. World Economic Reform. (2023, June). *Global Gender Gap Report 2024*. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/>

2. Lebanon Support. (2020, February). *Setting the Agenda towards Gender Equity*. Retrieved from <https://civilsociety-centre.org/file/settingtheagendaenpdf/download?token=abN0OU2N>

3. Global Payroll Association. (2022, March 9). *[Lebanon] Laws prohibiting women from holding certain roles continue to be enforced*. Retrieved from <https://globalpayrollassociation.com/blogs/emea-1/lebanon-laws-prohibiting-women-from-holding-certain-roles-continue-to-be-enforced>

4. L'Orient Today. (2020, October 27). *The National Social Security Fund, explained*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientjour.com/article/1238349/the-national-social-security-fund-explained.html>

5. Human Rights Watch. (2021). *World Report 2021: Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/lebanon#d91ede>.

6. Karkanawi, T. (2021, February 21). *The judiciary's marginalization of the hijab: Is it really a threat?* The Phoenix Daily. <https://www.thephoenixdaily.net/nationalaffairs/the-judiciarys-marginalization-of-the-hijab-is-it-really-a-threat>

7. L'Orient Today. (2021, October 25). *Women's representation in Parliament: A tale of plentiful proposals but limited political will*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientjour.com/article/1279197/womens-representation-in-parliament-a-tale-of-plentiful-proposals-but-limited-political-will.html>.

8. Ibid.

Sexual Harassment/Assault

Law 205/2021 criminalizes sexual harassment, including in the workplace, and sentences perpetrators to up to two years of prison. The law imposes fines 20 times the value of the minimum wage, with harsher penalties for cases that include children and people with disabilities.⁹ However, the text still lacks crucial protection measures regarding retaliation risks and prevention.¹⁰ It notably excludes a large segment of the workforce – including some of the workers most vulnerable to sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, such as domestic workers – because its terms apply only to workers covered by the labor law. This is particularly concerning as the latest evidence indicates that 68% of MDW women in Lebanon have survived sexual violence.¹¹ Rape and sexual assault against MDWs continue to be a considerable risk but remain under-reported. Due to fear of stigma, retaliation and limited knowledge and trust in services, less than 25% of MDW sexual violence survivors report the violation or take any kind of action against the abuser.¹²

Law 205's effective enforcement is tested through the case against journalist and film director Jaafar Al-Attar.¹³ The defendant will be responding to accusations of sexual advances from seven different plaintiffs, repeated undesired phone calls and messages, and physical harassment in what is the first criminal case laid under the charges provided by this law.¹⁴ The trial was due to begin in November 2021 but was postponed,¹⁵ and no progress has been reported since.¹⁶

In May, three individuals were arrested in connection with the sexual abuse of students at Lycée Emmanuel in Kfar Shima, Baabda district, including the school's principal.¹⁷ The abuse involved four staff members and came to light after a father discovered an inappropriate voicemail sent to his daughter by one of her teachers. The voicemail was anonymously forwarded to Minister of Education Abbas Halabi and Mount Lebanon's Chief Prosecutor Ghada Aoun, who instructed Judge Nazek Khatib to initiate an investigation. Initial findings revealed that the abuse had been ongoing for three years, with the principal allegedly aware of the situation. Arrest warrants were issued for the principal, a gym teacher, and a custodian who had previously been arrested for a similar offense but was later released. A fourth arrest warrant was also issued for a math teacher.

Other legal provisions in the Lebanese Penal Code jeopardize the rights of victims of sexual assault. Articles 505 and 518 create exceptions to escape charges for sex with minors between the ages of 15 and 17 years and the rape of females if a promise of marriage was made. In another disturbing incident of sexual harassment, Lebanese authorities arrested six individuals, including three minors who are well-known TikTok influencers, as part of an investigation into a paedophile gang. These six suspects are believed to be linked to a larger network of 28 individuals involved in the abuse. The case began after several children reported to the public prosecution that they were sexually assaulted,

⁹ Al-Arabiya. (2020, December 21). *Lebanon passes law criminalizing sexual harassment, amends domestic violence law*. Retrieved from <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2020/12/21/Lebanon-passes-law-criminalizing-sexual-harassment-amends-domestic-violence-law>.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch. (2021, March 5). *Lebanon: law criminalizing sexual harassment lacks key protection measures*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2021/03/05/378078>.

¹¹ The Public Source. (2024, May 1). *"We Are Everywhere, but Invisible": How One System Facilitates Sexualized Violence and Protects its Perpetrators*. Retrieved from: <https://thepublicsource.org/invisible-sexualized-violence>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Reuters. (2021, June 2). *'Test case' for Lebanon's new sexual harassment law*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/lebanon-women-harassment-idUSL5N2NJ41L>.

¹⁴ The 961 News. (2021, November 8). *First Trial for Sexual harassment in Lebanon will now begin*. Retrieved from <https://www.the961.com/first-trial-for-sexual-harrasment-will-begin/>.

¹⁵ Sharika wa Laken. (2023, January 5). *Postponing The Trial Of Jaafar Al-Attar, Who Is Accused Of Harassing And Threatening A Group Of Women*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/yw7myeaj>

¹⁶ Legal Agenda. (2022, April 14). *Postponement of the trial session of journalist Jaafar Al-Attar in a harassment case*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/bdh76s7u>

¹⁷ L'Orient-Le Jour (2024, May 24) Three arrested in sexual abuse case at Baabda high school Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1415027/three-arrested-in-sexual-abuse-case-at-baabda-high-school.html>

photographed, and coerced into taking drugs by members of the organized gang. The victims were reportedly forced into these situations in hotels. The investigation revealed that the minors were used to lure other children into compromising situations. The suspects allegedly drugged, raped, and blackmailed the victims into promoting drugs. The gang also recruited teenagers from outside Lebanon to attract children on TikTok. So far, six victims, all under the age of 16, have come forward. The suspects are accused of filming the assaults and using the footage to blackmail the children, threatening to release the videos if they spoke out. The investigation continues, and authorities are actively working to arrest all involved members of the gang.¹⁸

LGBTQ+ Rights

The LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon faces widespread social, cultural, and political exclusion and discrimination based on their gender identity or sexual orientation. Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code continues to criminalize “any sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature.”¹⁹ Despite an unprecedented 2023 parliamentary bill to abolish Article 534 and decriminalize homosexuality, the proposal has stalled amid opposition. Public sentiment on the issue has also been a matter of contention. In March, a document distributed to first graders sparked major controversy in one of Lebanon’s schools. The document, which included illustrations of various family structures, including same-sex families, was part of an activity encouraging students to reflect on the concept of family. Parents and local officials criticized the content as inappropriate for young children, accusing the teachers of promoting homosexuality. Several public figures joined in condemning the material as unprofessional.²⁰

Violations to the LGBTQ+ community’s safety extended to instances of hate speech, threats, and hate crimes. In May, the body of a transgender person was found in Dora, having been stabbed and left to die. After an investigation, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) arrested two men responsible for the murder.²¹

Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination has been a severe problem in Lebanon, typically targeting the country’s large population of migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, and sex workers. In the context of widespread xenophobic attitudes towards Palestinian and Syrian refugees, several widespread and targeted campaigns against individuals from Syria have been reported, driven by discriminatory intent tied to their national origin. The national debate about their presence in the country has also been largely dehumanizing and vilifying. Moreover, migrant workers in Lebanon are faced with racist rhetoric and various types of violations enabled by a flawed legislative framework (mostly the kafala sponsorship system) that does not provide protection against racial discrimination.

In April 2024, North Lebanon's governor issued a decision to expel Syrians who do not meet legal conditions for residence, work, or displacement in Lebanon.²² This led to State Security patrols going door-to-door in towns like Kfeifan, Kouba, and Boustane al-Aassi, with Syrians given two days to evacuate their homes. Properties of those who did not comply were sealed with red wax, making them

¹⁸ The National News (2024, May 3). *Arrest of alleged child trafficking TikTok gang sparks shock in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2024/05/03/lebanon-tiktok-gang-child-trafficking/>

¹⁹ Al Jazeera. (2019, March 30). *Lebanon court ‘acquits military personnel’ in sodomy case*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/3/30/lebanon-court-acquits-military-personnel-in-sodomy-case>

²⁰ L’Orient Today. (2024, March 12). *Two teachers suspended for discussing same-sex parenting at Jounieh Central College*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1371219/deux-enseignantes-suspendues-pour-avoir-aborde-lhomoparentalite-au-college-central-de-jounieh.html>

²¹ L’Orient Today. (2024, May 21). *Murder of a transgender person in Dora: two suspects apprehended*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1414572/le-meurtre-dune-personne-transgenre-a-dora-elucide.html>

²² L’Orient Today. (2024, April 25). *State security initiates eviction of Syrians from northern areas*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1411674/state-security-initiates-eviction-of-syrians-from-northern-areas.html>

off-limits without state approval. The eviction campaign explicitly targeted Syrians based on their national origin and was carried out amid increasing anti-Syrian sentiment and political calls for their repatriation, despite warnings from international organizations about the risks of returning to Syria.²³

Many Syrians are living with an uncertain legal status, as the government stopped UNHCR registrations. The government's actions are part of a broader effort to control the refugee population, with some officials blaming refugees for the country's economic and security issues. These narratives often attribute collective blame and reinforce negative stereotypes, contributing to discriminatory treatment that is both structural and socially normalized. In May 2024, around 200 refugees returned to Syria as part of a "voluntary return" campaign, though many Syrians fear detention and abuse upon re-entry. Despite the government's push for repatriation, human rights groups remain concerned about the safety of refugees.²⁴

Cases of discrimination particularly emerged during the intensification of Israel's airstrikes in September, as people from different nationalities in Lebanon were internally displaced. Internally displaced persons - whether Syrian, Palestinian, or Lebanese - faced discriminatory behaviors and restrictions that limited their ability to find and rent places in safer parts of Lebanon.²⁵ In fact, many migrants recalled either being denied access to shelters due to a lack of documentation or being kicked out of shelters for "not being Lebanese."²⁶ Such exclusion reflects not only legal precarity but also discriminatory judgments based on national and racial identity. Some migrant workers were even abandoned by their employers, left without their passports, residency documents, or financial resources.²⁷ These abandoned migrant workers quickly became homeless, with nowhere to go, as their home countries often failed to aid or repatriate their citizens, while their employers frequently abandoned them or confiscated their passports.²⁸ Those most affected were workers of African and South Asian descent, reflecting how racial and national identity influenced access to protection and shaped patterns of exclusion. The response from African diplomats in particular was largely absent.²⁹

Syrians who find themselves once again displaced, were struggling to find a place to stay as certain shelters were reportedly prioritizing Lebanese and Palestinians.³⁰ However, many Palestinian camps were specifically targeted by Israeli forces. In addition, numerous collective shelters for displaced people were reserved for Lebanese families, and even when Syrian and Palestinian communities were admitted, they experienced and resented the discrimination they faced.³¹

²³ L'Orient Today. (2024 June 6). Dozens of Syrian nationals evicted in Kousba, north Lebanon. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1416402/dozens-of-syrian-nationals-evicted-in-kousba-north-lebanon.html>

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Researching Internal Displacement. (2024, October 8). *Ignored, Displaced and Powerless: Lebanon's IDPs Caught Between Escalating Hostilities and Government Neglect*. Retrieved from https://researchinginternaldisplacement.org/short_pieces/ignored-displaced-and-powerless-lebanons-idps-caught-between-escalating-hostilities-and-government-neglect/

²⁶ Al Jazeera. (2024, October 5). *'No place to go': As Israel bombs Lebanon, African migrants feel abandoned*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/10/5/no-place-to-go-as-israel-bombs-lebanon-african-migrants-feel-abandoned>

²⁷ ReliefWeb. (2024, November 12). *Displacement of migrant workers in Lebanon increases risk of modern slavery*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/displacement-migrant-workers-lebanon-increases-risk-modern-slavery#:~:text=There's%20growing%20concern%20over%20the,further%20exploitation%20and%20modern%20slavery.>

²⁸ The New Humanitarian. (2024, September 26). *Lebanon's migrant workers left stranded and homeless by Israeli attacks*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2024/09/26/lebanons-migrant-workers-left-stranded-homeless-israeli-attacks>

²⁹ Al Jazeera. (2024, October 5). *'No place to go': As Israel bombs Lebanon, African migrants feel abandoned*. Al Jazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/10/5/no-place-to-go-as-israel-bombs-lebanon-african-migrants-feel-abandoned>

³⁰ The New Arab. (2024, September 25). *Displaced Syrians turned away from shelters in Lebanon*. The New Arab. <https://www.newarab.com/news/displaced-syrians-turned-away-shelters-lebanon>

³¹ Norwegian Refugee Council. (2024, September 27). *Far from home: Inside Lebanon's displacement crisis*. Norwegian Refugee Council. <https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2024/far-from-home-inside-lebanons-displacement-crisis>

Right to Life, Liberty, and Security of Persons

Homicide & Assassinations

Lebanon continues to suffer from a trend of homicides, some of which have been considered as political assassinations linked to high-level security concerns, political motives, and judicial investigations, often targeting leading political, religious, and security figures, journalists, and thinkers.

In 2024, 26 assassinations were documented. Israeli forces carried out 24 out of these, targeting Hezbollah and Hamas members in Lebanon, including Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, and the party's head of executive council Hashem Safieddine.^{32,33} An Israeli airstrike also killed Fatah Sharif, the UNRWA Teachers' Association Chairman and alleged Hamas leader.³⁴ The other case included Pascal Suleimani, the Lebanese Forces coordinator in Jbeil, whom assailants, allegedly Syrians, abducted and killed, leaving his body to be found in Syria. Mohammad Srour, an individual accused of funneling money to Hamas, was found dead in his house in Beit Mery³⁵

By the end of the year, Lebanon recorded 17 cases of femicides, contributing to a persistent trend of Gender Based Violence (GBV). In Baalbeck during the summer of 2024, a young woman was murdered by her uncle in an "honor killing" after being blackmailed and having intimate content published online without her consent.³⁶ In December, Abir Rahal, a Lebanese journalist, was shot by her husband inside a courthouse while finalizing their divorce proceedings.³⁷

Armed clashes and Insecurity

Lebanon has been witnessing sporadic armed clashes, especially between feuding families and clans, and in refugee camps across the country. In March, a man was arrested in at a military checkpoint Tripoli for carrying an unlicensed firearm, triggering a confrontation and leading another shooter to also open fire at the army³⁸. The latter responded by returning fire and injuring the shooter. Both individuals were subsequently arrested, and further investigations identified them as Palestinians, sparking backlash against Palestinians in Lebanon.³⁹

Family disputes continue to be a main source of insecurity and clashes. For instance, tensions erupted in Fneidek, Akkar, following the severe escalation of a family dispute, the exchange of gunfire, and the use of heavy machinery.⁴⁰ While no injuries were reported, the incident caused substantial property

³² Reuters. (2024, October 23) *Hezbollah's Hashem Safieddine, heir apparent to Nasrallah, killed in Israeli attack, Group says.* <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollahs-hashem-safieddine-heir-apparent-nasrallah-killed-israeli-attack-group-2024-10-23/>

³³ Al Jazeera. (2024, September 28). *Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah leader killed in Israeli strike* <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/28/hassan-nasrallah-hezbollah-leader-killed-in-beirut-in-israeli-strike>

³⁴ Keaten, J. (2024, October 1). *Top Hamas commander killed in Lebanon was UNRWA employee placed on administrative leave.* AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/lebanon-hamas-commander-killed-unwra-employee-israel-999ec22c1fef953f4f1b8b40a4c95b35>

³⁵ L'Orient Today (2024, April 10). *Lebanese man accused of moving money to Hamas killed.* Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1409873/lebanese-man-accused-of-moving-money-to-hamas-killed-security-source.html>

³⁶ LebanonOn. (2024, August 17). *A Baalbek family kills their famous TikToker daughter to wash away the shame... a pornographic film led to her murder.* Retrieved from <https://www.lebanonon.com/news/269741>

³⁷ Arab News (2024, December 27). *Lebanese journalist Abir Rahal killed by husband before his suicide.* Retrieved from: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2584459/media>

³⁸ L'Orient Today (2024, March 7). *Army detains man with unlicensed weapon, sparking gunfire at checkpoint.* Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1370701/army-detains-man-with-unlicensed-weapon-sparking-gunfire-at-checkpoint.html>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Lebanon On Files (2024, August 20). *Gunfire and RPGs in Fneidq... A Call for the Army's Intervention!* Retrieved from: <https://www.lebanonfiles.com/articles/%d8%a3%d8%ae%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d9%85%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%8a%d9%91%d8%a9/%d8%a5%d8%b7%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%82-%d9%86%d8%a7%d8%b1->

damage, and residents voiced feelings of fear and distress.⁴¹ Also in Akkar, an unidentified individual carried out a bomb attack followed by gunfire at an ISF Station.⁴² Similarly, in Tripoli, an altercation between two individuals escalated into violence, involving gunfire and stabbing, leaving one person injured. The assailants fled the scene, further contributing to concerns of insecurity and instability in the area.⁴³ Al Shaghwir area of El Hermel also witnessed, in June, an armed dispute between feuding families which involved gunfire and shelling, leading to the death of one person.⁴⁴

Such clashes have also occurred in refugee camps in the North and South of Lebanon. In November, armed clashes erupted in Ain el-Hilweh camp, involving heavy weaponry, following the attempted assassination of Omar Al-Natour, a leader in Jund al-Sham, as Islamic groups fired random shots indiscriminately at residential areas across the camp.⁴⁵ Violence concurrently broke out in Beddawi refugee camp over a dispute concerning a shipping container, and escalated into the use of firearms, grenades, and rockets.⁴⁶ The confrontation killed a 17-year-old, injured many residents, and caused severe property damage.⁴⁷ In another instance, heavy gunfire was exchanged during an altercation between members of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) and Amal movement in Hamra, Beirut.⁴⁸

In June, a gunman attacked and opened fire against the US Embassy in Beirut.⁴⁹ The assailant, who has known affiliations with the Islamic State, was injured and apprehended. Additionally, at least 20 to 40 individuals have been detained in connection with the crime and their association with Islamist extremists.⁵⁰ The Lebanese military launched an operation in Souairi and Majdal Anjar, near the Lebanese- Syrian border in the Bekaa Valley, involving raids, roadblocks, and the seizure of explosives and weapons from the homes of individuals connected to the US embassy shooting, including the perpetrator's brother. Furthermore, as investigations confirmed the assailant's Syrian nationality, prevailing narratives against Syrian refugees in Lebanon intensified, linking the country's growing insecurity to their increased presence and amplifying media focus on their involvement in criminal and illegal activities.⁵¹ This belief has contributed to tensions between Lebanese and Syrian individuals, leading to security disturbances in certain areas. For instance, Burj Hammoud has witnessed recurring clashes between members of both communities.⁵²

[%d9%88%d9%82%d8%b0%d8%a7%d8%a6%d9%82-%d8%a3%d8%b1-%d8%a8%d9%8a-%d8%ac%d9%8a-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d9%81%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%af%d9%82-%d9%88%d9%85%d9%86%d8%a7/](#)

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² ThisisLebanon. (2024, August 19) *Security centers need security protection!* Retrieved from [Here Lebanon is a security center in need of security protection! \(thisislebanon.com\)](https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/363261/)

⁴³ This is Lebanon (2024, August 12). *Altercation Between Building Residents in Tripoli Leaves One Injured.* Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/363261/>

⁴⁴ This is Lebanon (2024, June 9). *One killed in major clash in Al-Shawaghir... Army intervenes!* Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/337528/>

⁴⁵ L'Orient Today (2024, April 28). *Clashes in Ein El-Hilweh following an assassination attempt. And "Fateh" comments.* Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1411913/stray-bullets-strike-three-during-al-jamaa-al-islamiya-funeral-in-akkor.html>

⁴⁶ NNA (2024, June 4). *Teenager killed in overnight clashes at Beddawi Refugee Camp in Tripoli.* Retrieved from: <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/en/justice-law/699187/teenager-killed-in-overnight-clashes-at-beddawi-re>

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ This is Lebanon (2024, October 8). *Armed Clash in Hamra Between SSNP and Amal Movement!* Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/398941/>

⁴⁹ Naharnet. (2024, June 9). *20 so far arrested over US embassy attack.* Retrieved from <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/305802-20-so-far-arrested-over-us-embassy-attack>

⁵⁰ Naharnet. (2024, June 9). *20 so far arrested over US embassy attack.* Retrieved from <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/305802-20-so-far-arrested-over-us-embassy-attack>

⁵¹ MTV. (2024, June 5). *Gunfire in the Vicinity of the American Embassy.* Retrieved from <https://mtv.com.lb/en/News/Local/1451772/watch-gunfire-in-the-vicinity-of-the-american-embassy>

⁵² This is Lebanon (2024, April 19). *Clash Between Syrians and Lebanese in Burj Hammoud!* Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/317585/>

Armed Violence

While the law in Lebanon does not provide for a legal right to bear arms, permission to own and carry weapons is granted at the executive branch's discretion. For the last few decades, Lebanon has been home to several armed groups operating outside any legal framework and under official government acquiescence. This situation prompted the United Nations Security Council in 2004 to officially call for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias⁵³ but to no avail to this day.

Lebanon is estimated to have around two million privately owned firearms, which represents roughly a third of the population.⁵⁴ While owning an unlicensed weapon can lead to prosecution, the widespread circulation of firearms has raised concerns about security risks, including accidental deaths, particularly due to stray bullets fired during celebrations and mourning.⁵⁵ In Batroun, for example, a truck carrying oil caught fire, exposing 304 smuggled pistols,⁵⁶ while another truck seized at the Port of Tripoli was found to contain 400 concealed weapons.⁵⁷ Both shipments, originating from Turkey, were linked to a Palestinian resident of the Mieh Mieh refugee camp.⁵⁸ This accessibility to weapons has caused many individuals to suffer from stray bullets. In fact, during a funeral in Akkar on the 28th of April, stray bullets struck and injured four individuals in their homes, including a child.⁵⁹ The ongoing economic crisis and rising crime rate, including shootings, theft, and robberies, pushed many citizens to purchase firearms for personal protection, or as a means of coercion. Arms traders have capitalized on this increased demand, subsequently leading to the expansion of the Lebanese arms market.⁶⁰

In November, for example, the military patrol in Aley arrested three individuals involved in a shooting at a school sheltering Internally Displaced People from Southern Lebanon.⁶¹ Another incident in November involved a daytime armed robbery in Mtayleb, where the perpetrator stole money from a restaurant at gunpoint.⁶² Similarly, in Nabaa, two individuals attempted to rob a store, leading to an altercation during which a victim was stabbed in the face. In response, the latter retrieved his firearm and shot the assailants, resulting in one fatality and one injury.⁶³ Gang members also engaged in burglaries targeting residential apartments in Tyre and surrounding towns, exploiting the displacement crisis due to the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict.⁶⁴ This pattern of violence is not isolated, with family disputes repeatedly resulting in fatalities. In Baalbek, for instance, a man shot his 26-year-old

⁵³ Security Council Resolution. (2004, September 2). *SECURITY COUNCIL DECLARES SUPPORT FOR FREE, FAIR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN LEBANON; CALLS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES THERE*. Retrieved from <https://press.un.org/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm>

⁵⁴ L'Orient le Jour (2024, May 13). *Au Liban, le marché des armes a le vent en poupe*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1413252/au-liban-le-marche-des-armes-a-le-vent-en-poupe.html>

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Naharnet (2024, May 21). *Army seizes truck carrying guns in Batroun after it catches fire*. Retrieved from: <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/305353-army-seizes-truck-carrying-guns-in-batroun-after-it-catches-fire>

⁵⁷ L'Orient le Jour (2024, May 22). *Camions d'armes à Batroun et Tripoli: "très mauvais signe" pour le Liban*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1414664/camions-darmes-a-batroun-et-tripoli-tres-mauvais-signe-pour-le-liban.html>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ L'Orient Today (2024, April 28). *Stray bullets strike four during al-Jamaa al-Islamiya funeral in Akkar*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1411913/stray-bullets-strike-three-during-al-jamaa-al-islamiya-funeral-in-akkar.html>

⁶⁰ L'Orient-Le Jour. (2024, May 13) *Lebanon's arms market is on the rise*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1413252/au-liban-le-marche-des-armes-a-le-vent-en-poupe.html>

⁶¹ thisislebanon (2024, April 28). *After a problem in Aley. Army arrests 3 citizens*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/423375/>

⁶² MTV (2024, November 8). *Armed Robbery in Broad Daylight*. Retrieved from: <https://www.mtv.com.lb/en/News/Local/1514159/watch--armed-robbery-in-broad-daylight>

⁶³ This is Lebanon (2024, October 18). *A murder that shook Nabaa area*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/407946/>

⁶⁴ This is Lebanon (2024, November 3). *Exploiting Residents' Displacement... Theft Gang Arrested in the Tyre Region*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/418193/>

son,⁶⁵ while in Beddawi, another man shot his sister in the chest before fleeing the scene,⁶⁶ and in Batroun, a man killed his father and two relatives before committing suicide.⁶⁷ Other notable incidents include the killing of a Lebanese Army guard near the Port of Beirut,⁶⁸ and the murder of Dr. Fadi Chehwan in Koura.⁶⁹

Breaches of International Humanitarian Law⁷⁰

Between October 2023 and November 2024, Lebanon witnessed unprecedented violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) resulting from the armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. Following the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, Hezbollah launched attacks from Southern Lebanon on October 8, 2023. In response, the Israeli military undertook extensive aerial, artillery, and drone bombardments targeting areas far beyond the southern border, including parts of Beirut, the Chouf, the Bekaa, and Northern Lebanon. These attacks persisted until a ceasefire was reached on November 27, 2024, though a ground invasion of Southern Lebanon persists since October 1, 2024.

By the end of 2024, the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health reported 4,047 people killed, including 1,106 women and children, and 16,638 injured as a result of Israeli military operations. The United Nations and Lebanese authorities estimated that approximately 1.4 million people were internally displaced during this period. Vulnerable groups - including migrant MDWs, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children - faced heightened risks, including abandonment, exclusion from evacuation protocols, and poor access to basic services and shelter.

Israeli forces were accused of grave breaches of IHL, many of which may amount to war crimes. These include:

- Indiscriminate attacks on civilians: Multiple airstrikes targeted populated areas with no apparent military objectives. For example, the October 2024 airstrike on the town of Aitou killed 21 civilians, including 12 women and two children.
- Deliberate targeting of journalists: Journalists were repeatedly targeted in airstrikes despite wearing identifiable press gear. Notable cases include the killing of Reuters photojournalist Issam Abdallah and several media workers from Al-Mayadeen and Al-Manar TV. These acts violate Article 79 of Additional Protocol I and may constitute war crimes under Article 8 of the Rome Statute.
- Attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities: The Israeli military struck medical centers, humanitarian convoys, and UNIFIL positions. These actions are explicitly prohibited under IHL and jeopardize neutral humanitarian access.
- Use of unlawful weapons and methods of warfare: On September 17-18, 2024, Israel detonated thousands of booby-trapped communication devices across Lebanon. This coordinated attack killed at least 39 people and injured over 3,400 - including health workers and civilians in public areas. The use of disguised explosive devices constitutes a violation of

⁶⁵ This is Lebanon (2024, August 19). *A man kills his son with a military rifle in Baalbek*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/366717/>

⁶⁶ This is Lebanon (2024, November 24). *He shot his sister... and fled*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/430579/>

⁶⁷ This is Lebanon (2024, September 14). *Initial information surrounded the murder in Batroun*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/379332/>

⁶⁸ Al Jadeed (2024, June 14). *The discovery of a Lebanese Army member found dead in the vicinity of the Port of Beirut*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljadeed.tv/news/%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA/491142/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8B-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B7-%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%A3-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AA>

⁶⁹ MTV (2024, October 30). *Tragic Murder of Doctor Fadi Chehwan Uncovered in Koura*. Retrieved from: <https://www.mtv.com.lb/en/News/Local/1509589/tragic-murder-of-doctor-fadi-chehwan-uncovered-in-koura>

⁷⁰ ALEF (2025). *Blurred Boundaries: Humanitarian Law and Displacement in the 2024 Lebanon Conflict*.

the prohibition on weapons that cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering and undermines the principle of distinction.

- Environmental destruction: Israeli attacks destroyed large tracts of agricultural land, forests, and civilian livelihoods in Southern Lebanon. These acts, conducted without proportional military justification, contravene Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions and customary IHL protecting the natural environment.

Hezbollah was accused of the following breaches of IHL:

- Failure to distinguish between civilians and combatants: Hezbollah conducted attacks using inaccurate or imprecise weapons, such as rockets, across the Israeli border, many of which landed in civilian areas. This failure to distinguish military from civilian targets violates the principle of distinction, a core tenet of IHL.
- Indiscriminate attacks: Hezbollah's use of rockets and explosive-laden drones often lacked the capacity to be directed at a specific military objective, rendering the attacks indiscriminate in nature and prohibited under Article 51 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions .
- Use of human shields and military operations in civilian areas: Hezbollah has been repeatedly accused of positioning military assets in densely populated areas, potentially using civilians as human shields.

These operations not only violated fundamental rules of IHL - including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution - but also exacerbated Lebanon's already fragile humanitarian conditions. ALEF considers that several of these violations meet the legal threshold of war crimes and calls for urgent, independent international investigations to ensure accountability and uphold the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Kidnapping

Kidnappings in Lebanon are undertaken mainly for ransoms, political motives, or clan conflicts. In the first quarter of 2024, kidnapping rates saw a 150% surge.⁷¹ Habib , a school student, was kidnapped on the morning of October 11 in front of his school in the city of Al-Mina, Tripoli.⁷² ⁷³ After few days, the student safely returned to his family's home after the Intelligence Branch succeeded in rescuing him from his captors in Syria. The transgression was driven by a financial dispute, as the father owed money to the perpetrators. Another financially -motivated kidnapping took place on October 18, when a Syrian man abducted a two-year-old girl in Bikfaya, demanding a ransom of \$3,000. The ISF tracked down the kidnapper in Akkar District, arrested him, and rescued the girl.⁷⁴

Death Penalty

The death penalty in Lebanon is reserved for the most severe criminal punishment in the Lebanese Criminal Code, under Title II, Chapter I, namely under Articles 37 and 43. Nevertheless, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Resolution No.59/2005 calls upon countries that maintain

⁷¹ The 961. (2024, April 2). *An Old Man Was Just Killed in A Home Robbery in Achrafieh, Here's What We Know*. Retrieved from <https://www.the961.com/an-old-man-killed-in-a-crime-in-achrafieh/>

⁷² Imlebanon (2024, October 11). *A student was kidnapped in front of his school in Tripoli* Retrieved from <https://www.imlebanon.org/2024/10/11/tripoli45-4/#:~:text=%D8%A3%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85%20%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%87%D9%88%D9%84%D9%88%D9%86%20%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A9,%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86%20%D9%88%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AA%20%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82%D9%8B%D8%A7%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%AB.>

⁷³ Imlebanon (2024, October 16). *Student Habib Naja freed from his kidnappers* Retrieved from <https://www.imlebanon.org/2024/10/16/naja54322/>

⁷⁴ Thisislebanon. (2024, October 20). *Kidnapping of a child...and a raid to free her!* Retrieved from <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/408740/>

the death penalty to suspend executions and apply a moratorium. Even though Lebanon has not signed this resolution and death sentences are still issued, no executions have been conducted since 2004 because of an undeclared moratorium on the practice.

Although international activists have continuously called for the formal abolition of the death penalty,⁷⁵ it continues to garner public and political support. In March 2024, the Military Court sentenced the infamous Lebanese drug traffickers, Nuh and Ali Zaiter, to death in absentia. The duo was involved in a violent operation that involved an attack on the Lebanese Army in the Bekaa. The attack, orchestrated by both men and carried out by a group of armed men, resulted in the killing of an LAF soldier and the injury of others.⁷⁶

Prohibition of Slavery or Servitude and Slave Trade

Migrant Domestic Workers

Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) have become a staple of Lebanese life. Before 2019, Lebanon hosted over 400,000 MDWs from various countries in African and South and Southeast Asian countries, making up about 10% of the female population.⁷⁷ Migrant workers reached 176,504 individuals in between May and July 2024,⁷⁸ representing a 10% increase from 2023,⁷⁹ as a result of the reduction in host families' financial capabilities due to the economic crisis and the devaluation of the Lebanese Pound, which also reduced MDWs' ability to support their families abroad.⁸⁰

The Lebanese Labor Law excludes MDWs from its provisions and places them under the control of the sponsorship system, better known as the Kafala system. The Kafala system places more power in the hands of the employers, providing them with absolute control over the legal status and work permit of the MDW.⁸¹ The vast majority of MDWs are recruited through agencies, which have commonly faced criticism for encouraging human rights abuses against MDWs,⁸² such as mistreatment or requesting worker-paid recruitment fees.

With no ability to decide their work schedule or freedoms, MDWs often face several abuses, such as denial of time off, non-payment of wages, restriction of movement, confiscation of passport and identification documents, and other forms of ill-treatment, such as physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.⁸³ General Security requires domestic workers to live with their employers and uses it as a condition for residency renewal, despite this not being part of any law.⁸⁴ In September 2020, the Ministry of Labor adopted an updated standard unified contract to implement safeguards such as the

⁷⁵ By The East. (2019, April 23). *Lebanon could play a role model*. Retrieved from <https://www.bytheeast.com/2019/04/23/lynn-maalouf-on-death-penalty-lebanon-could-play-a-role-model/>.

⁷⁶ Al Modon. (2024, March 11). *Drug dealers Noah Zaiter and Abu Sala sentenced to death*. Retrieved from <https://www.almodon.com/society/2024/3/11/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85-%D8%A8%D8%A5%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%AD-%D8%B2%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%B1-%D9%88-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A9>

⁷⁷ Anti-Racism Movement. (2022, February 18). *Domestic Work in Lebanon Post-2019: Reflections on Emerging Trends*. Retrieved from <https://armlebanon.org/domestic-work-in-lebanon-post-2019-reflections-on-emerging-trends/>

⁷⁸ International Organization for Migration. (2024, August). *Migrant Presence Monitoring*. Retrieved from: https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1461/files/reports/MPM_Report_Round%204.pdf

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ As-Saffir Al-Arabi. (2021, October 28). *Migrant Workers in Collapsed Lebanon. How did it go?* Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/yxwtrenx>

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch. (2018, April 6). *Lebanon: Migrant Worker's Abuse Account*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/06/lebanon-migrant-workers-abuse-account>.

⁸² Middle East Monitor. (2018, May 8). *Women Migrant Workers Come Together Against the kafala System in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180508-women-migrant-workers-come-together-against-the-kafala-system-in-lebanon/>.

⁸³ Human Rights Watch. (2018, April 6). *Lebanon: Migrant Worker's Abuse Account*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/06/lebanon-migrant-workers-abuse-account>.

⁸⁴ ILO. (2016). *Intertwined - A Study of Employers of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <http://www.kafa.org.lb/StudiesPublicationPDF/PRpdf-100-636294924587081719.pdf>.

obligation to pay the equivalent of the national minimum wage or terminate the contract without the employer's consent, with a month's notice. However, it was suspended after the Shura Council ruled in favor of a complaint filed by the Syndicate of the Owners of Recruitment Agencies.⁸⁵

The working conditions many MDWs encounter have led to an alarming number of suicide cases, with two MDWs dying per week, according to the latest General Security reports in 2020. Those trying to flee abusive workspaces risk detention and deportation, as their legal status is linked to their employer. They seek the support network of migrant community groups, churches, and local supporters that provide them with shelter, work, and legal aid. The situation of MDWs in Lebanon is also characterized by a rise in exploitative methods since the start of the economic crisis. MDWs faced severe exploitation, including non-payment or underpayment of wages, increased abuse, and abandonment by employers. The devaluation of the Lebanese lira significantly reduced the value of MDWs' salaries, while many reported not receiving wages at all. The consequences of the crisis were such that many MDWs decided to leave Lebanon. Moreover, following the military escalation in September 2024, the situation of 61,000 migrant workers in parts of South Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley and Beirut,⁸⁶ was put at risk. Many were abandoned by their employers, left alone in their homes and unable to seek shelter amid heavy Israeli bombings. Additionally, several preventable deaths were reported in affected areas. However, due to complications associated with the Kafala system, it has been reported that responsible authorities failed to adequately repatriate or identify the bodies of migrants.⁸⁷

In this context, most commercial airlines suspended their flights to Lebanon, leading to a sharp increase in ticket prices and making evacuations unattainable⁸⁸ for MDWs seeking to leave the country. Many faced additional challenges returning to their countries of origin, often exacerbated by abusive practices permitted by the *kafala* system, such as the confiscation of passports and other documents by employers,⁸⁹ which made it nearly impossible for workers to leave the country.⁹⁰ In November 2024, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reportedly received 20,000 new requests from migrants and their embassies in Lebanon for travel assistance.⁹² While the organization offered voluntary repatriation assistance for migrants to their countries of origin, several challenges such as financial restrictions, limited flight availability, and insufficient support from embassies, left many feeling abandoned.⁹³ These circumstances have pushed many migrants to work in an unregulated shadow economy, with reports of some being forced into labor or sex trafficking.

Seeking legal aid against cases of abuse or rape against an employer still proves hopeless for MDWs. So far, no employer has been punished by the Lebanese justice system for restricting a worker's movement or withholding their documents and the worst sentence for physical abuse was issued at

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch. (2020, October 30). *Lebanon: Blow to Migrant Domestic Worker Rights*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/30/lebanon-blow-migrant-domestic-worker-rights>

⁸⁶ The New Humanitarian. (2024, September 26). *Lebanon's migrant workers left stranded and homeless by Israeli attacks*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2024/09/26/lebanons-migrant-workers-left-stranded-homeless-israeli-attacks>

⁸⁷ L'Orient Le-Jour (2024, November 7). *Employées de maison, travailleurs étrangers : ces victimes oubliées de la guerre au Liban*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1433527/employees-de-maison-travailleurs-etrangers-ces-victimes-oubliees-de-la-guerre-au-liban.html>

⁸⁸ The New Arab. (2024, October 11). *With limited flight options available, luxury yachts and boats become lifelines for Lebanese fleeing Israel's attacks*. Retrieved from: <https://www.newarab.com/features/limited-flights-how-are-lebanese-fleeing-israels-war>

⁸⁹ ReliefWeb. (2024, November 12). *Displacement of migrant workers in Lebanon increases risk of modern slavery*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/displacement-migrant-workers-lebanon-increases-risk-modern-slavery>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Elaph. (2024, October 11). *Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon: My employer locked me inside the house and fled to save his life!* Retrieved from <https://elaph.com/Web/News/2024/10/1550453.html>

⁹² International Organization for Migration. (11, November 2024). *IOM supports migrants to return home from conflict-stricken Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://mena.iom.int/news/iom-supports-migrants-return-home-conflict-stricken-lebanon>

⁹³ ReliefWeb. (2024, November 12). *Displacement of migrant workers in Lebanon increases risk of modern slavery*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/displacement-migrant-workers-lebanon-increases-risk-modern-slavery>

one month in prison. Nevertheless, in 2021, the first criminal case alleging slavery of an MDW was filed by Legal Action Worldwide on behalf of an Ethiopian woman who was held captive without her passport or salary in her employer's apartment for eight years. The hearing, initially set to begin in October 2021, is still underway as of February 2024, after the defendants repeatedly failed to appear.⁹⁴ MDWs attempting to press charges often faced counter -accusations, such as theft, and many were unable to pursue legal action due to financial constraints or deportation before trial. The justice system also failed to provide adequate language interpretation services, with judges addressing MDWs in languages they may not fully understand, further compromising their ability to participate in legal proceedings.

Mainly due to a lack of political will and limitations imposed by the law which does not allow domestic workers to organize themselves,⁹⁵ the Ministry of Labor (MoL) does not recognize the Domestic Workers Union as legal, thus denying MDWs in Lebanon their right to form and join unions and subsequently create meaningful and positive change. Even though the union continued campaigning for MDWs' rights, its reach has been limited to only 700 members.⁹⁶ The low support of employers also hampers the success of the labor union is also hampered by the low support of employers, as 70% would not want their MDW to attend trade union meetings.⁹⁷

The new standardized employment contract for domestic workers, issued in 2020, ensures minimum wage for migrant workers and gives them the right to unilaterally decide when they want to terminate their contract if they inform their employer a month in advance. The contract had several beneficial objectives but was criticized for its impractical application.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Legal Action Worldwide. (2024, February 29). *Happening now in Baabda palace in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://x.com/LegalActionWW/status/1763138855622906226https://x.com/LegalActionWW/status/1763138855622906226>

⁹⁵ See Lebanese Labor Code Art. 7

⁹⁶ Equal Times. (2018, May 22). *Abused Ethiopian Domestic Worker is "the Poster Girl for Kafala" in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.equaltimes.org/abused-ethiopian-domestic-worker?lang=en#.XFFp3FUzbiU>.

⁹⁷ ILO. (2016). *Intertwined - A Study of Employers of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/study-employers-migrant-domestic-workers-lebanon-intertwined>

⁹⁸ The Legal Agenda. (2020, November 11). *Lebanon's New Standard Domestic Worker Contract: A Coin with Two Sides*. Retrieved from <https://english.legal-agenda.com/lebanons-new-standard-domestic-worker-contract-a-coin-with-two-sides/>

Human Trafficking

Although progress has been made in recent years with a rising number of investigations into cases of human trafficking in Lebanon, the 2011 Anti-Human Trafficking law's provisions are still neither sufficiently nor adequately enforced. An anti-trafficking commission has been set up under the National Human Rights Commission, and the DGGS and MoL established hotlines for potential victims. Identified victims are referred to NGOs for protection services and safe houses, as the government does not provide protection services. There are protective provisions in the 2011 law, such as excluding the victim's identity from official reports if there is a threat to their safety or decisions to allow undocumented victims to stay in Lebanon during the time of the investigation. Still, there are no reports of these provisions being effectively implemented.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the prevalent political deadlock in Lebanon disrupted efforts to pass a drafted amendment to the 2011 Anti-Trafficking law, although its passage was previously approved by the Cabinet in October 2023.¹⁰⁰ Victims remain at high risk of being arrested or detained for illegal acts committed under the authority of the trafficker, such as irregular stays on the territory. Moreover, the trust fund for victims of human trafficking has yet to be set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA).

Identifying a victim of trafficking is considered the first stage of safeguarding their rights. However, in Lebanon, trafficking victims largely depend on NGOs and international organizations for support due to the government's weak victim identification and protection efforts.¹⁰¹ For instance, while at least 148 potential victims were identified in 2022, only nine were officially recognized as trafficking victims by the judiciary. Similarly, in 2023, an NGO reported assisting 769 victims, yet only 15 victims had been officially referred by the government¹⁰². In March 2024, Lebanon launched a new Human Trafficking Identification Kit, which serves as a reference document and work tool to detect human trafficking crimes and identify potential victims.¹⁰³ However, its impact has yet to be observed. Since the start of the economic crisis, trafficking of all kinds has been multiplying, including trafficking of humans, especially between Syria and Lebanon.¹⁰⁴ Syrian refugees are thus especially vulnerable and continuously exposed to trafficking in exchange for transit to flee Syria.¹⁰⁵

Overzealous enforcement of legal residency requirements impedes victims' access to justice. Indeed, when victims lack documentation because they were trafficked, they may be detained due to their undocumented status or even deported. Lebanon lacks the capacity or framework to allow for remote testimony from abroad, which means that if a victim is deported or voluntarily repatriated before the conclusion of the prosecution, the trafficker may escape justice. Even when provided with protection from retaliation or deportation, it often takes the form of *de facto* arbitrary detention, as victims are kept in shelters or safe houses during lengthy trial processes. The locations of these shelters are kept secret for the protection of the victims, but, in practice, this results in extreme isolation and vulnerability for those housed there. Additionally, victims cannot leave these shelters without

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of State. (2021). *2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/lebanon/>.

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Department of State. (2024). *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/lebanonhttps://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/lebanon>

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ National News Agency. (2024, March 11). *The Minister of Justice launched from Tunisia the reference guide to identify victims of Human Trafficking in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1/680234https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1/680234>

¹⁰⁴ L'Orient Today. (2021, April 12). *Arrestation d'un homme accusé de trafic d'êtres humains*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientjour.com/article/1258268/arrestation-dun-homme-accuse-de-traffic-detres-humains.html>.

¹⁰⁵ UNODC. (2021, June 11). *UNODC Supports Jordan and Lebanon to Respond to Trafficking of Refugees*. Retrieved from <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/Webstories2021/unodc-supports-jordan-and-lebanon-to-respond-to-trafficking-of-refugees.html>.

permission from the DGGS.^{106 107} In May 2024, a sex trafficking case gained widespread attention and outrage, following the arrest of a famous content creator on the social media platform “TikTok”, who was allegedly part of a larger network. Media outlets reported that the gang used the application to lure minors before sexually assaulting them on camera.¹⁰⁸ According to the police, the acts, such as exploitative images and rape videos, were filmed for sale at high prices online.¹⁰⁹ The ISF later called on parents to “take the lead in making their children aware of the risks they run on the Internet”.¹¹⁰ In total, at least six people were arrested out of 28 suspected individuals.¹¹¹

Attempts of Syrians, Palestinians, and Lebanese citizens to leave the country via irregular and dangerous migration routes, often through human trafficking networks, continued through 2024. In June, for instance, the Lebanese Armed Forces announced the arrest of at least five individuals for human smuggling.¹¹² Furthermore, in December 2024, the ISF announced the arrest of an individual involved in human trafficking.¹¹³ Following investigations, it was allegedly found that he was a member of a gang that kidnapped young men in Bebnine.¹¹⁴ A month before, two individuals were arrested in Zouk Mosbeh for forming a gang that also deceived victims into smuggling them to Europe in exchange for large sums of money.¹¹⁵ These acts targeted Syrian Refugees in multiple areas across the country.¹¹⁶ Prisoners Sentenced to Hard Labor

The Lebanese judiciary often sentences convicts to hard labor sentences, especially for individuals charged with collaboration with Israel. The sentence technically entails a prolonged stay in prison coupled with physical labor of an afflictive nature and fewer rights. Although it is not practically implemented in prisons, the sentence itself violates international human rights instruments Lebanon is party to, most notably the UDHR, the ICCPR, and the Convention Against Torture.

In May 2024, the Kataeb party submitted a draft law to parliament aiming to amend Articles 503 to 521 of the Lebanese Penal Code which address sexual assault crimes. Through this proposal, the party seeks to significantly increase penalties, setting sentences ranging between 20 years of hard labor to life imprisonment for perpetrators.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, these sentences continue to be handed to prisoners. In July 2024, for instance, the Criminal Court of North Lebanon sentenced a man to 68 years

¹⁰⁶ ALEF. (2013). *Guilty Until Proven Innocent: Report on the Root Causes of Arbitrary Detention, Long Delays in Trial and Lengthy pre-Trial Detention*. Retrieved from <https://alefliban.org/publications/guilty-until-proven-innocent/>.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State. (2024, June). *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/lebanon/> (accessed 19.05.2025)

¹⁰⁸ Arab News. (2024, May 12). *TikTok gang bust lays bare continued criminal abuse of children in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2508526/middle-east>

¹⁰⁹ L’Orient Today. (2024, May 8). *What is the ‘dark web,’ allegedly used by a TikTok pedophile gang arrested in Lebanon?*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1412910/what-is-the-dark-web-allegedly-used-by-a-tiktok-pedophile-gang-arrested-in-lebanon.html>

¹¹⁰ L’Orient Today. (2024, May 7). *Pedophile network on TikTok in Lebanon: Police publish prevention guide*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1412863/pedophile-network-on-tiktok-in-lebanon-police-publish-prevention-guide.html>

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. (2024, November 13). *Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) during the period from 21 June to 20 October 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/817https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/817>

¹¹³ LBCI. (2024, December 5). *Arrest of a wanted man for human trafficking and active in the field of kidnapping young men and demanding ransom from their families*. Retrieved from <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/lebanon-security/821796/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%81-%D9%85%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D9%88%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D9%81-%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8-%D9%81%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B0%D9%88/ar>

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ This is Lebanon. (2024, November 4). *“Security” reveals a professional fraud gang promoting immigration to Europe*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/419240/>

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ The Legal Agenda. (2024, May 15). *Kataeb Bill on Public Morality: Criminalizing Marital Rape... and by trickery*. Retrieved from: <https://tinyurl.com/ypzt4tu5>

of hard labor for raping his three children.^{118 119} Additionally, in December 2024, a lawsuit has been filed against a young man who ran over a police officer on duty stipulating a penalty of hard labor of up to 20 years in prison.¹²⁰¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Asharq Al-Awsat. (2024, July 15). *68 years of hard labor for a Lebanese who raped his three children*. Retrieved from:

¹¹⁹ Library of Congress. (2024, September 13). *Lebanon: Father Sentenced to 68 Years in Prison for Raping His Three Children*. Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2024-09-13/lebanon-father-sentenced-to-68-years-in-prison-for-raping-his-three-children/>

¹²⁰ Nidaa Al-Watan. (2024, December 16). *Khalil Sibliini faced hard labor*. Retrieved from : <https://www.nidaalwatan.com/article/298494https://www.nidaalwatan.com/article/298494>

¹²¹ Annahar. (2024, December 26). *Shocking Beirut Biker faces hard labor sentence*. Retrieved from: <https://annah.ar/183094https://annah.ar/183094>

Judicial Rights

Prohibition of Torture or Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment

Even though torture and ill-treatment are prohibited under Lebanon's international obligations, in practice, both are still common in the country, especially during interrogations.¹²² Many confessions are made under torture, denying detainees the right to a fair trial.¹²³ While security officials are trained on alternative techniques that avoid the use of torture, it is still perceived as a justified means of investigation in Lebanon.¹²⁴

In 2017, Article 401 of the Lebanese Penal Code was amended to expand the previously limited definition of torture. However, the new amendment ignores concerns raised by the Committee Against Torture (CAT)¹²⁵ since it does not comply with the norms of the UNCAT and does not include provisions on ill-treatment. Moreover, the penalties for torture do not equate to the severity of the action, making the law obsolete if abusers are not deterred.¹²⁶ Most importantly, the Lebanese judiciary has been completely failing to implement the new law criminalizing torture. Lebanese authorities should prosecute torture cases under the new law until improvements to its content are made. Additionally, Lebanese courts should interpret the law in line with Lebanon's obligations under international human rights law.

In March, Lebanese Military Intelligence arrested a 23-year-old Syrian man with special needs during a protest in Sin-el-Fil. A forensic medical examination later confirmed that he had been beaten and tortured. The exam revealed that the marks and scars on his body resulted from being struck with a sharp object.¹²⁷ Additionally, testimonies from the groups participating in the sit-in reveal that several Lebanese Military Intelligence were contacted for the man's whereabouts for six hours to no avail, and that a statement was extracted from him from force as he was forced to sign a statement stating he was a terrorist.¹²⁸

"Medical tests" on persons suspected of belonging to the LGBTQ community

Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code punishes "any sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature." The vagueness of this article gives considerable flexibility in its interpretation. Under the guise of enforcing this provision, security forces regularly harassed LGBTQ individuals and those suspected of being LGBTQ¹²⁹, at checkpoints. If detained, some individuals are forced to undergo extremely invasive and brutal tests to assess whether they committed acts in violation of Article 534. However, these "exams" have no medical validity and constitute torture. Transgender people have reported

¹²² CLDH. (2021). *Torture, an Illegal and Failing Tool of Interrogations: A Documentation of the Use of Torture During Interrogations in Lebanon*. Retrieved from http://www.rightsobserver.org/files/Torture,_An_illegal_and_failing_tool_of_interrogations_-_July_2021.pdf.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Alkarama. (2017, May 12). *Lebanon: UN Committee Deplores Routine Use of Torture*. Retrieved from <https://www.alkarama.org/en/articles/lebanon-un-committee-deplores-routine-use-torture>

¹²⁶ Alkarama. (2017, September 29). *Lebanon: New Anti-Torture Law a Missed Opportunity, Fails to Meet Standards of UN Convention Against Torture*. Retrieved from <https://www.alkarama.org/en/articles/lebanon-new-anti-torture-law-missed-opportunity-fails-meet-standards-un-convention-against>

¹²⁷ Human Rights Watch. (2025, April 15). *Lebanon: Stepped-Up Repression of Syrians*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/25/lebanon-stepped-repression-syrians>

¹²⁸ Legal Agenda. (2024, March 12) *العالمي المرأة يوم في اعتصام خلال توقيفه بعد شاب تعذيب*. Retrieved from https://legal-agenda.com/%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B0%D9%8A%D8%A8-%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%81%D9%87-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹²⁹ Human Rights Watch. (2019, September 3). *Lebanon: End Systemic Violence Against Transgender Women Protect Against Discrimination, Simplify Legal Gender Recognition*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/03/lebanon-end-systemic-violence-against-transgender-women>.

ubiquitous torture and mistreatment in custody based on their gender identity – a clear violation of the CAT.¹³⁰

National Human Rights Institute and National Prevention Mechanism

In 2016, the Lebanese Parliament passed a law to set up the National Human Rights Institute (NHRI), whose task is to monitor the human rights situation in Lebanon and end the use of torture, as well as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM). The NPM is an independent body mandated to improve conditions of detention by examining detention facilities in unannounced visits, as required by the OPCAT. In 2019, members were officially appointed to the NHRI by Cabinet decree. Although this mechanism is essential for the implementation of a stable and successful framework against torture in Lebanon, it has yet to be successful in the execution of its functions. In fact, only three of five members have been actively conducting their duties, allegedly due to a lack of resources and the lack of approval for its regulating decrees. However, in 2024, the NHRC carried out several field activities, like conducting 228 visits to 182 detention facilities, and documenting the situation of displaced people throughout Lebanon.¹³¹ Despite this increased activity, the mechanism continues to operate with weak implementation of its legal framework, lacking the resources to function thoroughly.¹³² The process for appointing NHRI/NPM members has faced criticism since members are selected without objectively assessing their expertise or knowledge relevant to the NHRI/NPM's¹³³

Prison Conditions

Article 10 of the ICCPR requires inmates to be treated with humanity and respect. Furthermore, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/175 – also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules – establishes standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners in order to ensure humane conditions of detention and is binding for Lebanon as customary international law.¹³⁴ However, problems related to prison overcrowding, safety, and management in Lebanese prisons remain a serious concern,¹³⁵ as no comprehensive strategy to address these issues has been developed by the government yet.¹³⁶

In 2024, Lebanese prisons and detention centers held 8,402 inmates, with 48% being foreigners, mainly Syrians and Palestinians.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the rate of pre-trial detainees has consistently increased over the past years, rising from 30% in 2019 to 53.77% in 2023.¹³⁸, and reaching an alarming

130 Human Rights Watch (2019, September 3). *Lebanon: End Systemic Violence Against Transgender Women Protect Against Discrimination, Simplify Legal Gender Recognition*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/03/lebanon-end-systemic-violence-against-transgender-women>.

131 National Human Rights Commission of Lebanon, including the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (NHRC-CPT). (2025, May 22). *Annual report of NHRC-CPT for the year 2024*. National Human Rights Commission of Lebanon. Retrieved July 10, 2025, from <https://nhrcb.org/en/archives/3101>

132 National Human Rights Commission – Committee for the Prevention of Torture (NHRC-CPT). (2022). *Report to the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture following the May 2022 visit to Lebanon (CPT-Report-SPT Visit-LB0522)*. <https://en.nhrcb.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CPT-Report-SPT-Visit-LB0522-En.pdf>

133 IRCT. (2020, July 9). *Torture and detention in Lebanon*. Retrieved from chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://irct.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Briefing-note_Lebanon_2020.pdf

134 UNODC. (2015, December 17). *The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)*. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/GA-RESOLUTION/E_ebook.pdf.

135 Human Rights Watch. (2017, January 26). *It's not the right place for us - The Trial of Civilians by Military Courts in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/01/26/its-not-right-place-us/trial-civilians-military-courts-lebanon>.

136 ALEF. (2010, October). *Situational Update on the Occurrences and Trend of Torture in Lebanon (2008-2010): Torture prevention and Monitoring in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://alefliban.org/publications/situational-update-on-the-occurrences-and-trends-of-torture-in-lebanon-torture-prevention-and-monitoring-in-lebanon/>.

137 L'Orient Today. (2024, August 30). *Prison overcrowding: Beirut Bar Association blames judicial delays among other factors*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1425496/prison-overcrowding-beirut-bar-association-blames-judicial-delays-among-other-factors.html>

138 according to information from the DoP

83% in 2024.¹³⁹ These figures are based on findings by the Beirut Bar Association, whose team visited 24 prisons and 226 detention centers across Lebanon.¹⁴⁰

With the ongoing economic crisis, the situation in prisons continues to deteriorate drastically. The state has been incapable of providing prisoners with their basic needs, such as food, healthcare, proper shelter, or even a chance of being tried. Pretrial detention, overcrowding, a crumbling infrastructure, and an impoverished health system remain the major recurring problems to this day.¹⁴¹
142

The slow pace of the judicial system, including delays in hearings and the lack of resources for transporting detainees, exacerbates the situation. Additionally, many prisoners cannot pay compensation fees required for their release after serving their sentences. The poor conditions, including insufficient healthcare and the lack of rehabilitative services, contribute to the deterioration of prisoners' health and hinder efforts to reduce recidivism. A judicial emergency plan is being considered to address these issues, including increasing the number of magistrates and providing legal assistance to defendants.¹⁴³

A fight between prisoners in Roumieh prison escalated into a mutiny in June, leading to a hostage situation involving a member of the ISF. During the unrest, a fire broke out in one of the prison buildings, prompting authorities to intervene and restore order, ensuring the safety of both staff and inmates.¹⁴⁴ The already critical conditions in Lebanese prisons, worsened by the 2019 economic crisis, were highlighted by this incident. Overcrowding, with Roumieh prison housing around 4,000 inmates despite a capacity of just 1,200, is a major issue. Lebanese prisons, which have a total capacity of 4,760, currently hold over 8,500 prisoners, 80% of whom are awaiting trial. This has contributed to malnutrition, lack of healthcare, and an increasing number of deaths among inmates. Roumieh prison is known for frequent mutinies due to these dire conditions.¹⁴⁵ A disruption broke out in a room at Qobbeh prison in Tripoli when several prisoners injured themselves with sharp objects to protest the prison's decision to transfer certain inmates to another facility.¹⁴⁶

In 2024, Lebanon experienced a surge in prison breaks. In September alone, the ISF thwarted an escape from Batroun Prison,¹⁴⁷ followed by similar failed attempts in Baalbek and Roumieh Prisons.¹⁴⁸ Days later, Roumieh Prison witnessed a jail break, where the escapee attempted to flee using a rope made of blankets and was not apprehended.¹⁴⁹ In Zahle Prison, another inmate managed to flee during

¹³⁹ L'Orient Today. (2024, August 30). *Prison overcrowding: Beirut Bar Association blames judicial delays among other factors*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1425496/prison-overcrowding-beirut-bar-association-blames-judicial-delays-among-other-factors.html>

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Human Rights Watch. (2024, January 11). *Lebanon: Rights Under Threat Amid Crisis*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/11/lebanon-rights-under-threat-amid-crisis>

¹⁴² L'Orient Today. (2024, August 30). *Prison overcrowding: the bar points out, among other things, the slowness of justice*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1425418/surpopulation-carcerale-le-barreau-pointe-entre-autres-la-lenteur-de-la-justice.html>

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ L'Orient Today. (2024, June 10). *Brief mutiny at Roumié prison, policeman taken hostage freed*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1416820/mutinerie-a-la-prison-de-roumie-un-policier-pris-en-otage.html>

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

LebanonFiles. (2020, August 22). *A rebellion inside the Qubba prison. Use sharp instruments and fall wounded!* Retrieved from <https://www.lebanonfiles.com/articles/%d8%a3%d8%ae%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d9%85%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%8a%d9%91%d8%a9/%d8%aa%d9%85%d8%b1%d9%91%d8%af-%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%ae%d9%84-%d8%b3%d8%ac%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d8%a8%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%aa%d8%ae%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%85-%d8%a2%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%ad%d8%a7%d8%af%d8%a9/>

¹⁴⁷ This is Lebanon. (2024, September 3). *Thwarting an escape attempt from Batroun prison!* Retrieved from <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/373911/>

¹⁴⁸ This is Lebanon. (2024, September 28). *Thwarting escape attempts in Baalbek and Roumieh prisons*. Retrieved from <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/389895/>

¹⁴⁹ This is Lebanon, (2024, September 8). *"A rope made of sheets".. This is how a prisoner escaped from Roumieh!* Retrieved from <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/376371/>

a medical examination.¹⁵⁰ Amidst all the chaos and airstrikes on Lebanon that month, 130 prisoners also managed to escape from Jezzine prison but were all caught by the ISF.¹⁵¹

Furthermore, children are also held in immigration detention in Lebanon. Those in pre-trial detention spend, on average, more than a month in Lebanese prisons, although some are detained for up to one year. What is more alarming is the lack of independent judicial oversight, as immigration detention decisions are taken by the DGGS, which acts as Lebanon's immigration police.¹⁵² In addition to the persisting lack of care, there is also often no adequate distribution of minors, as they are often detained with unrelated adults, and detainees held for minor misdemeanours could be in the same room with people detained for felonies.¹⁵³ Juvenile detention facilities in Lebanon remain limited and unavailable in some regions, pushing police stations to hold most minors in detention, often exceeding the legally-permissible 48-hour limit renewed only once.¹⁵⁴

Equality before the Law and Protection against Incitement

Article 7 of the UDHR declares, "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law," including protection against incitement to such discrimination. While Lebanon's constitution guarantees these rights, their practical implementation remains a significant challenge. Personal status courts often create disparities in legal treatment based on an individual's religious affiliation and can lead to unequal application of laws. The pervasive issue of political interference in the judiciary also means that many legal cases remain in limbo due to the accused being protected by political connections. High-profile cases often stall indefinitely, creating a culture of impunity for those with political clout. The result is a legal system where the ideals of equal protection often clash with entrenched power structures and sectarian divisions that enable incitement rather than addressing it.

Detention of Non-Citizens

In Lebanon, foreigners can be detained and deported through criminal and administrative procedures for violations of immigration regulations. Nevertheless, there is no standard procedure concerning the detention and criminal prosecution of non-citizens who enter or remain in Lebanon without a valid visa or residency. Non-citizens are frequently arbitrarily confined in administrative detention.¹⁵⁵ For instance, in January, the LAF arrested a Syrian man at a military checkpoint near Tripoli who was apparently not carrying his legal residency papers.¹⁵⁶ Vulnerable groups such as refugees or domestic workers face particular issues, such as extended pre-trial detention, being kept in custody after completing sentences for a criminal conviction, and denial of legal aid.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ IM Lebanon. (2024, September 17). *Escaped from prison during medical examination*. Retrieved from <https://www.imlebanon.org/2024/09/17/jail-7/>

¹⁵¹ This is Beirut. (2024, September 28). *130 Prisoners Apprehended Out of 133 Who Escaped from Jezzine Prison*. Retrieved from <https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/lebanon/295704>

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ OHCHR. *Universal Periodic Review Second Cycle - Lebanon - Reference Documents | OHCHR*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/uprlb-stakeholders-info-s37>

¹⁵⁴ Interview conducted by ALEF with Restart Centre

¹⁵⁵ Global Detention Project. (2018, February). *Immigration Detention in Lebanon: Deprivation of Liberty at the Frontiers of Global Conflict*. Retrieved from <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GDP-Immigration-Detention-Report-Lebanon-2018-1.pdf>.

¹⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch. (2025, April 25). *Lebanon: Stepped-Up Repression of Syrians*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/25/lebanon-stepped-repression-syrians>

¹⁵⁷ Lebanese Center for Human Rights. (2017, January). *Legal Aid to Vulnerable Individuals in Lebanon*. Retrieved from http://www.rightsobserver.org/files/CLDH_Legal_Aid_Project_Report_2017.pdf.

Deportations and Criminal Offences

The 1962 Law regulating the entry and stay of foreigners in Lebanon and their exit from the country criminalizes individuals who enter the country without proper authorization. Individuals who overstay their visas are also at risk of being criminally prosecuted and administratively detained. Any breach of judicial or administrative deportation shall be punishable by imprisonment between one and six months. Therefore, foreigners believed to have breached the 1962 law may also be charged with criminal offenses leading to their pre-trial detention, imprisonment, and subsequent administrative detention. Administrative detention of foreigners in Lebanon is not based on any judicial reasoning. Typically, the DGGS claims they need more time to process the detainee's legal files.

The DGGS, Lebanon's security agency in charge of foreigners' entry and residency, continues to resort to deportation, especially when migrants are detained for their invalid residency status. This violates their right to challenge the circumstances of their detention and have their case reviewed by a competent court within a reasonable time. In 2019, Lebanon's Higher Defence Council decided to deport all Syrian refugees who had illegally entered Lebanon after the 24th of April 2019.¹⁵⁸ Due to this decision, Syrian men, women, and children detained by the DGGS or the LAF continue to be systematically deported to Syria.

Between April and May 2024, social tensions between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese host community escalated, prompting heightened risks of deportation.¹⁵⁹ In this context, the EU announced €1 Billion in financial aid to Lebanon, mostly to strengthen basic services such as education, social protection and health¹⁶⁰, as well as border and migration management.¹⁶¹ The package was widely criticized by various Lebanese political and religious figures, who viewed it as an incentive to keep Syrian refugees from leaving Lebanon and seeking asylum in Europe.¹⁶² In response Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati declared that "Any Syrian residing in Lebanon illegally will be deported, and a different approach will be taken towards all registered individuals compared to unregistered ones."¹⁶³

Protection against Incitement

Incitement to a crime is punishable, as stipulated in Article 217, which states that "an instigator is someone who encourages or attempts to encourage another person by any means to commit a crime." Nevertheless,¹⁶⁴ are widely targeted due to media and political incitement. In April 2024, the assassination of Pascal Sleiman, a Lebanese Forces official, triggered anti-¹⁶⁵ and violence that spread

¹⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch. (2019, September 19). *Syrians Deported by Lebanon Arrested at Home*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/02/syrians-deported-lebanon-arrested-home>

¹⁵⁹ UNHCR. (2024, September 6). *Protection Monitoring – Situation of Forcibly Displaced Syrians in Lebanon, 2nd Quarter 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/protection-monitoring-situation-forcibly-displaced-syrians-lebanon-2nd-quarter-2024>

¹⁶⁰ EU. (2024, May 2). *President von der Leyen reaffirms EU's strong support for Lebanon and its people and announces a €1 billion package of EU funding*. Retrieved from https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/president-von-der-leyen-reaffirms-eus-strong-support-lebanon-and-its-people-and-announces-eu1-2024-05-02_en

¹⁶¹ Arab News. (2024, May 4). *\$1.07bn EU 'bribe' over Syrian refugees stirs anger in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://arab.news/vi5e7>

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. (2024, August 28). *Targeted : How Misinformation Puts Lebanon's Syrian Refugees in Danger*. Retrieved from : <https://timep.org/2024/08/28/targeted-how-misinformation-puts-lebanons-syrian-refugees-in-danger/>

¹⁶⁵ Naharnet. (2024, April 9). *Sleiman's murder triggers backlash against Syrian refugees*. Retrieved from: <https://naharnet.com/stories/en/304499-sleiman-s-murder-triggers-backlash-against-syrian-refugees>

fear in the vulnerable community. Videos began circulating online of Syrian refugees being beaten and humiliated in the streets¹⁶⁶¹⁶⁷

Incitement remains a strategy often used by political groups in Lebanon against opposition. For instance, in November, Annahar journalist Nabil Mamlouk was severely assaulted in Tyre.^{168 169} He linked the assault to an ongoing wave of incitement against him. Furthermore, Eman Shweikh announced her resignation from MTV following alleged online threats and incitement by Hezbollah supporters.¹⁷⁰¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ The Guardian. (2024, May 8). *'If they see a Syrian, they beat them up': the refugees living in fear in Lebanon*. Retrieved from : https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/may/08/syrian-refugees-lebanon-death-christian-political-leader-vigilante-attacks?CMP=share_btn_urlhttps://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/may/08/syrian-refugees-lebanon-death-christian-political-leader-vigilante-attacks?CMP=share_btn_url

¹⁶⁷ L'Orient Today. (2024, April 16). *Pascal Sleiman's murder: Public anger turns toward Syrian residents*. Retrieved from : https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/may/08/syrian-refugees-lebanon-death-christian-political-leader-vigilante-attacks?CMP=share_btn_urlhttps://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/may/08/syrian-refugees-lebanon-death-christian-political-leader-vigilante-attacks?CMP=share_btn_url

¹⁶⁸ This Is Beirut. (2024, November 14). *Nabil Mamlouk, Journalist Assaulted for Voicing "Dissenting Opinions"*. Retrieved from : <https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/articles/1301255/nabil-mamlouk-journalist-facing-charges-for-dissenting-opinions><https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/articles/1301255/nabil-mamlouk-journalist-facing-charges-for-dissenting-opinions>

¹⁶⁹ SK Eyes Media. (2024, November 21). *Online Incitement, Real-World Consequences for Journalists in Lebanon*. Retrieved from : <https://www.skeyesmedia.org/en/News/Reports/21-11-2024/12099>

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Arab News. (2024, November 16). *Renowned Lebanese journalist quits MTV over death threats by alleged Hezbollah supporters*. Retrieved from : <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2579566/media>

Right to Effective Remedy by National Tribunals for Violations

Exceptional Courts

Lebanon has four main exceptional courts: the Supreme Council, the Judicial Council, the Military Court, and the Personal Status Courts. The Supreme Council is the special court created by the Taef accord, to investigate cases against the President of the Republic, Prime Minister, and Ministers for crimes that they may have committed in the line of duty and are not covered by the jurisdiction of normal judicial courts.¹⁷² The dominant perception seems to be that the only recourse to the Supreme Council happens when cases are wished, by political will, to be removed from normal courts and then being dismissed or simply forgotten. Until today, the Supreme Council has never exercised its duties, while the Judicial Council and the Military Tribunal have and notorious for various human rights abuses.¹⁷³

In November 2024, Lebanon's parliament passed a law extending the mandates of five Supreme Judicial Council members whose terms expired back in October 2024 and extending the terms of magistrates nearing retirement. This decision exceeds the usual appointment process, which has been stalled by Lebanon's political paralysis and presidential vacuum. The law also undermines judicial independence by allowing Parliament to arbitrarily extend judicial terms and create ad hoc membership rules based on political considerations, introducing sectarian calculations into what should be merit-based judicial appointments. Additionally, the Supreme Judicial Council now consists of only seven judges, with three positions remaining.¹⁷⁴

The Judicial Council

The Judicial Council was established under the Lebanese Criminal Code of Procedure (CCP) specifically Legislative Decree No. 150 of 16 September 1983 and only has jurisdiction over cases referred to it by the Council of Ministers, an executive body, on matters of national security, such as crimes including spying, treason, and illegal contact with Israel, as well as any crimes that involve at least one military personnel.¹⁷⁵ The Judicial Council is, therefore, criticized for being vulnerable to pressures from the executive branch and other political figures, in addition to lacking an appeals system.¹⁷⁶ Due to the nature of its mandate, the Judicial Council often utilizes Article 108 of the CCP, which determines exceptions to the time limits for pre-trial detention, to justify holding suspects in pre-trial detention indefinitely.

¹⁷² [Taif Agreement. Article B\(1\)](#)

¹⁷³ ALEF. (2018). *The Situation of Human Rights in Lebanon: Annual Report 2018*. Retrieved from <https://alefliban.org/publications/annual-report-2018/>

¹⁷⁴ L'Orient Today. (2024, December 2). *Jamal Hajjar joins the Supreme Judicial Council*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1437822/jamal-hajjar-joins-the-supreme-judicial-council.html>

¹⁷⁵ ALEF. (2010). *Military Tribunal: A Breach in the Integrity of the Judicial System*. Retrieved from <https://alefliban.org/publications/military-tribunal-a-breach-in-the-integrity-of-the-judicial-system/>

¹⁷⁶ Court Decisions taken by the Judicial Council are not open for appeal or review. The process lacks an ordinary review/appeal mechanism. Additionally, the Executive branch and the Cabinet have the authority to refer cases to the Council but don't have the ability to refer a review or to appeal the decision.

As part of this specialized mandate, the Judicial Council currently holds jurisdiction over the Beirut port blast investigation, which was formally referred to it by the Lebanese government shortly after the explosion.¹⁷⁷ Judge Tarek Bitar, the second and current judge appointed to the case since February 2021, has faced increasing obstacles and threats, impeding his ability to carry out the investigation.¹⁷⁸ From January 2023, the case stalled following instructions from former prosecutor at the Court of Cassation Ghassan Oueidat for the judicial police not to comply with summons issued by investigative judge Bitar,¹⁷⁹ and by October 2024, no further judicial progress had been reported.¹⁸⁰The Military Court

Established under Decree No. 24 of 13 April 1968 of the Military Justice law, the permanent Military Court, also commonly referred to as the Military Tribunal, is under the authority of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) mandated to adjudicate any case involving members of the military, GDGS, and MoD. It prosecutes a wide range of offenses, including crimes against national security and terrorism-related crimes, even if the case is of a civilian nature. The Military Court is headed by a military officer assisted by four judges, three of whom must be military officers, and a fourth civilian judge. The MoD appoints military judges based on recommendations made by the heads of Lebanon's main security institutions, such as the ISF, GDGS, the Customs Bureau, and the LAF. Appointed judges do not need a legal background, raising several concerns on how judges form decisions and the defendant's right to a fair trial. These include but are not limited to the right of adjudication before a competent, independent, and impartial court established by the law and the right to a public hearing.¹⁸¹ On the other hand, the civilian judge is appointed by Cabinet Decree upon the recommendation of the MoJ and MoD and with the approval of the High Judicial Council.¹⁸²

In a significant setback for anti-torture accountability, the Military Court dropped torture charges against five State Security members involved in the torture and subsequent death of Bashar Abed Saud, instead applying military regulation violations under Article 166 of the Code of Military Justice. This was heavily criticized by human rights organizations, as this ruling missed an opportunity to hold the perpetrators accountable and enforce Lebanon's anti-torture law.¹⁸³

In December 2023, the parliamentary sub-committee for Administration and Justice completed its study and combined two bills submitted by the Strong Republic and Democratic Gathering blocs into a single aimed at "restoring" the original jurisdiction of the Military Court and ending related abuses.¹⁸⁴

Following several rounds of discussion throughout 2024, the committee reached a preliminary agreement by June 2024 to strengthen the right to defense before the Military Court to match civil court standards, with further drafting to follow.¹⁸⁵ The agreement also limits the Military Court's jurisdiction to acts committed by military personnel related to their duties or rank.¹⁸⁶ Acts committed

¹⁷⁷ Opinio Juris. (2021, August 6). *Lebanon: Accountability and Redress for the Victims of the Beirut Port Explosion*. Retrieved from: <https://opiniojuris.org/2021/08/06/lebanon-accountability-and-redress-for-the-victims-of-the-beirut-port-explosion/>

¹⁷⁸ OHCHR. (2023, April 5). *Lebanon: UN expert concerned by interference in Beirut blast probe*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/04/lebanon-un-expert-concerned-interference-beirut-blast-probe>

¹⁷⁹ The Public Source. (2024, June 28). *Beirut Port Explosion Justice Denied*. Retrieved from: <https://thepublicsource.org/news-stand>

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Security Council. (2024, November 13). *Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) during the period from 21 June to 20 October 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/817>

¹⁸¹ ALEF. (2016). *The Situation of Human Rights in Lebanon: Annual Report 2016*. Retrieved from <https://alefliban.org/publications/alef-annual-report-2016/>

¹⁸² Code of Military Justice, article 13.

¹⁸³ Amnesty International. (2024, November 5). *Lebanon: Missed opportunity for justice in landmark case over torture and death in custody of Syrian refugee*. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/lebanon-missed-opportunity-for-justice-in-landmark-case-over-torture-and-death-in-custody-of-syrian-refugee/>

¹⁸⁴ This is Beirut. (2023, December 19). *Bill to Restore the 'Original' Jurisdiction of the Military Tribunal*. Retrieved from: <https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/articles/1209449/bill-to-restore-the-original-jurisdiction-of-the-military-tribunal>

¹⁸⁵ Lebanese Parliament. (2024, August 9). *The Administration and Justice Committee discussed the draft law aiming to amend some provisions of the Military Judiciary Law and its amendments, and the draft law aiming to amend some articles of the Military Judiciary Law*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lp.gov.lb/ContentRecordDetails?Id=33818>

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

by civilians were to be excluded from the military court's jurisdiction.¹⁸⁷ However, the committee members failed to adopt provisions related to acts of terrorism, espionage and contact with Israel committed by non-military personnel.¹⁸⁸

Civilians in Military Court

Despite the UN Human Rights Committee¹⁸⁹ and CAT¹⁹⁰ recommendations to prohibit Military Courts from exercising jurisdiction over civilians immediately,¹⁹¹ the trial of civilians in the Lebanese Military Court remains legal based on Articles 24 and 27 of the Lebanese Code of Military Justice, passed in 1968.

Defendants, lawyers, and human rights groups view the use of Military Court's jurisdiction over civilians as leading to intimidation or retribution for political reasons. Lebanon's Parliament should pass a law to remove civilians from Military Court jurisdiction to end this practice.¹⁹² Furthermore, the Military Court in Lebanon still prosecutes individuals under eighteen if they aided an adult in a crime. However, children should not be adjudicated before the Military Court since, as legal minors, their rights are not protected within the court's jurisdiction. Moreover, these children adjudicated by Military Courts often fall victim to abuse and psychological trauma. In theory, the Union for Protection of Childhood in Lebanon (UPCL), which provides social support to children on trial in Lebanese courts, is legally mandated to attend interrogations of children. Nevertheless, the Military Court does not often alert the UPCL that a child has been detained, routinely preventing their assistance.¹⁹³ The Military Court has a well-documented history of prosecuting civilians. Many individuals who stood trial before the Military Court reported experiencing solitary confinement, interrogations without a lawyer, confessions forced under torture, ill-treatment, decisions issued without an explanation, seemingly arbitrary sentences, and a limited ability to appeal.

In February 2024, Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram sparked controversy after photos of her meeting an Israeli blogger at a concert in Cyprus emerged online. The military prosecutor's office filed a complaint against Ajram, accusing her of violating Lebanon's 1955 law prohibiting any form of contact with Israelis.¹⁹⁴ While her intentions remain unclear, it is important to emphasize that, although her actions may constitute a crime under Lebanese law, a civilian should not be tried before a military court. The case remains pending, and no official statements or updates have been released.

In March, the Military Court summoned university professor Makram Rabah for questioning about an interview he had conducted regarding Hezbollah and the Israeli military. In the interview, he accused Hezbollah of 'fighting Iran's war' at the expense of Lebanon's national interests and pointed out alleged locations for Hezbollah's arms production and storage sites within the country. Rabah was

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Lebanese Parliament. (2024, July 16). *The Administration and Justice Committee studied a draft law amending some provisions of the Military Judiciary Law and its amendments, and a draft law amending some articles of the Military Judiciary Law*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lp.gov.lb/ContentRecordDetails?Id=33835>

¹⁸⁹ UNICPR. (2018, May 9). *Concluding Observations on the Third Periodic Report of Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fLBN%2fCO%2f3&Lang=en

¹⁹⁰ UNCAT. (2017, May 30). *Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/catclbnco1-concluding-observations-initial-report-lebanon>

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Human Rights Watch. (2020, February 5). *Lebanon's Military Courts Have No Business Trying Civilians*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/05/lebanons-military-courts-have-no-business-trying-civilians>

¹⁹³ Human Rights Watch. (2017, April 26). *Human Rights Watch Updated Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/26/human-rights-watch-updated-submission-committee-rights-child-lebanon>

¹⁹⁴ L'Orient Today. (2024, February 22). *Nancy Ajram targeted by a complaint to the military prosecutor's office after her photo with an Israeli*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1369048/nancy-ajram-visee-par-une-plainte-aupres-du-parquet-militaire-apres-sa-photo-avec-un-israelien.html>

detained for five hours and was accused of treason and collaborating with the enemy state¹⁹⁵ The case constitutes a complete violation of the basic principles of a fair trial and the rights of journalists to be tried before the Lebanese Court of Publications.

Personal Status Courts

Lebanon does not have a civil code regulating personal status matters. Instead, there are fifteen separate personal status laws for the country's eighteen different recognized religious communities, including several sub-religious denominations, such as twelve Christian, four Muslim, the Druze, and Jewish confessions, which separate religious courts administer.¹⁹⁶ Followers of unrecognized religious groups cannot marry, divorce, or inherit according to their rules or a civil code.¹⁹⁷ Certain personal status court procedures and decisions fall short of international standards and lead to flagrant rights violations. For instance, in most cases of divorce in Sunni and Shiite religious communities, child custody is by default transferred back to the father once the child reaches a certain age (this age varies between two and 12 years old, depending on the religious community).¹⁹⁸

Personal status courts have been accused of corruption, with allegations of bribery and favoritism influencing judicial decisions. This corruption often leads to court rulings that disproportionately favor men, particularly in cases involving child custody and financial support disputes between divorced couples.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, personal status courts create significant legal differential treatment towards Lebanese citizens based on sectarian affiliation, which violates the principle of full equality of all persons before courts and tribunals within the guarantees of the ICCPR. While Article 10 of Decree No. 60 (issued on March 13, 1936) allows individuals to withdraw from the authority of their sect by removing their religious affiliation, acts such civil marriages are still rarely registered officially.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ SKeys. (2024, March 31). *The Case of Makram Rabah and Lebanon's Endangered Freedom of Expression*. Retrieved from <https://www.skeyesmedia.org/en/News/News/31-03-2024/11514>

¹⁹⁶ Civil Society Knowledge Centre. *Lebanese Personal Status Laws*. Retrieved from <https://civilsociety-centre.org/tags/lebanese-personal-status-laws>

¹⁹⁷ Minority Rights Group International. *The Leaves of one Tree: Religious Minorities in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/old-site-downloads/mrg-briefing-religious-minorities-in-lebanon.pdf>

¹⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch (2015, January 19). *Unequal and Unprotected*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>

¹⁹⁹ Adyan Foundation. (2022). *Women's Rights in Religious Personal Status Laws in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://adyanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ENGLISH-WRL-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

²⁰⁰ L'Orient Today. (2021, June 29). *This couple is determined to force the Interior Ministry's hand on civil marriage*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1266766/this-couple-is-determined-to-force-the-interior-ministrys-hand-on-civil-marriage.html>

Prohibition of Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

Although Lebanon has ratified the ICCPR and incorporated the UDHR in its constitution,²⁰¹ in practice, the Lebanese criminal justice system has not always functioned accordingly.²⁰² Arbitrary detention has long been a concern, particularly in the context of political instability, security operations, and the treatment of vulnerable groups such as refugees. Although national law guarantees the right to liberty, in practice many detainees face prolonged detention without trial, lack of access to legal counsel, and limited judicial oversight. Although some progress and positive steps can be noted in the Lebanese system, many shortfalls remain throughout this cycle of criminal justice.

Rights of Detainees

Under the right to liberty and the prohibition of arbitrary arrest or detention, the deprivation of a person's liberty must be conducted in accordance with the law. One of the principal guarantees of a fair trial is the right to have a case reviewed by a competent tribunal within a reasonable delay. A suspect should be adjudicated soon after arrest in a public hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal established by law. In reality, detainees are deprived of their right to legal counsel, as law enforcement officers often do not inform suspects of their rights. Detainees are also deprived of the right to a speedy trial by an impartial tribunal; In 2024, the rate of pre-trial detention in Lebanon surged from 53.77% to 83%.²⁰³

In October, amid the war, journalist Alia Mansour, was briefly detained by State Security forces in a raid at her home. The arrest occurred without prior notification and was based on unfounded accusations resulting from fabricated online smear campaign that accused Mansour of communicating with Israel on social media.²⁰⁴ In an interview with *Al-Hadath TV*, she explained that the screenshot circulated was from a fake social media account that had used her picture and her name to engage with an Israeli public figure. She then posted a screenshot of her profile to verify and prove that the other account was not hers.²⁰⁵

In November, journalists and foreigners entering Lebanon on tourist visas were denied access with no clear explanation for their refusal. These individuals were detained at passport control at the Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport, with no adequate explanation or communication and were held for extended periods without proper legal procedure. It was later revealed that General Security had been taking precautions regarding people entering the country for security reasons.²⁰⁶

Although detainees in Lebanon have the right to avoid self-incrimination or coerced confessions, a lack of adequate training leads to police officers typically failing to inform defendants of their right to remain silent.²⁰⁷ The CCP does not assign a lawyer if the accused refuses to have one. This can also be interpreted as not needing a lawyer during the initial interrogation and investigation, which opens the door to forced confessions or other abuses at police stations. The presence of a lawyer during the

²⁰¹ Lebanese Constitution, Article 8.

²⁰² ALEF. (2016). *The Right to Fair Trial in Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PP2_v02_print.pdf

²⁰³ L'Orient Today. (2024, August 30). *Prison overcrowding: Beirut Bar Association blames judicial delays among other factors*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1425496/prison-overcrowding-beirut-bar-association-blames-judicial-delays-among-other-factors.html>

²⁰⁴ Now Lebanon. (2024, October 21). *Framing Alia Mansour*. Retrieved from <https://nowlebanon.com/framing-alia-mansour/>

²⁰⁵ Samir Kassir Eyes. (2024, November 21). *Online Incitement, Real-World Consequences for Journalists in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.skeyesmedia.org/en/News/Reports/21-11-2024/12099>

²⁰⁶ L'Orient Today. (2024, November 11). *'No reason' to be in Lebanon, tourists and journalists are being turned away at Beirut airport*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1435044/no-reason-to-be-in-lebanon-tourists-and-journalists-are-being-turned-away-at-beirut-airport.html>

²⁰⁷ ALEF. (2016). *The Right to Fair Trial in Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PP1_v02_print.pdf; American Bar Association. (2012, April). *Detention Procedure Assessment Tool for Lebanon*. Retrieved from p. 20. Print; ICCPR, Article 14(3-g).

preliminary investigation can be an effective way of monitoring and reducing violations of the right to a fair trial.

Police Stations

Police stations are particularly prone to procedural abuses. As the first place of detention after arrest, police stations are designed to hold detainees for no more than 96 hours (48 hours with a one-time renewal).²⁰⁸ However, this time limit is often violated.²⁰⁹ Data on the number of detainees in police stations is not shared publicly or with the Ministry of Justice's Directorate of Prisons (DoP). However, according to the latter's most recent figures, an estimated 690 people were detained in police stations by the end of 2024.²¹⁰ Available space in police holding cells is limited, and there are no systems to provide detainees with food or basic sanitation needs. Detainees' families must provide food and other needs, such as clothing and mattresses, for the length of the detention period. Even then, there is no set place for families to meet, and the officer in charge arbitrarily decides visiting hours.

Exile and Enforced Disappearance

The Lebanese civil war between 1975 and 1990 led to a multitude of human rights violations, ranging from arbitrary detention in third countries to forced exile and enforced disappearances. Many of these violations remain unresolved to this day, leaving thousands of victims without justice. While the vast majority of these cases are individuals who went missing during the civil war, disappearances continued to occur after the war on a smaller scale, namely by Israeli troops (up to 2000) and the Syrian Army (up to 2005).²¹¹

Out of the 17,415 Lebanese citizens reported as having disappeared,²¹² approximately 2,300 were officially registered as missing with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) through the registration efforts of the organization²¹³. To this day, the Lebanese government has failed to assess the totality of missing persons, as well as enforced and involuntary disappearances. It only passed a law in 1995 to allow families to declare their relatives dead.²¹⁴ Starting in 2012, the ICRC has assessed the number of missing people in Lebanon to not only answer unsolved questions but also provide support for the families of those missing. This resulted in identifying 5,000 to 8,000 missing persons,²¹⁵ but only a portion of the total estimate disappeared as the ICRC collected additional data.

After the Lebanese Parliament approved Law 105 on the missing and forcibly disappeared in 2018, the Council of Ministers set up the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared in 2020. The Cabinet selected 10 members based on suggestions presented to the Ministry of Justice from the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee and actors involved in the issues, such as the Commission for the Families of the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared in the Civil War. The Commission enjoys moral personality and administrative and financial independence, and its members have been appointed for a non-renewable five-year term on a voluntary, unpaid basis.

²⁰⁸ ALEF. (2013, January). *Guilty until Proven Innocent*. Retrieved from <https://ALEFliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ALEF-Arbitrary-Detention-2013.pdf>

²⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch. (2013, June 26). *Lebanon: Police Torturing Vulnerable People*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/26/lebanon-police-torturing-vulnerable-people>

²¹⁰ According to the Directorate of Prisons https://pa.justice.gov.lb/cont/files/18/2024-12_DOUKHOUL_SEX_P-N.pdf

²¹¹ Act for the Disappeared. *Context*. Retrieved from <https://www.actforhedisappeared.com/our-cause/context>

²¹² Amnesty International. (2008, August 28). *Annual Report 2008 – Enforced Disappearance Update Selected Extracts on Enforced Disappearance*. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/POL36/003/2008/en/>

²¹³ ICRC. (2016, July 1). *Lebanon: Collection of biological samples renews hope for families of the missing*. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57a445684.html>

²¹⁴ Middle East Eye. (2016, August 30). *Lebanese Still Searching for Truth on Disappeared of Civil War*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/lebanese-still-searching-truth-disappeared-civil-war>

²¹⁵ Interview with Act for the Disappeared, Justine De Mayo conducted in 2016.

Following Law 105, the latter should enjoy immunity from prosecution and protection from suspending their work in cases of emergency and perform their duties independently from any other authority.²¹⁶ However, there had been an almost 19-month delay in forming the Commission after the approval of Law 105, reportedly due to political quotas and disputes among authorities on sectarian representation, which has cast public doubts on whether the Commission will face further political obstacles.²¹⁷ Still, the Commission is expected to meet at least once a month and quickly begin contact with Lebanese and foreign officials to ask for helpful information for the proper exercise of their duties. Based on Law 105, the Commission could gather information about missing people, collect DNA, and exhume graves locally. It also grants victims the right to know the fate and whereabouts of the missing and disappeared, gives the commission rights to conduct excavations at the local level, and gives families the right to prosecution, remedies, and compensation.

In December 2024, the fall of the Assad regime contributed to a more optimistic outlook on the forcibly disappeared Lebanese people in Syria. The Committee of the Families Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon affirmed that Lebanese inmates were being freed from Syria's Hama prison, stating that the Lebanese government has a significant responsibility to act and verify the identities of the inmates being released.²¹⁸ The committee was able to verify the identity of one individual, Ali Hassan Al-Ali from Akkar.²¹⁹ As of 2024, Al-Ali has not yet arrived in Lebanon following his release.²²⁰ Another Lebanese prisoner, Suheil Hamawi, who was arrested from his home in Chekka in 1992, has returned to his village after being freed by Syrian rebels. The caretaker Minister of Justice, Henri Khoury, has met with the members of the National Commission for Detainees in Syrian prisons and has joined efforts with the ISF, General Security, and the State Security to check for any additional information the authorities might have.²²¹ Caretaker Minister of Interior, Bassam Mawlawi, later announced in a statement that nine Lebanese inmates had been freed from Syria's prisons after the fall of the Assad regime and had returned safely to Lebanon.²²² While the caretaker government has been coordinating with different groups working on the issue of the disappeared, a formal institution in Syria to collaborate and provide information remains non-existent.²²³

Right to Fair and Public Hearing by Independent and Impartial Tribunal

The right to fair trial begins from the first moment of detention or arrest through interrogation, trial, appeal, imprisonment, and eventual release. In practice, however, the Lebanese criminal justice system has not always functioned accordingly.²²⁴ Although some progress and positive steps can be noted in the Lebanese system, many shortfalls remain throughout this life cycle of criminal justice.

²¹⁶ Al-Akhbar. (2020, June 20). *The National Commission for Missing Persons: God willing, good*. Retrieved from <https://al-akhbar.com/Politics/290334>

²¹⁷ AUB Issam Fares Institute. (2020, September). *Truth, Dignity, and Justice – the Case of the Mission and Forcibly Disappeared in Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/policy_briefs/2019-2020/20200710_the_disappeared_english.pdf

²¹⁸ The New Arab. (2024, December 6). *Lebanese wait for answers on missing relatives in Syria after man 'freed' in Hama*. Retrieved from <https://www.newarab.com/news/lebanese-man-freed-syria-prison-after-38-years>

²¹⁹ Anadolu Agency. (2024, December 7). *Lebanese man freed after 40 years in Syrian prison*. Retrieved from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/lebanese-man-freed-after-40-years-in-syrian-prison/3417096>

²²⁰ L'Orient Today. (2024, December 9). *After 33 years of detention in Syria, a Lebanese man reunites with his family in Chekka*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1438956/apres-33-ans-de-detention-en-syrie-un-libanais-retrouve-les-siens-a-chekka.html>

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Anadolu Agency. (2024, December 11). *Assad's fall revives Lebanese hopes for return of 'forgotten' detainees in Syria*. Retrieved from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/assad-s-fall-revives-lebanese-hopes-for-return-of-forgotten-detainees-in-syria/3421801>

²²³ The New Arab. (2024, December 16). *Assad's fall revives hope for Lebanon's forgotten prisoners*. Retrieved from <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/assads-fall-revives-hope-lebanons-forgotten-prisoners>

²²⁴ ALEF. (2015). *The Right to Fair Trial in Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PP2_v02_print.pdf

Judiciary

According to World Justice Rule of Law Index, Lebanon ranked 126th out of 142 countries in terms of civil justice. In terms of criminal justice, Lebanon ranked 116th out of 142 countries.²²⁵ Indeed, corruption, interference, and encroachment among multiple elements of the Lebanese judiciary continue to be some of the country's most conspicuous shortcomings in judicial performance.²²⁶ Under the current legal framework, Lebanon's judiciary is still influenced by executive and political actors,²²⁷ where, for instance, political parties continue to influence the executive branch's appointment of judges close to their respective sectarian groups.²²⁸

An independent and impartial judiciary has been a popular demand among the general public in recent years, with many arguing that anti-corruption measures would be ineffective without laws ensuring judicial independence.²²⁹ ²³⁰ The Lebanese Civil Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary, which represents 31 organizations and is headed by the NGO Legal Agenda, has championed reform legislation since 2018 that would significantly reduce the Minister of Justice's role in judicial appointments and transfers, empowering the Judicial Council to make decisions independently of government approval.²³¹ While MPs completed drafting the reform bill in May 2021, the legislation has yet to advance through Parliament.²³²

Although the Parliament's version partly refers to that of the Lebanese Civil Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary, it considerably waters down some of the demanded reforms. The amendments propose that judges elect seven of the ten members of the Higher Judicial Council, while, under the current system, the government appoints eight members.²³³ At the financial level, the council would be allocated a budget under the Ministry of Justice. However, the original proposal aimed to limit the broad powers of the prosecutor at the Court of Cassation from interfering with the work of prosecutors. The MP's proposal retains these powers and transfers them to the Minister of Justice.²³⁴

In 2024, the Venice Commission, an advisory body of the Council of Europe, reviewed the reformed bill and concluded that certain aspects of it do not align with international standards regarding judicial independence and fair trial rights. The bill was found to have concerns regarding political interference

²²⁵ World Justice Project. (2025). *WJP Rule of Law Index*. Retrieved from <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2024/Lebanon/>

²²⁶ The Arab Weekly. (2020, January 5). *The daunting task of fighting corruption in Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://the arabweekly.com/daunting-task-fighting-corruption-lebanon?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook

²²⁷ Annahar. (2020, February 6). *The Independence of the Judiciary: An essential element for Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://en.annahar.com/article/1119581-the-independence-of-the-judiciary-an-essential-element-for-lebanon>

²²⁸ Legal Agenda. (2021, January 21). *The President's Outdated Speech: Using Judiciary as Cover and Legislation to Buy Time*. Retrieved from <https://legal-agenda.com/en/article.php?id=6372>

²²⁹ Middle East Eye. (2019, November 18). *One month on, Lebanese protestors cling to their demands*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/lebanon-month-protest-anniversary-safadi>

²³⁰ France 24. (2019, November 20). *'It's your right to arrest us': Beirut protestors vow to keep up the pressure*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/20191120-it-s-your-right-to-arrest-us-beirut-protesters-vow-to-keep-up-the-pressure>

²³¹ ALEF. (2018). *The Situation of Human Rights in Lebanon: Annual Report 2018*. Retrieved from <https://alefliban.org/publications/annual-report-2018/>

²³² L'Orient Today. (2021, May 21). *A law establishing the independence of the judiciary could be realized in the near future*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1262654/a-law-establishing-the-independence-of-the-judiciary-could-be-realized-in-the-near-future.html>

²³³ The Tahir Institute for Middle East Policy. (2021, October 26). *Towards an Independent Judicial Branch in Lebanon? Part 1: The Civil Judiciary*. Retrieved from <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/towards-an-independent-judicial-branch-in-lebanon-part-1-the-civil-judiciary/>

²³⁴ Ibid.

and lack of transparency, and grants excessive power to the State Council President, who drafted the law alone with little to no judicial input from any other judge.²³⁵

Two other draft laws introduced in 2023 that would strengthen the independence of judicial investigations and prevent political interference with the judiciary have also stalled due to Lebanon's political stalemate, lack of a President, and the inactivity of the Parliamentary Committee on Administration and Justice.²³⁶ These bills seek to amend specific articles in Lebanon's Code of Civil and Criminal Procedure, which have historically obstructed investigations, including those into the Beirut port explosion and financial crimes. The proposed changes would prevent automatic suspensions of investigations triggered by legal actions against judges and instead require a competent court to decide on any suspension, addressing institutionalized impunity and obstructions to justice.²³⁷ Political interferences also remain stagnant which have been affecting the review of judicial reform laws in the country.²³⁸

After the economic crisis in Lebanon unfolded, judges demanded higher wages, better working conditions, and judicial independence, free of political interference.²³⁹ In February 2024, Lebanese court officers staged a 20-day strike to demand higher wages and protest poor working conditions. This action paralyzed judicial offices, delaying trials and disrupting court proceedings.²⁴⁰

Due to the armed conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, Lebanese courts faced significant disruptions throughout the duration of the hostilities. In heavily bombed regions like Nabatiyeh and parts of Bekaa, courts shut down, detainees were transferred to other areas, and most judicial activity was halted. Judges in less affected regions focused only on urgent criminal cases, often postponing civil and commercial matters. Courts in safer areas, like Beirut and Mount Lebanon, maintained partial operations, with online hearings used where possible.²⁴¹ The judicial sector still does not comply with the country's Right to Access to Information Law, passed in 2017. The law intends to adapt the Lebanese legal system to the UN Convention against Torture. It binds public administrations, particularly the judicial branch, to publish key legal documents, decisions, and statistics and respond within 15 days upon citizens' requests. However, to date, many violations of the law have been reported. Article 1 of the law was recently amended so that a reason for a request to access information must no longer be stated.²⁴² Although this amendment could be a positive development toward greater access to information, its implementation is yet to be evaluated.

Investigation of the Port of Beirut Explosion

Two thousand seven hundred fifty tons of ammonium nitrate improperly stored at the Port exploded in the sixth-largest artificial non-nuclear explosion in the world on the 4th of August 2020. The resulting shockwave killed 236 individuals, injured at least 7,500, displaced around 300,000 people, and caused at least \$15 billion USD in property damages. The investigation into the explosion has been

²³⁵ *The Legal Agenda*. (2024, April 8). *The Venice Commission: Adwan's Proposal Violates Judicial Independence and Fair Trial*. Retrieved from <https://english.legal-agenda.com/the-venice-commission-adwans-proposal-violates-judicial-independence-and-fair-trial/>

²³⁷ Human Rights Watch. (2023, April 3). *A Path Toward Judicial Independence in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/03/path-toward-judicial-independence-lebanon>

²³⁸ Maharat Foundation. (2024, March 15). *The Independence of the Judiciary in Lebanon: Effectiveness of International Technical Assistance Depends on Political Will*. Retrieved from <https://maharatfoundation.org/en/InternationalTechnicalAssistance>

²³⁹ The National News. (2023, January 6). *Lebanese judges to end months-long strike on Monday*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/lebanon/2023/01/06/lebanese-judges-to-end-months-long-strike-on-monday/>

²⁴⁰ L'Orient Today. (2024, February 19). *Court officers suspend strike*. Retrieved from https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1368624/court-officers-suspend-strike.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁴¹ L'Orient Today. (2024, October 11). *How the war changed the way Lebanese courts function*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1430783/comment-la-guerre-a-bouleverse-le-fonctionnement-des-tribunaux-libanais.html>

²⁴² The Tahrir Institute. (2021, September 8). *Lebanon's Access to Information Law Has Been Amended... What's New?* Retrieved from <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/lebanons-access-to-information-law-has-been-amended-whats-new/>

a microcosm of Lebanon's judicial system, in which attempts to hold those in positions of power accountable most often prove futile four years after the fact. Minimal progress has been made as the domestic investigation remains obstructed by political and systematic delays.²⁴³

In January 2023, Judge Tarek Bitar attempted to resume the investigation after repeated legal and political challenges aimed at removing him from the case. He ordered the release of five suspects detained between August 2020 and September 2021 and filed charges against several high-ranking officials, including Lebanon's top prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat. In retaliation, Oueidat filed a lawsuit against Bitar, imposed a travel ban on him, and ordered the release of all remaining detainees, citing the right to a speedy trial under international law.²⁴⁴

Throughout 2024, the investigation of the Port remained halted,²⁴⁵ continuing a pattern of political interference and obstruction.. Judge Tarek Bitar continued to face legal challenges from former ministers facing charges who actively hinder the pursuit of justice. Concurrently, there have been no substantive progress regarding the proposed amendments to Article 751 of Lebanon's Code of Civil Procedure and Article 52 of the Code of Criminal Procedure which would give Bitar more freedom in his investigation.²⁴⁶

In an effort to move the case forward, Judges Bitar and Hajjar, Oueidat's successor, held a meeting in March, followed by two additional meetings during which Hajjar expressed his "intention" to resume the case.²⁴⁷ However, this intention has yet to be formalized into concrete measures.²⁴⁸

Legal sources speaking to Nidaa Al-Watan report that although the indictment is nearly finalized, its issuance has been delayed due to the war. Formal investigative are not expected to resume before early 2025, pending resolution of ongoing legal and political developments.²⁴⁹

²⁴³ Al Jazeera. (2024, August 4). Lebanon marks four years since Beirut port blast amid regional tensions. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/4/lebanon-marks-four-years-since-beirut-port-blast-amid-regional-tensions>

²⁴⁴ Amnesty International. (2023, August 3). *Lebanon: Unacceptable lack of justice, truth and reparation three years after Beirut blast*. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/lebanon-unacceptable-lack-of-justice-truth-and-reparation-three-years-after-beirut-blast/#:~:text=When%20Judge%20Bitar%20tried%20to,of%20involvement%20in%20the%20explosion>

²⁴⁵ The Public Source. (2024, June 28). *Beirut Port Explosion Justice Denied*. Retrieved from: <https://thepublicsource.org/news-stand>

²⁴⁶ L'Orient Today. (2024, August 5). *'We will never stop fighting': Four years since the Port blast, and still no justice*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1422731/we-will-never-stop-fighting-four-years-since-the-port-blast-and-still-no-justice.html>

²⁴⁷ L'Orient Today. (2024, May 10). *How will the Beirut port blast investigation resume?*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1413379/how-will-the-beirut-port-blast-investigation-resume.html>

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Nidaa Al-Watan. (2024, November 18). *Post-war indictment*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nidaalwatan.com/article/292382-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B8%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8>

Right to Presumption of Innocence and Non-Retroactivity of Laws

Right to Presumption of Innocence

The Lebanese 2001 amended Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP) does not mention the principle ‘innocent until proven guilty,’ despite its sacredness in international law. Gaps in legal texts and practices by law enforcement bodies reveal that the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty does not exist.²⁵⁰

The rate of pre-trial detention in Lebanon steadily increased from 53.77% in 2023²⁵¹ To 83% in 2024.²⁵² This is one of the reasons why prisons across the country are overcrowded. Additionally, law enforcement practices sometimes reveal a perverse understanding of the purpose of detention. These factors, among many others, pave the way for a skewed understanding of human rights in criminal justice proceedings, making detainees in Lebanon not innocent until proven guilty. Secret detention, in which detainees are held in locations known only to the authorities, which is a widespread practice in the country, and medical tests on persons suspected of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community also violate the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. On a procedural level, some arbitrary detentions occur out of blatant disrespect or ignorance of the law, compounded by the widely held belief that a suspect is not innocent until proven guilty.²⁵³

Non-Retroactivity of Lebanese Laws

The CCP, in its first and second chapters, guarantees the non-retroactivity of sentences.²⁵⁴ Article 1 of the Lebanese Criminal Code states: “No penalty or precautionary or corrective measure shall be imposed for a crime that was not provided for by law at the time of its commission. The acts that constitute the offense and the acts of the original or subsidiary participation that were done before the crime was committed shall not be held against the defendant before the law provides for this offense.”²⁵⁵ However, the Parliament often intervenes with the Lebanese judiciary and issues laws with retroactive effects, thereby violating this human right.²⁵⁶

Guarantees in Case of Miscarriage of Justice

Article 9(5) of the ICCPR establishes the enforceable right to compensation for victims of unlawful arrest or detention. The Lebanese CCP accordingly recognizes situations of miscarriage of justice in Article 276 and stipulates proper compensation for such situations. However, although remedies exist for unlawful pre-trial detention, they are not used in practice by victims.²⁵⁷ Independent mechanisms to monitor the lawfulness of trials should be implemented, and oversight of detention facilities must increase to protect and compensate the victims of these practices. However, the downside of such provisions is that they shouldn’t be applied to pre-trial detention, as the judge does not conduct the investigations during that phase, but the prosecutor or investigative judge, who themselves do not

²⁵⁰ ALEF. (2013, December). *Guilty Until Proven Innocent: Report on the Root Causes of Arbitrary Detention, Long Delays in Trial and Lengthy pre-Trial Detention*. Retrieved from <https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ALEF-Arbitrary-Detention-2013.pdf>

²⁵¹ Ministry of Justice Directorate of Prisons.

²⁵² L’Orient Today. (2024, August 30). *Prison overcrowding: Beirut Bar Association blames judicial delays among other factors*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1425496/prison-overcrowding-beirut-bar-association-blames-judicial-delays-among-other-factors.html>

²⁵³ ALEF. (2013, December). *Guilty Until Proven Innocent: Report on the Root Causes of Arbitrary Detention, Long Delays in Trial and Lengthy pre-Trial Detention*. Retrieved from <https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ALEF-Arbitrary-Detention-2013.pdf>

²⁵⁴ ALEF. (2016). *The Right to Fair Trial in Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PP2_v02_print.pdf

²⁵⁵ Government of Lebanon. (2001). *Lebanese Criminal Code of Procedures*. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/265848933/Lebanon-New-Code-of-Criminal-Procedure-2001>

²⁵⁶ Academia.edu. (2014, May 28). *Overview of the Rule of Law in Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/4835840/Overview_of_the_Rule_of_Law_in_Lebanon

²⁵⁷ ALEF. (2016). *The Right to Fair Trial in Lebanon*. Retrieved from https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PP2_v02_print.pdf

decide the verdict. Therefore, requiring judges to compensate victims for anything other than disciplinary violations during pre-trial detention is unfair and unproductive.

Civil and Political Rights

Protection from Arbitrary Attacks on Privacy, Honor, and Reputation

Digital security in Lebanon is often the main obstacle to achieving protection from interference with the privacy and correspondence of residents in the country. Although Lebanese law 140 of 1999 protects the confidentiality of communications from eavesdropping, monitoring, or disclosure, except in cases provided by law, it also authorizes the Minister of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), who oversees the Directorate General of General Security, and the Minister of Defense, to order the interception of specific communications. This is authorized through a written decision approved by the Prime Minister to combat terrorism, crimes against state security, and organized crime.

Digital Security and the Right to Privacy

The lack of guarantees for a robust digital security system in Lebanon leaves many individuals in the country vulnerable to countless attacks against their privacy. During the armed conflict in 2024, Israel managed to wage various forms of psychological and digital tactics to spread terror among civilians. In addition to the pager attacks that triggered the detonation of thousands of Hezbollah pager devices and walkie-talkies, Israel digitally manipulated civilian phones through phone hacking, GPS jamming, threatening phone calls, and evacuation orders, some of which were false.²⁵⁸ Israel's technological advancements have allowed it to penetrate Lebanese telecommunications networks, allowing them to access landlines, mobile phones, and other personal data that enables them to communicate with individuals.²⁵⁹ The months of October and November witnessed a surge in phishing attempts targeting platforms like WhatsApp, intensifying fears of surveillance.²⁶⁰ According to SMEX, many residents in South Lebanon also reported receiving anonymous texts from unknown numbers. These suspicious texts would often disclose personal information, such as their phone numbers, home addresses, and daily movements, raising fears of surveillance and targeted threats.²⁶¹

Defamation and Slander

Article 582 of the Lebanese Criminal Code punishes any person found guilty of defamation or slander with up to three months in prison and a fine between 50,000 LL and 400,000 LL (33 USD to 266 USD before 2019, currently less than ten USD). While this provides individuals with the necessary protection from attacks on their honor and reputation, the defamation law in Lebanon is often used to silence criticism of public officials outside of the specific references in Article 384 of the Penal Code and Article 157 of the Military Code. Moreover, these provisions fail to meet international standards and even restrict the right to freedom of expression, as the UN Human Rights Committee has clarified that imprisonment for defamation is not a proportionate restriction and thus serves as a violation to Article 19 of the ICCPR.²⁶²

Prosecutors have consistently used defamation laws to restrict legitimate speech on media platforms. In fact, most defamation cases against activists, private citizens, and journalists have been initiated by powerful political leaders, for exercising their right to express an opinion critical of official

²⁵⁸ TIMEP. (2024, December 4). *Israel's Digital Assault on Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://timep.org/2024/12/04/israels-digital-assault-on-lebanon/>

²⁵⁹ Al Jazeera. (2024, September 23). *'Get away from Hezbollah': Has Israel hacked Lebanon's telecoms networks?* Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/23/get-away-from-hezbollah-has-israel-hacked-lebanons-telecoms-networks>

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ SMEX. (2024, November 21). *Digital Rights During the War on Lebanon: November 21, 2024*. Retrieved from <https://smex.org/digital-rights-during-the-war-on-lebanon-november-21-2024/>

²⁶² UNHRC. (2011, September 12). *General comment No. 34*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/english/bodies/hrc/docs/gc34.pdf>

authorities. At the beginning of 2024, the Criminal Court summoned Gina al-Chammass, head of the Lebanon Certified Anti-Corruption Managers, to appear for a hearing. The reasons for her summons were only revealed during the session and stemmed from a defamation lawsuit filed by caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati in response to corruption accusations she had made against him in the media.²⁶³

Defamation and slander lawsuits have also been heavily weaponized against the press. In January 2024, journalist Riad Tawk was summoned by the Central Criminal Investigations Department after Judge Sabbouh Sleiman filed a personal complaint against Tawk, accusing him of defamation, slander, and libel. Tawk criticized Judge Sleiman in a video published on 'Beirut Time' for halting the arrest warrant against former minister Youssef Fenianos and MP Ali Hassan Khalil in connection with the Beirut Port investigation.²⁶⁴ The use of defamation and slander laws to crack down on journalists, activists, and critics persisted in 2024. In December, Gebran Bassil filed a defamation lawsuit against journalist and TV host Joe Maalouf. He accused Maalouf of making false and misleading allegations against him and the former President of Lebanon, Michel Aoun, during an episode of his show 'Lel Watan' that discussed the situation of Lebanese detainees in Syria after the fall of the Assad regime. The complaint was submitted to the Mount Lebanon Appeals Prosecutor's Office after Maalouf criticized both Aoun and Bassil for mishandling of the issue of the Lebanese detainees in Syria.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Amnesty International. (2024, May 3). *Lebanon: End use of defamation laws to target journalists and critics*. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/lebanon-end-use-of-defamation-laws-to-target-journalists-and-critics/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁶⁴ Skeyes. (2024, February 2). *Social Media Reaction to SKeyes' Violation Monitoring: Legal Action against Journalist Riad Tawk*. Retrieved from <https://www.skeyesmedia.org/en/News/Reports/02-02-2024/11330>

²⁶⁵ L'Orient Today. (2024, December 20). *Bassil files defamation complaint against journalist Joe Maalouf*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1440673/bassil-files-defamation-complaint-against-journalist-joe-maalouf.html>

Freedom of Movement and Residence and Right to Leave the Country

Under the Lebanese Constitution and laws, residents are entitled to freedom of movement with few official limitations. Nevertheless, many Lebanese remain hesitant to move, pass through and/or reside in certain areas due to sectarian, political and recently economic reasons.

Non-State Actors Checkpoints

In areas under Hezbollah's control, it is common to see checkpoints staffed by civilian and/or military units or streets barricaded by the party's forces or residents²⁶⁶ restricting the freedom of movement. The same applies in and around Palestinian Refugee camps where Palestinian armed groups prevent the Lebanese civilians and security forces from entering the camps. Residents cannot usually enter such areas at night without being stopped and asked to show proof of identity.²⁶⁷

With the economy's collapse that eventually fueled the paralysis of some security agencies, certain areas have developed community-based approaches to ensure safety and security.²⁶⁸ For example, residents of Dahieh, including the municipalities of Chiyah and Ghobeiri, in collaboration with the ISF, organized an ad-hoc neighborhood patrol to keep watch over the emptied southern suburbs which have been heavily targeted during the war.²⁶⁹ They coordinated with local authorities to report and hand over alleged thieves. In response, to a "rising number" of thefts and security incidents.²⁷⁰ However, vigilantes appeared to utilize violent methods to catch suspects, with many visibly injured and bleeding.²⁷¹

Moreover, in response to the targeted killings of Hezbollah officials, patrols have been established in Christian-majority areas hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs), in light of growing fears that Hezbollah members may be hiding among them.²⁷² While some neighborhood watches have been unarmed, others have adopted armed patrols in response to reduced security resources over time. The significant presence of traditional political parties in these regions has led entities such as Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, Future Party, and Lebanese Forces to form and arm these groups.²⁷³

Restrictions for Non-Citizens

Compared with Lebanese citizens, foreigners in Lebanon face significant restrictions on their freedom of movement. Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps often have limited access to areas under the authority of official security forces. Syrian refugees and other foreigners in the country are victims of similar obstacles, as they are often subjected to curfews and other informal hindrances, with additional discriminatory restrictions in certain municipalities.²⁷⁴ Such is the case of several

²⁶⁶ Urban Violence. (2019, November 24). *Navigating Dahiyeh: Security in Lebanon's Southern Suburbs*. Retrieved from <https://urbanviolence.org/navigating-dahiyeh/>

²⁶⁷ Lebanon Debate. *Armed checkpoints and self-security ... here is the "Dahiyeh state"! (Video)*. Retrieved from <https://www.lebanondebate.com/news/520220>

²⁶⁸ Al Arabiya News. (2022, November 27). *Beirut 'neighborhood watch' launched, but critics see echoes of troubled past*. Retrieved from <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2022/11/27/Beirut-neighborhood-watch-launched-but-critics-see-echoes-troubled-past>

²⁶⁹ L'Orient Today. (2024, November 29). *In Beirut's southern suburbs, the vigilante neighborhood watch that took security into its own hands*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1437348/in-beirut-southern-suburbs-the-vigilante-neighborhood-watch-that-took-security-into-their-own-hands.html>

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² NPR News. (2024, November 13). *In Lebanon, residents fear Hezbollah could be hiding among people displaced by war*. Retrieved from : <https://www.npr.org/2024/11/12/nx-s1-5184457/lebanon-israel-hezbollah-war>

²⁷³ Center For Operational Analysis And Research. (2022, February 17). *Lebanon Conflict Analysis – Central Bekaa*. Retrieved from <https://coar-global.org/2022/02/17/lebanon-conflict-analysis-central-bekaa/>

²⁷⁴ ACHR. (2020, August 19). *Lebanon: Tracking the Conditions of Syrian Refugees in the Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.achrighs.org/2020/05/01/10816/>

municipalities and governorates imposing curfews on Syrian refugees in April 2024,²⁷⁵ following the death of Lebanese Forces official Pascal Sleiman.

Beyond movement restrictions, Palestinian and Syrian refugees face systemic barriers. For instance, women married to Palestinian refugees classified as Non-IDs, or to foreign nationals, face significant legal barriers, including denial of birth registration for their children and restricted access to residence permits for both spouses and children. Palestinian refugee women from Syria married to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon also face difficulties obtaining identification and must renew residency permits annually, highlighting gendered and bureaucratic discrimination.²⁷⁶

Moreover, security regulations governing Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon continue to impose stringent restrictions on the entry of construction and sanitation materials, requiring prior authorization from relevant security agencies.²⁷⁷ These measures, originating from a Council of Ministers decision in late 1996 and reinforced by an executive directive in January 1997, prohibit the importation of such materials into the camps without official permits.²⁷⁸ Consequently, these restrictions significantly hinder essential home maintenance, increasing risks to structural safety and residents' well-being, while fostering informal markets that inflate costs and deepen financial burdens on vulnerable refugee households.^{279,280}

²⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch. (2024, April 25). *Lebanon: Stepped-Up Repression of Syrians*. Retrieved from : <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/25/lebanon-stepped-repression-syrians>

²⁷⁶ Palestinian Refugee Rights Coalition. (2025). *Stakeholder Submission to the 4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR)*.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Arab Barometer. (2024, August 20). *Lebanon Migration Insights: 2024 Public Opinion Factsheet*. Retrieved from <https://www.arabbarometer.org/2024/08/lebanon-migration-insights-2024-public-opinion-factsheet/#:~:text=Desire%20to%20Emigrate%3A%2038%25%20of,the%2026%25%20recorded%20in%202018.>

Right to Seek and Enjoy Asylum from Persecution for Political Crimes

Lebanon has neither ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor its 1967 protocol. However, Lebanon is bound by its international commitments under the Convention Against Torture and other instruments, as well as customary international law, to respect the rights of refugees. These include the principle of non-refoulement²⁸¹, which prohibits a state from deporting an individual to a location where they are likely to face persecution. Moreover, Lebanon has adopted a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNHCR, which provides for the management of refugees and asylum-seekers within Lebanon.

Lebanon still hosts the highest number of refugees per capita, with government estimates at 1.5 million Syrian refugees, of whom 844,056 were registered with the UNHCR at the end of October 2021.²⁸² By December 2024, this number dropped to 755,426 registered refugees.²⁸³ However, the government's suspension of the UNHCR's ability to register new refugees in 2015 has made it difficult to assess the actual number of refugees in Lebanon and even more challenging to support unregistered refugees²⁸⁴. Furthermore, these figures do not include the approximately 175,000 Palestinian refugees who have lived in Lebanon since before the Syrian crisis, 45,000 additional Palestinian refugees from Syria who have lived²⁸⁵ in Lebanon as a result of the Syrian crisis²⁸⁶, and almost 15,000 refugees from Iraq and other nationalities.²⁸⁷

Non-Refoulement

The UNHCR reported that in 2023 alone, approximately 13,772 individuals were either deported from Lebanon or pushed back at the border with Syria in nearly 300 separate incidents - including 600 people in a single day on November 8.²⁸⁸ These practices have continued into 2024, with at least 1,763 Syrians deported by Lebanese authorities between January and June.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, the escalation

²⁸¹ The principle of non-refoulement forms an essential protection under international human rights, refugee, humanitarian and customary law. It prohibits States from transferring or removing individuals from their jurisdiction or effective control when there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be at risk of irreparable harm upon return, including persecution, torture, ill-treatment or other serious human rights violations. Under international human rights law the prohibition of refoulement is explicitly included in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). In regional instruments the principle is explicitly found in the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention of Torture, the American Convention on Human Rights, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. International human rights bodies, regional human rights courts, as well as national courts have guided that this principle is an implicit guarantee flowing from the obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. Human rights treaty bodies regularly receive individual petitions concerning non-refoulement, including the Committee Against Torture, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. OHCHR. *The principle of non-refoulement under international human rights law*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/GlobalCompactMigration/ThePrincipleNon-RefoulementUnderInternationalHumanRightsLaw.pdf>

²⁸² UNHCR. (2021, November). *Factsheet: Lebanon, November 2021*. Retrieved from <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/1262>

²⁸³ UNHCR. (2024, December). *Syria Regional Refugee Response - Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>

²⁸⁴ UNHCR. *Protection*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/protection#:~:text=The%20registration%20of%20Syrian%20refugees,by%20the%20Government%20in%202015.&text=The%20fees%20of%20USD%20200,of%20arrest%2C%20detention%20and%20exploitation>

²⁸⁵ UNHCR. (2021, November). *Factsheet: Lebanon, November 2021*. Retrieved from <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/1262>

²⁸⁶ Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee. (2018, February). *Population and Housing Census in Palestinian Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon 2017*. Retrieved from <https://lpdc.gov.lb/lpdcnews/key-findings-of-the-national-population-and-housing-census-of-palestinian-camps-and-gatherings-in-lebanon-2017/#:~:text=The%20results%20of%20the%20census%20revealed%20that%20about,7.1%25%20in%20Al%20Shouf%20and%204%25%20in%20Bekaa>.

²⁸⁷ UNHCR (2021, November). *Factsheet: Lebanon, November 2021*. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/1262>; Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (2018, February). *Population and Housing Census in Palestinian Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon 2017*. <http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/DocumentFiles/Key%20Findings%20report%20En-636566196639789418.pdf>; Human Rights Watch (2019). *World Report 2019: Lebanon*. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/lebanon>.

²⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch. (2025, January 17). *World Report 2025: Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/lebanon>

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

of tensions following the assassination of Lebanese Forces official Pascal Suleiman, which was attributed to Syrians, shifted the focus of refugee-related discussions heavily toward deportation. In the aftermath, anti-refugee rhetoric intensified, particularly online where, according to Lebanese research firm InflueAnswers, over half of the discourse centered on expelling refugees and roughly 20% of the discourse framed Syrians as an “existential threat”.²⁹⁰

In the first quarter of 2024, Lebanon faced increased scrutiny for its treatment of Syrian refugees, with Human Rights Watch documenting several instances of forcible returns.²⁹¹ In March 2024, the GDGS deported Muaz al-Waer, a Syrian who had been incarcerated in Lebanon, leading to widespread panic among fellow inmates, some of whom attempted suicide fearing their own deportation.²⁹² The UN Commission of Inquiry for Syria and the OHCHR reiterated that Syria continues to be unsafe for returns, highlighting that returnees are specifically targeted upon their arrival.²⁹³ Such is the case of Rifaat al-Faleh, a defector from the Syrian army, who was arrested at a military checkpoint in Tripoli and deported despite his well-founded fear of persecution in Syria.²⁹⁴

In May 2024, Lebanese authorities arranged convoys for the voluntary return of 300 refugees to Syria, while more than 400 were forcibly deported.²⁹⁵ Those deported were not afforded adequate protections, such as the opportunity to meet with the UNHCR or plead their asylum case in court. In the absence of oversight and protective measures, refugees at risk of detention, torture, and other crimes in Syria were sent back in violation of the principle of non-refoulement.²⁹⁶ In response, the international community, including organizations like Amnesty International, criticized Lebanon’s treatment of Syrian refugees.²⁹⁷ The fall of the Assad regime marked a pivotal change in Syria. Refugees have expressed both hope and caution about the possibility of returning to their homes.²⁹⁸ The UNHCR, which projects up to 1.5 million Syrians to return in 2025,²⁹⁹ has expressed readiness to assist those who choose to return voluntarily.³⁰⁰ While thousands have reportedly returned,³⁰¹ the EU

²⁹⁰ Reuters. (2024, May 29). *Syrians in Lebanon fear unprecedented restrictions, deportations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/syrians-lebanon-fear-unprecedented-restrictions-deportations-2024-05-29/>

²⁹¹ HRW. (2024, April 25). *Lebanon: Stepped-Up Repression of Syrians*. Retrieved from : <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/25/lebanon-stepped-repression-syrians>

²⁹² Asharq Al-Awsat, (2024, March 5). *Suicide Attempts among Syrian Prisoners Put Lebanon’s Deportation Standards under Scrutiny*. Retrieved from <https://english.aawsat.com/arab-world/4893326-suicide-attempts-among-syrian-prisoners-put-lebanon%E2%80%99s-deportation-standards>

²⁹³ Amnesty International. (2024, May 6). *Lebanon: Hundreds of Thousands of Syrian Refugees at Imminent Risk of Deportation*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-hundreds-thousands-syrian-refugees-imminent-risk-deportation>

²⁹⁴ The Syrian Network for Human Rights. (2024, August 2). *SNHR’s Monthly Report on Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions in Syria*. Retrieved from : <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/least-209-arbitrary-detentions-recorded-july-2024-including-14-children-and-three-women-syrian-regime-arrests-17-refugees-forcibly-deported-lebanon-enar>

²⁹⁵ Reuters. (2024, May 29). *Syrians in Lebanon fear unprecedented restrictions, deportations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/syrians-lebanon-fear-unprecedented-restrictions-deportations-2024-05-29/>

²⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch. (2019, September 2). *Syrians deported by Lebanon arrested at home*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/02/syrians-deported-lebanon-arrested-home>

²⁹⁷ Amnesty International. (2024, May 16) *Lebanon: Hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees at imminent risk of deportation*. Retrieved from : <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde18/8051/2024/en/>

²⁹⁸ UNHCR. (2024, December 17). *UNHCR Preparedness and Response | Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees (January – June 2025)*. Retrieved from : <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-preparedness-and-response-voluntary-return-syrian-refugees-january-june-2025>

²⁹⁹ UNHCR. (2025, February 6). *UNHCR Operational Framework: Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs 2025*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-operational-framework-voluntary-return-syrian-refugees-and-idps-2025>

³⁰⁰ UNHCR. (2024, December 17). *UNHCR Preparedness and Response | Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees (January – June 2025)*. Retrieved from : <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-preparedness-and-response-voluntary-return-syrian-refugees-january-june-2025>

³⁰¹ UNHCR. (2024, December 17). *UNHCR urges continued protection and support for Syrians inside and outside the country*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-urges-continued-protection-and-support-syrians-inside-and-outside-country>

commission maintained that the conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified returns to the country have yet to be met.³⁰²

Legal and Civil Documentation

In 2024, a mere 18% of Syrians held valid legal residency.³⁰³ Moreover, the vast majority of Syrian households (93%) include at least one individual without such documentation.³⁰⁴ This widespread lack of legal status continues to heighten the vulnerability of refugee populations to arrest and deportation, while also severely restricting their access to essential services, education, lawful employment, and civil registration processes.

The months following the ceasefire saw a resurgence of strict enforcement, particularly in northern regions, where individuals without valid residency were increasingly subjected to checks at security points. As a result, many Syrians began limiting their movements or resorting to less safe, alternative routes to avoid detection.³⁰⁵ Meanwhile, in southern areas, historically home to the highest number of residents with legal status, many Syrians encountered mounting obstacles in renewing or securing legal documents. These included prolonged, unexplained processing delays and outright denials of renewal requests, further entrenching their legal situation.³⁰⁶

Adding to these difficulties, 2024 has seen a wave of new administrative practices by municipalities and changes in national policies that further limit access to legal residency. On the 29th of April, the GDGS introduced a significantly higher renewal fee of LBP 4,900,000, equivalent to 53.90 USD, for expired residencies, applicable even to those registered with UNHCR. Fees under other legal pathways, such as sponsorship-based residency, were also raised. In a concerning development, the GDGS suspended all residency renewals for Palestinians from Syria (PRS) as of May 2024, further exacerbating protection risks for this group.³⁰⁷ In 2024, birth registration among Syrian refugees in Lebanon peaked at 50%, up from 41% in 2023.³⁰⁸ While this marks a notable improvement, the inability to afford registration costs remained the main barrier,³⁰⁹ followed by a continued lack of awareness about the necessary procedures.³¹⁰

The lack of adequate pathways towards legal documentation has caused several protection and security issues for Syrians displaced in Lebanon. In addition to the constant fear of being stopped by security forces and facing potential fines, imprisonment, or deportation for lacking residency permits, Syrian refugees can be easily exploited and are easy targets for crimes and abuse because they are unlikely to report offenders.³¹¹ Additionally, some registration processes require displaced Syrians to obtain documents or stamps from the Syrian Embassy in Lebanon, which can pose a significant risk to the safety of asylum seekers, especially if they are on the Assad regime's wanted list.³¹² Members of

³⁰² Euro News. (2024, December 13). *Austria offers Syrians €1,000 'return bonus' as Europe suspends asylum claims*. Retrieved from: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/12/13/austria-offers-syrians-1000-return-bonus-as-europe-suspends-asylum-claims>

³⁰³ UNHCR. (2025, April 16) *Protection Sector Analysis Report, December 2024-March 2025*. Retrieved from : <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115744>

³⁰⁴ UNHCR. (2025, April 16) *Protection Sector Analysis Report, December 2024-March 2025*. Retrieved from : <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115744>

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ UNHCR. (2025, April 16) *Protection Sector Analysis Report, December 2024-March 2025*. Retrieved from : <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115744>

³⁰⁸ UNHCR. (2025). *Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2024*.

³⁰⁹ UNHCR. (2025). *Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2024*.

³¹⁰ UNHCR. (2025). *Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2024*.

³¹¹ Norwegian Refugee Council. (2020, June 16). *Documentation and access to healthcare for refugees in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.nrc.no/resources/briefing-notes/documentation-and-access-to-healthcare-for-refugees-in-lebanon/>

³¹² UNHCR. (2022, January 25). *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2021*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2021-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

the PASC WG have noted in discussions and meetings the rise in crime against Syrian refugees and their unwillingness to report on them due to their fragile situation. Refugee-led NGOs also fear staff members being stopped at checkpoints and harassed due to their legal status or nationality.

Access to Services

Refugees but also host communities do not receive standardized access to services in Lebanon. The limited means and cost of transportation, long distances, cost of healthcare, and restricted services in facilities nearby prevent the most vulnerable from accessing proper services. In May 2024, UNHCR announced a 50% reduction in medical coverage for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, forcing them to bear a larger share of their healthcare costs. This measure further restricted access to medical services, which were already out of reach for some.

Additionally, the healthcare system had to contend with a wave of attacks targeting medical infrastructure, healthcare professionals, and patients. Between the 7th of October and 18th of November 2024, 47% of the recorded attacks on healthcare services resulted in the death of at least one patient or healthcare worker. Furthermore, 15 out of the 153 hospitals in the country ceased operations or were only partially functioning, significantly reducing access to care for both refugees and host communities.³¹³

Although receiving additional support from local and foreign NGOs, and the World Bank, secondary and tertiary healthcare institutions are mostly private, and their inflated cost remains a significant barrier to refugees. Furthermore, refugees not registered with UNHCR are not covered by any medical insurance, leaving them at the margins of the Lebanese health system. Regarding education, in 2024, the municipalities of Al-Qaa and Sin El Fil declared that Syrian children were ineligible to enroll in schools unless they and their families had legal residency permits, a measure that marked a significant threat to thousands of students' right to education. As hostilities erupted in September, nearly 60%³¹⁴for IDPs, delaying the start of the new school year for many refugee children and disrupting the education of ³¹⁵ Syrian students.³¹⁶

The mass displacement crisis overwhelmed shelters, with Lebanese communities being prioritized in the authorities' emergency response, leaving many displaced Syrian families without adequate emergency housing.³¹⁷ Moreover, as rent prices skyrocketed, they faced increasing social pressures to vacate spaces for Lebanese families, alongside limited access to essential services, such as food, water, blankets, medicine and cash assistance.³¹⁸ By the end of 2024, 55% of displaced Syrian refugees relied on informal support networks, while only 5% were accommodated in emergency shelters and 9% were homeless.³¹⁹ Following the ceasefire, refugees also faced increased difficulty in accessing emergency shelters. Many found themselves unable to return to their pre-conflict places of residence due to the destruction of their houses and movement restrictions imposed by several municipalities. At least 35 measures were recorded in southern Lebanon aimed at preventing Syrian refugees from returning to their previous residences, further exacerbating their vulnerability. Consequently, significant disparities

³¹³ WHO (2024 November 27). *Lebanon: a conflict particularly destructive to health care*. Retrieved from : <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-11-2024-lebanon--a-conflict-particularly-destructive-to-health-care>

³¹⁴ UNICEF. (2024, October 8). *Lebanon Humanitarian Situation Report No.2*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/media/163506/file/Lebanon-Humanitarian-SitRep-08-October-2024.pdf>

³¹⁶ The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. (2024, December 14). *Education in Times of Emergency in Lebanon: Improvised Solutions and Missed Opportunities*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/en/articles/details/4896/education-in-times-of-emergency-in-lebanon-improvised-solutions-and-missed-opportunities>

³¹⁷ UNHCR. (2025, March 12). *UNHCR - Protection Monitoring Findings - Q4 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115060>

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

emerged³²⁰ of accommodation between Lebanese and Syrian communities, with almost no Syrians reporting to reside³²¹

Durable Solutions

Durable solutions in response to the Syrian refugee crisis include support of host communities, protection, including access to services, legal work opportunities, and livelihood, resettlement to a third country, and voluntary return when conditions for a safe, dignified, and sustainable return are in place.

Access to protection for Syrian refugees in Lebanon is minimal, as 93% of Syrian families had at least one member in their household lacking legal residency in 2024.³²² Lacking access to legal work opportunities, secure housing, and quality education, even before the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, Lebanon's refugee population has been among the most vulnerable. Sufficient funding must be available to rise to the challenge of providing access to protection and working towards durable solutions. Unfortunately, the international community's commitment has dwindled over the past few years.

At the eighth Brussels Conference in May 2024, international donors pledged a total of €7.5 billion, which included €5 billion in grants and €2.5 billion in loans.³²³ The decline in overall contributions in recent years has been linked to donor fatigue and the growing number of international crises, including the conflicts in Ukraine, Sudan, and Gaza.³²⁴

The collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime on December 8, 2024, concluded over five decades of Ba'ath Party rule.³²⁵ Ahmad al-Sharaa, formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Julani and leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS),³²⁶ assumed leadership and was declared president for a transitional period, during which the constitution was suspended and a temporary legislative council established to oversee the transition of power.³²⁷ This political shift created a significant opportunity for many Syrian refugees to begin returning home,³²⁸ with a total of 58,350 Syrians (26% men, 28% women and 46% children) returning to their homes in Syria through official border crossings from neighboring host countries, including Lebanon.³²⁹ Although UNHCR projects up to 1.5 million Syrians returning in 2025,³³⁰ it is not promoting large-scale voluntary repatriation to Syria due to the many challenges that persist in the country.³³¹

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² UNHCR. (2025, March 12). *UNHCR - Protection Monitoring Findings - Q4 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115060>

³²³ European Council (2025, March 25) Standing with Syria - Brussels ninth conference, 17 March 2025. Retrieved from: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2025/03/17/>

³²⁴ AP News (2024, May 28). Donor fatigue persists as nations commit around \$8.1 billion for conflict-hit Syrians. Retrieved from: <https://apnews.com/article/brussels-syria-donors-conference-bdbf13a6e6aaeb81b53274cb89ddac26>

³²⁵ The Guardian. (2024, December 8). *Syrians celebrate fall of Bashar al-Assad after five decades of dynastic rule*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/dec/08/syrians-celebrate-fall-of-bashar-al-assad-after-five-decades-of-dynastic-rule>

³²⁶ This is Beirut. (2024, December 29). *Syria: Al-Joulani Announces Elections in Four Years*. Retrieved from: <https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/articles/1304769/syria-al-joulani-announces-elections-in-four-years>

³²⁷ Al-Jazeera. (2025, January 29). *Syria's Ahmed al-Sharaa named president for transitional period*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/29/syrias-ahmed-al-sharaa-named-president-for-transitional-period>

³²⁸ UNHCR. (2025, December 16). *Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-position-returns-syrian-arab-republic-december-2024-enarrukobg>

³²⁹ UNHCR. (2024, December 27). *Regional Flash Update #7 – Syria situation crisis*. Retrieved from: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/syria-situation-crisis-regional-flash-update-7>

³³⁰ UNHCR. (2025, February 6). *Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs 2025*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-operational-framework-voluntary-return-syrian-refugees-and-idps-2025>

³³¹ UNHCR. (2024, December 16). *Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-position-returns-syrian-arab-republic-december-2024-enarrukobg>

As of December 2024, the Lebanese Government indicated that just under 10,000 Syrians have returned from Lebanon since the fall of the Assad regime.³³² In parallel, tens of thousands of Syrians and Lebanese are reportedly crossing back from Syria into Lebanon,³³³ with the Government's Disaster Risk Management Unit estimating that 90,000 have arrived,³³⁴ of which some 20,000 are Lebanese.³³⁵ The situation remains fluid.

As the transition of power spread feelings of uncertainty, the refugee population will continue to require protection in host countries and time to make informed decisions regarding returns.³³⁶ The UNHCR stresses that for safe and sustainable returns to finally occur, "Developments need to evolve peacefully to enable safe and sustainable returns".³³⁷ While the agency stands ready to facilitate returns to Syria, it affirms that the Host governments and the Syrian authorities bear the primary responsibility to ensure the protection and well-being of returning refugees.³³⁸

Palestinian[?]

The situation of Palestinian refugees has been steadily deteriorating for the last few years. Palestinians were already competing for jobs with Syrian refugees, migrant workers, and Lebanese nationals, as they continue to be banned from 70 different professions.³³⁹

In 2024, the poverty rate among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon was reported to be over 72%, nearly double the national poverty rate of 44% for the Lebanese population³⁴⁰ - 8% lower than in 2023, when the rate stood at 80%.³⁴¹ Additionally, as of October-November 2024, approximately 40% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon experienced high levels of acute food insecurity, indicating a significant portion of this population faced crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity.³⁴² As a result, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon organized multiple protests in front of UNRWA offices, primarily in response to funding cuts, which exacerbated their already challenging living conditions.³⁴³ On the 30th of January 2024, approximately 200 Palestinian refugees demonstrated outside UNRWA's headquarters in Beirut.³⁴⁴ They protested the suspension of funding by several countries following allegations that

³³² UNHCR. (2024, December 13). *UNHCR Regional Flash Update #3 – Syria Situation Crisis (13 December 2024)*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-regional-flash-update-3-syria-situation-crisis-13-december-2024#:~:text=The%20Government%20of%20Lebanon%20has,especially%20into%20Hermel%2DBaalbek%20Governorate.>

³³³ UNHCR. (2024, December 13). *UNHCR Regional Flash Update #3 – Syria Situation Crisis (13 December 2024)*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-regional-flash-update-3-syria-situation-crisis-13-december-2024#:~:text=The%20Government%20of%20Lebanon%20has,especially%20into%20Hermel%2DBaalbek%20Governorate.>

³³⁴ UNHCR. (2024, December 19). *UNHCR Regional Flash Update #5 – Syria situation crisis*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/114893>

³³⁵ UNHCR. (2024, December 24). *Regional Flash Update #6 – Syria situation crisis*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/114895>

³³⁶ UNHCR. (2024, December 11). *What do recent events in Syria mean for Syrian refugees*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/what-do-recent-events-syria-mean-syrian-refugees>

³³⁷ UNHCR. (2024, December 11). *What do recent events in Syria mean for Syrian refugees*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/what-do-recent-events-syria-mean-syrian-refugees>

³³⁸ UNHCR. (2024, December 11). *What do recent events in Syria mean for Syrian refugees*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/what-do-recent-events-syria-mean-syrian-refugees>

³³⁹ Middle-East Eye. (2019, July 23). *Palestinian refugees in Lebanon denounce new 'inhumane' work restrictions*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestinian-refugees-lebanon-denounce-latest-work-restrictions>

³⁴⁰ UNRWA (2024, November 5) *SYRIA, LEBANON AND JORDAN EMERGENCY APPEAL 2024 PROGRESS REPORT*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/syria-lebanon-and-jordan-emergency-appeal-2024-progress-report>

³⁴¹ UNRWA. (2023, July). *Lebanon | UNRWA*. Retrieved from <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

³⁴² IPC (2025, January 17) *Lebanon: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis October 2024 - March 2025*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-ipc-acute-food-insecurity-analysis-october-2024-march-2025-published-17-january-2025>

³⁴³ Arab New (2024, February 2) *Palestinian refugees in Lebanon protest against UNRWA funding cuts*. Retrieved from: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2452831/middle-east>

³⁴⁴ L'Orient Today (2024, January 30) *Demonstration in support of UNRWA in Beirut*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1366288/demonstration-in-support-of-unrwa-in-beirut.html>

some UNRWA employees were involved in the 7th of October Hamas attack in 2023. Protesters expressed concerns that halting support for UNRWA would be disastrous, given the agency's role in providing essential services such as education and healthcare.

In addition, many Iraqi refugees residing in Lebanon have been seeking resettlement in a third country. This process can last three to five years because Iraqis must apply for resettlement through the UNHCR. Currently, this process is arduous because only the U.S., Australia, and Canada accept Iraqi refugees.

Irregular Migration

As a result of the socio-economic collapse in Lebanon, some of the most desperate refugees and Lebanese have begun seeking ways out of Lebanon, hoping that life in another country will offer more dignity. Since traditional pathways to immigration typically serve more privileged segments of society and are not generally accessible to vulnerable communities in need, and in the light of the meager refugee resettlement numbers, many have resorted to irregular migration by sea as a coping method.

Lebanon's GDGS, which oversees foreign residency permits, reported that it had intercepted or deported 821 Syrians between January 2022, and the 1st of August 2024. These individuals had attempted to leave Lebanon aboard 15 boats. A few weeks later, on the 18th of January, a second boat carrying 60 passengers went missing after departing from Tripoli en route to Cyprus. After drifting for several days in the Mediterranean, Cypriot health authorities announced the death of a young girl who was found unconscious on board the vessel on the 25th of January.³⁴⁵

The first three months of 2024 saw a record number of sea arrivals in Cyprus, with nearly 2,000 individuals reaching the island, compared to just 78 during the same period in 2023. In response to this unprecedented influx, the Cypriot government announced the temporary suspension of asylum application procedures in April 2024.³⁴⁶

In May 2024, following these events, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides to address the situation in Lebanon and explore EU support for the country. She announced a €1 billion assistance package for the years 2024 to 2027, aimed at strengthening education, the economy, banking reform, and migration management. The EU also committed to providing logistical support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, which will include equipment and training to enhance border control and combat smuggling.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ Elnashra. (2024, January 25). وفاة طفلة سورية ظلت لأيام على متن قارب بالبحر المتوسط انطلق من لبنان Retrieved from <https://www.elnashra.com/news/show/1654922/وفاة-طفلة-سورية-ظلت-لأيام-على-متن-قارب-بالبحر-قارب-متن-على-الأيام-ظلت-سورية-طفلة-وفاة>

³⁴⁶ Aljazeera. (2024, April 14). *Cyprus suspends asylum applications for Syrians as arrivals rise*. Retrieved from : <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/14/cyprus-suspends-asylum-applications-for-syrians-as-arrivals-rise>

³⁴⁷ European Commission – Press release. (2024, May 2). *President von der Leyen reaffirms EU's strong support for Lebanon and its people and announces a €1 billion package of EU funding*. Retrieved from : https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_24_2384/IP_24_2384_EN.pdf

Right to Nationality

Nationality Law

The Lebanese nationality law only considers “every person born of a Lebanese father” as Lebanese. Lebanese nationality is also given on request to a foreign woman who marries a Lebanese man one year after the marriage registration in the civil registry office.³⁴⁸ Individuals born of a Lebanese mother only cannot acquire Lebanese nationality, rendering the law discriminatory as it prohibits women from passing on their nationality to their children.

Although the National Commission for Lebanese Women proposed a draft law in 2020 to amend the nationality law and allow mothers to pass the Lebanese nationality to their children, along with several other proposals throughout the past decade,³⁴⁹ none have been seriously discussed in Parliament since 2021.

Stateless Persons

Lebanon is home to a population of stateless persons whose size is disputed. The latest study estimates around 27,000 stateless individuals nationwide. However, previous national estimates ranged between 80,000 and 200,000.³⁵⁰ Stateless persons are stripped of their fundamental human rights as they cannot enjoy civil and political rights, social security, and the rights to work, education, and access to public health services except in emergencies.

The main reasons behind statelessness in the country are legislative and administrative, as the nationality law denies Lebanese nationality to some, and many who must prove their right to nationality in court cannot do so. In fact, a considerable portion of stateless persons in Lebanon are stateless because their parents were stateless as well and thus could not register them at birth. Others are the descendants of ancestors who did not register in the 1932 national census. Orphans also sometimes become stateless as the criteria and regulations for their administrative registration are not always met, and orphanages often fall short of completing the process.³⁵¹

Children born out of wedlock also face significant structural discrimination based on age and nationality criteria. Although children of Lebanese men are Lebanese irrespective of age or the mother’s nationality, out-of-wedlock children acquire Lebanese nationality only if a Lebanese parent legally recognizes them when they are still minors and before a non-Lebanese parent registers them. A child of an unregistered father and a registered mother is also a cause for the statelessness of children, as the mother does not have the right to pass her nationality to her child.³⁵² However, the personal status laws of the 18 officially recognized religious groups in Lebanon make it even harder for illegitimate children to acquire Lebanese nationality.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has been issuing annual circulars to regulate school enrollment and facilitate access to education for stateless children of Lebanese origin or those born to a Lebanese mother. However, challenges persist. For instance, in June 2024, the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement issued statements urging private and public schools

³⁴⁸ Government of Lebanon. (1925). *Decision no. 14 issued on January 19, 1925 amended according to Law 1/11/1960: Lebanese Nationality Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=5e60d39d4>

³⁴⁹ The National News. (2020, January 26). *A matter of identity: The families who are affected by Lebanon's nationality law*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/family/a-matter-of-identity-the-families-who-are-affected-by-lebanon-s-nationality-law-1.968488>.

³⁵⁰ Siren Associates. (2021, September). *Mapping and Understanding Statelessness in Akkar*. Retrieved from <https://sirenassociates.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Mapping-and-understanding-statelessness-in-Akkar-2021.pdf>.

³⁵¹ UNHCR. *Stateless Persons*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/stateless-persons>

³⁵² United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. (2019). *Lebanon 2019 Human Rights Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/LEBANON-2019-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

to refrain from enrolling Syrian students whose families do not hold legal residency permits issued by the GDGS. They emphasized that refugee cards issued by UNHCR should not be considered valid for school enrollment and warned that institutions disregarding this directive could face legal action. The Progressive Socialist Party criticized these campaigns, expressing concern that they could result in thousands of Syrian children losing their access to education and becoming vulnerable to exploitation.³⁵³

As the presidential seat remained vacant throughout the year, no naturalization decrees were issued in 2024.

³⁵³ L'Orient today. (2024, June 8). *LF, FPM ask schools not to enroll Syrians who do not hold legal residency*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1416614/lf-asks-schools-not-to-enroll-syrians-who-do-not-hold-legal-residency.html>

Right to Marry and Protection of Family

Since Lebanon does not have a civil law for personal status matters, such as marriage and family, marriage is not governed by national law, rather it is regulated by each of the 18 religious groups recognized in the country. Indeed, Article 9 of the Lebanese Constitution stipulates that “[t]he state shall guarantee that the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect they belong to, shall be respected.”³⁵⁴

Minimum Age for Marriage

Lebanon is a party to several conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which explicitly or implicitly ban child marriage. UN committees responsible for the oversight of the implementation of these conventions urge the parties to abolish child marriage and amend laws to set the legal age for marriage at 18³⁵⁵. However, there is no minimum age for marriage stipulated in Lebanese law, as it varies based on the religious group and the gender to which individuals belong. Accordingly, some boys aged 13 years and girls as young as nine years old are allowed by their religious community to get married. In contrast, other groups base their decision on whether the child has become physically fit or has reached puberty.³⁵⁶ The proposed draft law, introduced in 2020, sets the legal marriage age at 18 for all genders.³⁵⁷ However, it remains stalled in Parliament's Administration and Justice Committee, with no progress made.

Civil Marriage

Civil marriage is still not allowed in Lebanon, where only a religious marriage can be recognized. Although some couples opt to bar their religious affiliation from their civil registry and then get married at a public notary office, such a move is still rarely accepted by the official authorities and is highly controversial, culturally speaking. Most couples who do not identify with any officially recognized religions or belong to different faiths have been choosing to travel to neighboring countries, such as Cyprus or Turkey, where civil marriage is legal, and return to Lebanon to register their marriage as a foreign marriage.

Equal Rights to Marriage, During Marriage, and at its Dissolution

While Lebanon is a party to the CEDAW, it has registered its reservation on Article 16 relating to same rights during marriage upon its ratification of the convention. As the Lebanese Government does not consider itself bound by the provisions related to equal rights during marriage and at its dissolution, equal rights and responsibilities as parents and regarding guardianship of children, and the right to choose a family name.³⁵⁸ Indeed, in both law and practice, Lebanese men and women are not entitled to the same rights to marriage, during marriage, and in case of the latter's dissolution.

Because the personal status laws of all religious groups in Lebanon is still largely traditional and have never been revisited, they all provide for unequal rights to marriage and duties between spouses

³⁵⁴ Lebanese Parliament. (1926, May 23). *The Lebanese Constitution*. Retrieved from <https://www.lp.gov.lb/backoffice/uploads/files/Lebanese%20Constitution-%20En.pdf>.

³⁵⁵ Human rights watch. (2017, April 17). *Lebanon: Pass Bill to End Child Marriage*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/12/lebanon-pass-bill-end-child-marriage>

³⁵⁶ OHCHR. *Report on child marriage, early marriage, and forced marriage*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/ForcedMarriage71-175/Lebanon.pdf>.

³⁵⁷ Legal Agenda. (2020, March 27). *Child Marriage Proposal: For a more realistic legislative workshop*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/yckz5zjs>

³⁵⁸ United Nations. *Declarations, Reservations and Objections to CEDAW*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm>.

during marriage. For instance, some Muslim traditions in Lebanon require men to pay their wives-to-be a dowry before the wedding, while women do not have the same obligation. They also allow polygamy, i.e men to have four different spouses simultaneously, discipline their wives, and have sexual intercourse with them even if the latter is unwilling. In contrast, women do not have any of these rights. Under all religious personal status laws, husbands have the legal duty of supporting and providing for their families by getting them food, clothes, and shelter, among other needs. At the same time, wives are legally responsible for taking care of the house and children, engaging in sexual relations with their husbands, and living in the family home.

Many religious groups also allow wives to go to court to demand spousal support from their husbands while denying the latter that right regardless of the spouses' roles and financial position during the marriage. However, women have systematically rejected that request, and courts often reduce support, including in cases in which a woman refuses to live with her husband or leaves the family home. Moreover, almost all religious groups recognize only the father as the absolute financial and moral guardian of children, both during marriage and at its dissolution, giving him the primary responsibility for raising and preserving children and their assets until they become adults.³⁵⁹ The draft law was proposed to Parliament in 2022 to make personal status laws universal across all religious groups but has seen no advancements since.³⁶⁰

In 2024, divorce rates in Lebanon remained stagnant, with a rate of 1.6 divorces per 1,000 people.³⁶¹ At the dissolution of the marriage, women are discriminated against in the personal status laws of all religious groups, with fewer rights to access divorce and child custody. Sunni and Shia traditions in Lebanon give women a conditional right to divorce only, while men have an absolute right to do so. In Christian law, although it is hard for both spouses to seek divorce, some conditions grant men more grounds for annulment than women.

Furthermore, personal status laws do not recognize marital domestic abuse as a sufficient basis for dissolving a marriage. Women are also often confronted with legal and other hurdles when they want to end their marriage,³⁶² restrictions on their financial rights, and the risk of losing custody. When the marriage is dissolved, child custody is often decided based on the age of the child and specific conditions applied to mothers but not fathers, instead of giving the primary concern to the best interest of the child with either parent.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is a common phenomenon in Lebanon's rural areas that explicitly violates the principle of free and full consent of intending spouses. Although forced marriage can occur at any age, when spouses are forced by their family or community to get married, it is predominantly found in early marriages, i.e before the age of . Forced marriage occurs for a variety of reasons; these include not only tradition and lack of education but also economic hardship, wherein a family looks to relieve

³⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch. (2015, January 19). *Unequal and Unprotected: Women's Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>; Adyan Foundation. (2022). *Women's Rights in Religious Personal Status Laws in Lebanon*. <https://adyanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ENGLISH-WRL-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

³⁶⁰ L'Orient Today. (2022, December 23). *Breaking the 'sect and sex bargain': Personal status draft law seeks sweeping change*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1322552/breaking-the-sect-and-sex-bargain-personal-status-draft-law-seeks-sweeping-change.html>

³⁶¹ Lebanon24. (2024, September 8). *Lebanon within the list... Divorce rates in Arab countries*. Retrieved from <https://www.lebanon24.com/news/lebanon/1244117/%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B6%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%87%D9%83%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%A1%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9>

³⁶² Human Rights Watch. (2015, January 19). *Unequal and Unprotected: Women's Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>

itself of the financial responsibility of a dependent. With the current deteriorating living conditions in Lebanon, forced marriage is on a sharp rise, further threatening the intending spouses' civil rights.³⁶³ In 2024, Forced marriage constituted 78% of reported GBV by children, mainly girls, with a 20% increase from the previous year (58%).³⁶⁴

Domestic Violence and Marital Rape

In December 2020, the Lebanese Parliament amended Law 293/2014 on domestic violence, broadening the framework for criminalizing domestic violence to include psychological and economic violence. Moreover, violence perpetrated "during marital life or because of it" was included in the definition of the crime,³⁶⁵ but [cultural, religious, and social challenges hinder a more protective interpretation of the law](#).

While the ISF has a hotline for victims of domestic violence with trained officers and operators, it is still only available in Arabic, cannot be used anonymously, and is not free of charge – issues that remained particularly relevant in 2024 amid ongoing cases and domestic violence trials. For example, in July, a father was sentenced to 68 years in prison after being found guilty of raping his daughter and two sons.³⁶⁶

Nevertheless, domestic violence claims the lives of many individuals, especially women and girls, every year. In August, a well-known TikToker was murdered by her uncle in honor killing, after she was blackmailed over an explicit video she was a part of.³⁶⁷ Another girl in Baakline was sexually assaulted, and according to the ISF, her father murdered her to restore the family's reputation. The murder was only uncovered a year later, in November 2024, when the son confessed that his father had killed her.³⁶⁸ The father had also been abusing his son, reportedly chaining him to a tree for several days. Although the perpetrator in this case was arrested a year after committing the crime, many honor killings continue to go unpunished.³⁶⁹ The severity of gender-based violence and the frequency of femicides in Lebanon were further underscored by the homicide of Lebanese journalist Abir Rahal, who was killed by her husband in the Sharia Court in Shheim in December 2024³⁷⁰³⁷¹

³⁶³ Freedom United. (2021, May 21). *Rise in forced underage marriages in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.freedomunited.org/news/rise-in-forced-underage-marriages-in-lebanon/>

³⁶⁴ UNICEF (2024). *Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Information Management System (IMS)*

2024 Midyear Thematic Report. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/112644>

³⁶⁵ CVAW. (2021, January 14). *In Lebanon: The Parliament Passes New Amendments to the Protection from DV Law*. Retrieved from <https://cvaw-arabcoalition.org/en/english-in-lebanon-the-parliament-passes-new-amendments-to-the-protection-from-dv-law/>.

³⁶⁶ Al Sharek al Awsat (2024, July 15). *68 years for a man who raped his three children*. Retrieved from:

<https://aawsat.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A/5040390-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B4%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A9-68-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8B-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A8-%D8%A3%D8%B7%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AB%D8%A9>

³⁶⁷ Lebanonon (2025, August 17). *A Baalbek family kills their famous TikToker daughter in honor killing...A pornographic video led to her murder*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lebanonon.com/news/269741>

³⁶⁸ This is Lebanon (2024, November 7). *He killed his daughter'... New information about the crime of chaining a child in Baakline!* Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/421052/>

³⁶⁹ ibid

³⁷¹ This is Lebanon (2024, December 26). *In the Shheim Sharia Court, a husband shoots his wife and kills her*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/447602/>

Rights of Migrant Families

Migrant families, and especially their children, often face discrimination in health or education institutions. The government should aim to promote anti-discrimination measures targeting educational institutions and parents in order to provide equal access to education and a safe environment for children to grow and learn.

Moreover, women migrant workers cannot benefit from many maternity provisions under the Lebanese Labor Law. If they become pregnant during their contract period, whether by choice or as a result of rape, they are often forced to leave their workplace and the country or fall into irregularity. Children of migrant workers, thus, usually end up being stateless, especially when the law of their country of origin does not recognize the child's right to citizenship when born outside of marriage.³⁷²

³⁷² UN Women. (2021). *Migrant Workers' Rights and Women's Rights – Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon: A Gender Perspective*. Retrieved from <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/06/women-migrant-domestic-workers-in-lebanon-a-gender-perspective>

Right to Own Property

Evictions

Since 2019, many residents have been falling short of paying their rent, exposing them to the risk of being evicted. Indeed, eviction has been steadily rising in Lebanon, as many landlords have been requesting rent to be paid in USD or its daily black-market equivalent in Lebanese Pound. In contrast, other evictions occur because the landlord has found someone willing to pay more.³⁷³

In the first nine months of 2024, real estate transactions surged by 118%, and their total value increased by 197% compared to the same period in 2023. However, this boom has not resolved the rental crisis. Instead, demand has spiked without a corresponding increase in affordable supply.³⁷⁴

The housing crisis was further aggravated by the ongoing armed conflict. According to the World Bank, around \$3.4 billion in damage occurred until November 2024, with 82% affecting the housing sector. The most impacted areas include Nabatiyeh (45%), the South (38%), and the Bekaa (12%). An estimated 99,209 housing units have been damaged, 18% of which are completely destroyed.³⁷⁵ These losses have pushed thousands into displacement and increased competition for the remaining habitable units, driving up rent. The economic fallout is equally severe - estimated at \$389 million - due to lost rental income, reduced property taxes, and diminished revenue in related sectors. Heavily affected areas such as Tyre, Saïda, Bint Jbeil, and Marjayoun are bearing the brunt of this strain.³⁷⁶

In 2024, the rental situation was particularly dire for displaced persons, especially in regions like Nabatiyeh (where 12% of the displaced are located), Beirut, and Mount Lebanon. Compared to the 2006 war, when displaced families were often welcomed into homes, the 2024 housing crisis was marked by speculative markets, rising rents, and a lack of available housing. The shortage was compounded by the absence of new construction and deepening financial pressures.³⁷⁷

Exploitation is widespread: landlords frequently demand months of rent in advance or impose long-term contracts to exclude financially vulnerable groups.³⁷⁸ In Saïda, furnished apartments now charge \$1,000 to \$3,000 in monthly rent, up from \$500 a year ago. Unfurnished units have also surged in price, in the Bekaa, rents can exceed \$2,000 per month. Even basic items like foam mattresses have become significantly more expensive.³⁷⁹ Despite this, demand for furnished apartments remains high due to immediate shelter needs - though prices are increasingly unaffordable for those most in need.³⁸⁰

In October 2024, around 250 displaced persons occupied the long-abandoned Hamra Star Hotel in Beirut. After collectively rehabilitating the space, they received a 48-hour eviction notice from security

³⁷³ Norwegian Refugee Council. (2021, August). *Housing, land and property in Beirut, in the light of the port blast*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hlp-in-beirut-in-the-light-of-the-port-blast-full-report.pdf>

³⁷⁴ L'Orient Today. (2024, November 7). *Real estate transactions up by 118% in Lebanon during first nine months of 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1434669/real-estate-transactions-up-by-118-in-lebanon-during-first-nine-months-of-2024.html>

³⁷⁵ World Bank Group. (2024, November). *Lebanon Interim Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA) Assessment Report*. Retrieved from: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099111224112085259/pdf/P5063801c62fbc0c21beff1d0a436d07e02.pdf>

³⁷⁶ Ibid

³⁷⁷ LBCI. (2024, February 24). *Navigating the Rental Surge: Lebanon's Housing Dilemma in Times of Crisis*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/news-bulletin-reports/756431/navigating-the-rental-surge-lebanons-housing-dilemma-in-times-of-crisi/en>

³⁷⁸ UNHCR. (2025, March 12). *UNHCR - Protection Monitoring Findings - Q4 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115060>

³⁷⁹ L'Orient-Le Jour. (2024, October 7). *Displaced: The surge in rent prices in Lebanon continues*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1430057/displaced-the-surge-in-rent-prices-in-lebanon-continues.html>

³⁸⁰ World Bank Group. (2024, November). *Lebanon Interim Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA) Assessment Report*. Retrieved from: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099111224112085259/pdf/P5063801c62fbc0c21beff1d0a436d07e02.pdf>

forces. Roads were blocked, and resistance was met with force, including the use of pepper spray and physical assault. Although some residents returned the same night, the incident revealed the absence of sustainable housing options for displaced families.³⁸¹

Legal residency barriers and housing insecurity for refugees

In 2024, housing conditions deteriorated further for vulnerable refugee communities, particularly Syrian refugees and Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS). Legal and administrative barriers have severely restricted access to formal housing.³⁸²

In May 2024, GDGS officially suspended residency renewals for PRS, leaving nearly all 27,000 individuals without legal status.³⁸³ This shift effectively excludes them from formal rental markets. Without valid documentation, PRS are pushed into informal, overcrowded, and often unsafe housing arrangements where landlords do not require contracts. This legal vacuum exposes refugee families to exploitation, leaves them without protection against eviction or abuse, and denies them any legal recourse in the event of disputes.³⁸⁴

Forced evictions of refugees in Lebanon surged dramatically in 2024, with at least 4,132 documented cases representing a seven-fold increase from 586 cases in 2023³⁸⁵ and marking the highest number recorded in recent years and a reversal of the decline observed the previous year. In 2021, 955 cases were reported³⁸⁶, rising to 1,871 in 2022³⁸⁷. However, many evictions go unreported, especially in informal settings where refugees lack legal documentation or tenancy agreements, suggesting the actual number is likely higher.³⁸⁸

Aftermath of the Port of Beirut Explosion

The Port of Beirut Explosion deprived many residents in the city of their property, most critically as a sizable portion of the affected properties were places of residence. Indeed, the explosion left around 300,000 individuals homeless and caused a loss of \$ 15 billion in property damage. While the civil society organizations and international community rushed to provide these individuals with emergency aid and shelter, many remain displaced to this day, and the government's compensation falls short of fairly compensating for the properties they have been deprived of as they have been insufficient in scale, unevenly distributes and undermined by technical and systemic inefficiencies. In the year after the explosion, many victims still had difficulties returning to their homes.³⁸⁹ The dire economic crisis has made spending money to repair properties especially difficult. Particularly

³⁸¹ The Public Source. (2024, October 24). *Amid War, Displaced Families Fight for Housing Rights*. Retrieved from: <https://thepublicsource.org/blog/lebanon-front/war-displaced-housing-rights>

³⁸² ACHR. (2024, December 11). *Uprooting the Displaced- The Forced Evictions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.achrighs.org/en/2024/12/11/13820/>

³⁸³ UNCHR. (2025, April 16). *Lebanon Protection Sector Analysis Report December 2024 – March 2025*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-protection-sector-analysis-report-december-2024-march-2025>

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ ACHR. (2024, December 11). *Uprooting the Displaced- The Forced Evictions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.achrighs.org/en/2024/12/11/13820/>

³⁸⁶ ACHR. (2022, December 8). *The « Voluntary » Forced Return of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.achrighs.org/en/2022/12/08/12864/>

³⁸⁷ ACHR. (2022, May 25). *The Annual Report On The Prominent Human Rights Violations Against Syrian Refugees In Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.achrighs.org/en/2022/05/25/12604/>

³⁸⁸ ACHR. (2024, December 11). *Uprooting the Displaced- The Forced Evictions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.achrighs.org/en/2024/12/11/13820/>

³⁸⁹ Al Jazeera. (2021, August 2). *A year on, Beirut blast victims still struggling to return home*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/2/one-year-on-beirut-blast-victims-still-struggling-to-return-home>

vulnerable Beirut residents, such as refugees and migrant workers, have been suffering from a fragmented post-explosion recovery, as less than 1% of the reconstruction initiatives were state led.³⁹⁰

In response to the increasing evictions of victims of the August 2020 port explosion, the Lebanese Government passed Law 194/2020, which banned changing rent prices and contracts for 12 months and banned property owners in Beirut from selling their property.³⁹¹ limited. It does not provide clear guidelines on repair procedures and fails to resolve legal and administrative barriers, such as the requirement for property owners' consent to carry out repairs. These gaps have slowed down rehabilitation efforts. The absence of specialized committees and enforcement mechanisms further weakened the law's impact. These gaps have slowed down rehabilitation efforts. The absence of specialized committees and enforcement mechanisms further weakened the law's impact.³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Reuters. (2021, August 4). *Vulnerable Beirut residents struggle in 'fragmented' blast reconstruction*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-blast-refugees-idUSKBN2F507J>

³⁹¹ The Lebanese Association for Taxpayers' Rights. (2020). *Law No. 194 dated 16/10/2020 relating to the protection of the damaged and affected areas and their reconstruction following the explosion of the port of Beirut*. Retrieved from <https://www.albic.net/law-no-194-dated-16102020-relating-to-the-protection-of-the-damaged-and-affected-areas-and-their-reconstruction-following-the-explosion-of-the-port-of-beirut/>

³⁹² LCPS (2024, May 8). *REFORM MONITOR | Protecting Beirut's Heritage Buildings*. Retrieved from : <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/en/articles/details/4877/reform-monitor-%7C-protecting-beirut's-heritage-buildings>

Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion

Freedom of Religion and Belief

The Lebanese Constitution protects the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and Article 9 stipulates that: “[t]here shall be absolute freedom of conscience. The state, in rendering homage to the God Almighty, shall respect all religions and creeds and shall guarantees under its protection, the free exercise of all religious rites provided that public order is not disturbed. It shall also guarantee that the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect they belong, shall be respected.”³⁹³

A religiously diverse country, the Lebanese Government officially recognizes 18 religious groups in the country: five Muslim groups (Shia, Sunni, Alawite, Ismaili, and Druze), 12 Christian groups (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Assyrian, Chaldean, Copt, Evangelical, and Latin Catholic), and Jews. These groups enjoy the freedom to regulate all personal status matters of their adherents and have authority over their own personal status courts, in the absence of civil courts, for the arbitration of issues related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody, etc.

Although the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and belief, religious freedom crucially depends on the legal structure and enforcement mechanisms available to all religious communities. As such, some religious groups, despite being in Lebanon for decades, remain unrecognized and do not have the same legal rights. Although Lebanon has been tolerant of their religious practices, unrecognized religious groups, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, Baha’is, Ahmadis, Hindus, Buddhists, Mormons, Zoroastrians, and other faiths lacking state recognition, cannot marry, divorce, or inherit according to their own rules.³⁹⁴ To undertake formal proceedings, they must resort to the courts of recognized groups or leave the country to access courts elsewhere. Members of unrecognized groups face problems when applying for IDs and civil status extracts since these documents only mention religious groups recognized by the state. Members of unrecognized groups are also not allowed to work in the government, run for office, or become diplomats.

Furthermore, voters need to be registered under one of the recognized religions to access voting polls.³⁹⁵ Unrecognized groups cannot officially register their houses of worship, excluding them from the property tax exemption given to churches and mosques of the 18 recognized religious groups. In addition to legal and administrative discrimination, unrecognized groups are often subjected to social and religious prejudice. Several studies have shown that Jehovah’s Witness members are more vulnerable to harassment from security forces.³⁹⁶

To be recognized as a religious group in Lebanon, a statement of moral principles and doctrine should be submitted to the Government for review. Nevertheless, this process has proved to be lengthy and often dominated by demographic and political considerations, and lacking objective clear criteria based on which decisions are made: the Coptic Orthodox Church, for example, was added to the roster

³⁹³ Government of Lebanon (1926, May 23). *The Lebanese Constitution*. Retrieved from <https://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/LebaneseSystem/Documents/Lebanese%20Constitution.pdf>.

³⁹⁴ El Rajji, R. (2014, December). The leaves of one tree: Religious minorities in Lebanon. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/leaves-one-tree-religious-minorities-lebanon>

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ Minority Rights Group. (2014, Decmeber 10). *The leaves of one tree: Religious minorities in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://minorityrights.org/app/uploads/2023/12/mrg-briefing-religious-minorities-in-lebanon.pdf>

of legally recognized Christian denominations.³⁹⁷ Conversely, the application for recognition by the Lebanese Association for the Ahmadi Muslims faced rejection.³⁹⁸

Freedom to Change Religion or Belief

While the legal mechanisms to change one's religion or belief are present in Lebanon, this matter is regulated by each recognized religious group in the country. An individual may change their religion upon issuing a statement by a senior member of the religion that the convert has chosen, affirming the conversion, followed by a registration with the Ministry of Interior's Personal Status Directorate. Nevertheless, religious conversion is considered taboo and often done covertly. Some religious groups in the country, such as the Druze community, do not allow individuals who were not born into the group to convert to the Druze religion.

Individuals in Lebanon are also allowed to remove their religion from their official documentation and officially declare themselves as atheists or agnostics. While it is true that, legally, changing religions in Lebanon is allowed, such a change would still be hardly, if ever, accepted by society, showing that changing one's faith is still very challenging.

Freedom to Manifest Religion or Belief in Teaching, Practice, Worship, and Observance

Religious groups in Lebanon are free to practice their faith, hold religious ceremonies, and assemble freely. Indeed, the Lebanese Constitution protects the freedom to manifest an individual or a community's religion on the condition that it does not disturb public order.³⁹⁹ As such, the different existing religious groups in the country have the right and space to worship and practice their ceremonies in public and private places. Churches, mosques, and other places of worship exist across all Lebanese territory. Although assaults against these places may happen, such instances are rare and occasional.

Nevertheless, fear of persecution has driven unrecognized religious groups in Lebanon to perform their rituals behind closed doors and forced them to forego other traditions.⁴⁰⁰ Some recognized religious groups are victims of a similar experience as well. For instance, the number of Lebanese Jews residing in Lebanon today is only 27 people, and they live in fear, change their names, and hide their religious identity due to their religion's links to the Israeli state,⁴⁰¹ and with the escalation of the Hezbollah-Israeli war, backlash against Jews in Lebanon became more prominent.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁷ Lebanese University. (1996). *Adding the Coptic Orthodox Church to the sects recognized under Table No. (1) attached to Resolution No. 60 dated 03/13/1936 and to the sects stipulated in Article 1 of Law 04/02/1951*. Lebanese University Legal Informatics Center. Retrieved from <http://77.42.251.205/LawView.aspx?opt=view&LawID=184505>

³⁹⁸ Lebanese University. (2016). *Withdrawing the statement of knowledge and the news given to the establishment of the association called « The Lebanese Association for the Ahmadi Muslim »*. Lebanese University Center For Research And Studies In Legal Informatics. Retrieved from <http://77.42.251.205/Law.aspx?lawid=258465>

³⁹⁹ L'Orient Today. (2022, June 16). *The last Jews of Lebanon, a life shrouded in secrecy*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1302830/the-last-jews-of-lebanon-a-life-shrouded-in-secrecy.html>

⁴⁰⁰ Now Lebanon. (2014, November 20). *Lebanon's Zoroastrians Want a Civil State*. Retrieved from <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/564417-lebanons-zoroastrians-want-a-civil-state>

⁴⁰¹ L'Orient Today. (2022, June 16). *The last Jews of Lebanon, a life shrouded in secrecy*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1302830/the-last-jews-of-lebanon-a-life-shrouded-in-secrecy.html>

⁴⁰² The Jerusalem Post (2024, March 13). *The silent fade of Lebanon's last Jews amid escalation with Hezbollah*. Retrieved from: <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-791818>

Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution guarantees, “The freedom to express one’s opinion orally or in writing, the freedom of the press, the freedom of assembly, and the freedom of association shall be guaranteed within the limits established by law”.⁴⁰³ Still, the Lebanese state sometimes uses broad defamation laws to criminalize free speech and expression.

Freedom of Speech

While Lebanon enjoys a greater degree of freedom of speech than most countries in the region, there remain several limitations that restrict citizens’ right to free speech. The Lebanese Penal and Military Codes’ prohibition of defamation of the military, president, and public officials is routinely used to silence Government critics. Even outside of specific references in these codes, defamation law is often used to silence criticism of public officials. The laws are also overstretched to include intimidating ordinary citizens, like journalist Rami Naim who was arrested by the Lebanese Army after stating in a radio interview that he would shoot at Lebanese law enforcement and the Army. His remarks were fueled by frustration with the double standards of Lebanon’s security forces, with the intention to criticize Hezbollah and its affiliates. Naim was released a few hours after his arrest.⁴⁰⁴ Moreover, Article 15 of Lebanon’s 1946 Labor Code prohibits a public employee from making or publishing any speech, public statement, or authored work on any subject without the prior written approval of the superior.

One of the most controversial moments concerning freedom of speech was comedian Shaden Fakhri’s viral video where she criticized aspects of Islam during her comedy shows. Dar al-Fatwa, Lebanon’s highest Sunni religious authority, called for a judicial investigation and accused her of blasphemy and inciting sectarian conflict. Fakhri received backlash from both religious figures and social media users, with some calling for her prosecution.⁴⁰⁵ Amid the controversies and backlash, Fakhri decided to leave the country in July 2024 and has not returned since, stating that “the state can’t protect me.”⁴⁰⁶

Indeed, many people have been summoned and arrested for criticizing the Government. This is especially true for activists who were vocal on social media and were thus attacked for being critical or offending public officials.⁴⁰⁷ The ISF’s Cybercrime Bureau is frequently responsible for repressing the freedom of speech, as it has effectively transformed into a de facto censorship enforcer, significantly overstepping its intended jurisdiction by routinely investigating and intimidating individuals for their online expression, often at the behest of political elites or acting independently on politically sensitive content, thus diverging sharply from its primary mandate of combating cybercrime.

As the armed conflict intensified in Lebanon in 2024, so did crackdowns on the freedom of speech. Whenever a public criticized Hezbollah’s stance on the war, they were met with backlash from the party. For instance, in March, the GDGS temporarily detained political activist Makram Rabah after he

⁴⁰³ Government of Lebanon (1926). *The Lebanese Constitution*. <https://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/LebaneseSystem/Documents/Lebanese%20Constitution.pdf>.

⁴⁰⁴ L’Orient Today. (2024, April 13). *Journalist Rami Naim, a well-known opponent of Hezbollah, briefly arrested by the Lebanese army*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1410140/le-journaliste-rami-naim-opposant-notoire-au-hezbollah-arrete-par-larmee-libanaise.html>

⁴⁰⁵ L’Orient-Le Jour (2024, May 10). *Comedian Shaden Fakhri accused of 'blasphemy' by Dar al-Fatwa*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1413306/comedian-shaden-fakhri-accused-of-blasphemy-by-dar-al-fatwa.html>

⁴⁰⁶ L’Orient Today. (2024, July 18). *Comedian Shaden Fakhri leaves Lebanon after religious controversy over one of his sketches*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1420692/lhumoriste-shaden-fakhri-quitte-le-liban-apres-une-polemique-religieuse-sur-un-de-ses-sketchs.html>

⁴⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch (2020, July 13). *Lebanon: New Coalition to Defend Free Speech*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/13/lebanon-new-coalition-defend-free-speech>

criticized Hezbollah and their military presence during an interview.⁴⁰⁸ Rabah's interrogation focused on his ability to provide information about Hezbollah's whereabouts, which was perceived as sharing potential coordinates with Israel. Rabah contended that the information was already publicly available and had been reported in the media.⁴⁰⁹

Similarly, in August, GDGS detained and questioned comedian Kassem Jaber over a Facebook post criticizing Hezbollah's military intervention. Jaber claimed that the GDGS arrested him with a warrant after searching his home.⁴¹⁰ In November, State Security summoned political activist Charles Chartouni following interviews where he expressed opposition to Hezbollah and voiced criticism against them.

Freedom of Press

In 2024, Lebanon's position in the World Press Freedom Index declined significantly, falling from 119th in 2023⁴¹¹ to 140th out of 180 countries⁴¹². One of the main concerns for freedom of expression is that the regulations affecting Lebanon's media are legislated mainly through the 1962 Press and Publication Law and the 1994 Audiovisual Law, which are outdated and lack amendments capable of addressing the digital revolution. Moreover, the media is characterized by alliances with domestic and foreign powers striving for control, which, in other words, means it is not independent. Key political groups and wealthy family clans are involved in the media business, which reflects an overall laissez-faire attitude and high politicization. This elitist and exclusive ownership model jeopardizes pluralism and independence in media.⁴¹³

In 2024, journalists in Lebanon continued to face increasing pressure through both legal repression and coordinated harassment campaigns. Authorities persisted in misusing criminal defamation laws to target journalists, particularly those reporting on corruption or politically sensitive matters. On the 18th of January 2024, Judge Sabbouh Sulaiman initiated legal proceedings against investigative journalist Riad Tawk, accusing him of defamation, slander, and libel. The case stemmed from a video published on the "Beirut Time" platform, in which Tawk criticized the judge's decision to suspend arrest warrants for former minister Youssef Fenianos and MP Ali Hassan Khalil, both implicated in the Beirut port explosion investigation. Judge Sulaiman demanded Tawk's arrest, prosecution, and sought \$200,000 in damages.⁴¹⁴

Beyond legal intimidation, Lebanese journalists were also subjected to mounting threats and online harassment. For instance, in November 2024, journalist and university professor Dr. Eman Shweikh resigned from her position at MTV after receiving repeated threats, allegedly from Hezbollah supporters. She reported that she was being followed, chased while driving, and targeted in a campaign that also affected her family. Shweikh cited the lack of state protection and fear for her personal safety as reasons for her resignation.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁸ Naharnet. (2024, March 18). *Makram Rabah briefly detained over anti-Hezbollah interview*. Retrieved from <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/304028-makram-rabah-briefly-detained-over-anti-hezbollah-interview>

⁴⁰⁹ Arab News. (2024, March 18). *Lebanese judiciary temporarily detains academic who criticized Hezbollah on TV*. Retrieved from <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2478776/media>

⁴¹⁰ L'Orient Today. (2024, August 23). *Comedian Kassem Jaber, known for his criticism of Hezbollah, briefly detained*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1424777/le-comedien-kassem-jaber-connu-pour-ses-critiques-envers-le-hezbollah-brievement-detenu.html>

⁴¹¹ Reporters Without Borders (2023, January 23). *World Press Freedom Index – Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://rsf.org/en/country/lebanon>

⁴¹² Reporters Without Borders. (2024, May 3). *World Press Freedom Index – Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://rsf.org/en/country/lebanon>

⁴¹³ Reporters without Borders (2018, December 11). *Media Ownership Monitor*. Retrieved from <https://www.ifex.org/lebanon/2018/12/11/media-ownership-monitor/>; Media Ownership Monitor (2018). *Media Ownership Matters*. <https://lebanon.mom-rsf.org/en/>.

⁴¹⁴ SKeyes Media. (2024, February 2). *Judge Sabbouh Sulaiman sues journalist Riad Tawk for defamation*. Retrieved from <https://www.skeyesmedia.org/en/News/Reports/02-02-2024/11330>

⁴¹⁵ Arab News. (2024, November 16). *Renowned Lebanese journalist quits MTV over death threats by alleged Hezbollah supporters*. Retrieved from <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2579566/media>

In the context of the Israel- Hezbollah conflict, the dangers facing journalists escalated dramatically. On the 25th of October 2024, journalists Ghassan Najjar, Mohammad Rida, and Wissam Qassem were deliberately targeted and killed by an Israeli airstrike in the town of Hasbaya while staying in a media compound. Their deaths sparked widespread condemnation and renewed international calls for the protection of journalists in conflict zones.⁴¹⁶

Convocations and Arrests

Numerous Lebanese activists, journalists, and other individuals have been arrested or summoned for expressing their opinions. Most individuals were questioned by the CCB, which enjoys extensive powers beyond its jurisdiction. Public prosecutors often selectively act on politically motivated complaints by political leaders and influential individuals, referring these complaints to the CCB if the Bureau had not already acted independently. These practices are concerning because they undermine the judiciary's responsibility to uphold due process rights. Convocations by the CCB often result in periods of involuntary confinement and deprivation of liberty and usually end with victims signing extrajudicial pledges restricting their freedom of expression. This falls within Categories II⁴¹⁷ and III⁴¹⁸ of arbitrary detention defined by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD).⁴¹⁹ Therefore, self-censorship has become more prominent in the blogosphere and in the country's top media outlets, owned by powerful figures across the political spectrum, due to users fearing repercussions from the government or certain political and sectarian groups.

In December 2024, Sahar Ghaddar, Ghina Ghandour, and Eveline Mouhawes were arrested following complaints filed by the Lebanese TV station MTV over critical posts shared on social media during the Israeli assault on Lebanon. They were interrogated at the CCB and released that same evening. The case triggered public outrage and mobilization, especially after reports that Hezbollah officials pressured the judiciary to secure their release. The Lebanese Audiovisual Syndicate issued a statement condemning the arrests as a violation of freedom of expression, stressing that journalists and influencers must not be treated as criminals for expressing dissent. The controversy further highlighted the increasing use of legal and extralegal tactics to intimidate and silence critics in Lebanon.⁴²⁰

Censorship

Although Lebanese law guarantees intellectual property rights, the DGGS still censors musical, cultural, and media public broadcasts. Censorship includes banning a specific work from being displayed, withdrawing it from the market, or intimidating its owners. Numerous foreign and local works have been banned in Lebanon because they were considered either as constituting sectarian strife, offensive to state officials or public morals, or as pro-Israeli propaganda. For instance, in February 2024, DGGS in Lebanon banned BDSM awareness workshops that were scheduled to take place at KED Beirut. These workshops were aimed to educate participants about BDSM practices and

⁴¹⁶ Human Rights Watch. (2024, November 25). *Lebanon: US Arms Used in Israeli Strike on Journalists*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/11/25/lebanon-us-arms-used-israeli-strike-journalists>

⁴¹⁷ When the deprivation of liberty results from the exercise of the rights or freedoms guaranteed by articles 7, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the UDHR and, insofar as States parties are concerned, by articles 12, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26 and 27 of the ICCPR

⁴¹⁸ When the total or partial non-observance of the international norms relating to the right to a fair trial, established in the UDHR and in the relevant international instruments accepted by the States concerned, is of such gravity as to give the deprivation of liberty an arbitrary character.

⁴¹⁹ The WGAD, established by resolution 1991/42 of the former Commission on Human Rights is a non-treaty based body, mandated to investigate cases of arbitrary detention, seek and receive information about such detentions from governments, NGOs, and individuals. See: United Nations Human Rights Council (2011, January 19). *A/HRC16/47: Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention*. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/16session/A-HRC-16-47.pdf>.

⁴²⁰ L'Orient-Le Jour. (2024, April 1). *Plainte de la MTV contre trois activistes: Wafic Safa aurait fait pression pour leur relaxe*. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1440289/plainte-de-la-mtv-contre-trois-activistes-wafic-safa-aurait-fait-pression-pour-leur-relaxe.html>

create safer spaces for open discussions. However, they faced significant opposition from conservative groups, which deemed the content morally inappropriate. In response, the GDGS intervened, citing concerns over public decency and the preservation of societal values. This ban is part of a broader trend of censorship in Lebanon, where cultural and social events that challenge traditional norms are often restricted. The decision to stop these workshops highlights the ongoing tension between freedom of expression and societal expectations, with religious and conservative authorities continuing to exert influence over what is deemed acceptable in the public sphere.⁴²¹

In addition, in June 2024, Le Monnot Theatre in Beirut canceled the scheduled performance of *Wedding Day at the Cro-Magnons* by France-based Lebanese-Canadian playwright and director Wajdi Mouawad, following public and political pressure. Though the play, written in 2008, depicts a family's wedding during the Lebanese Civil War, its presentation in Lebanon triggered a smear campaign and boycott against Mouawad. Accusations focused on his earlier play, *All Birds*, which was condemned by activist groups for allegedly normalizing relations with Israel. The newest smear campaign was backed by certain journalists and led by an actor who allegedly contributed to the play's cancellation. The actor called Mouawad a traitor who should stand trial in a circulated audio recording.⁴²² However, in a similar controversy concerning collaboration with Israel, the actor was accused of double standards for not speaking out against it.

⁴²¹ L'Orient-Le Jour. (2024, February 12). BDSM awareness workshops banned in Beirut. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1367949/bdsm-awareness-workshops-banned-in-beirut.html>

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Chalala, E. (2024, June 7). *Wajdi Mouawad's "Controversial" Wedding Day*. The Markaz Review. Retrieved from <https://themarkaz.org/wajdi-mouawads-controversial-wedding-day/>

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

In Lebanon, the constitution does not guarantee absolute freedom of assembly and association but rather freedom within limits established by law only. Since the protests began in the country in October 2019, demonstrations have continued into 2024 with the Lebanese authorities maintaining a strong crackdown on the freedom of assembly.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The primary legislation in Lebanon governing the right to peaceful assembly is the 1911 Public Assemblies Law, which is still outdated as it dates to the Ottoman era. The law provides that the MoIM or local administrative authority must be notified at least 48 hours before a public assembly. Although the provision in this article is rarely respected or implemented in practice, it has allowed the MoIM to ban peaceful assemblies arbitrarily under the pretext of “a threat to national security” or “inciting immorality and disrupting the public order.”

On the 21st of May, 2024, the Lebanese State Council issued a ruling ordering the Lebanese government to compensate a citizen who lost his right eye after security forces fired rubber bullets at protesters in Beirut on the 18th of January, 2020.⁴²³ Although the compensation was modest, the ruling marked the first and only recognition of state responsibility for the violent suppression of protests.⁴²⁴ However, it failed to hold individual perpetrators or security agencies accountable, and did not include punitive measures to prevent future repression and torture against protesters.⁴²⁵

Oppression against freedom of assembly in Lebanon continued in 2024. The repeated use of force, often excessive, by the Lebanese security forces in response to protests has been increasingly eroding the civic space for freedom of expression in the country. For instance, in February 2024, retired Lebanese army personnel held a protest in downtown Beirut demanding fair pension adjustments amid deteriorating economic conditions. As the protest escalated, security forces responded by firing tear gas to disperse the crowd.⁴²⁶ In May, protests broke out near Al-Marijah police station after authorities confiscated motorcycles from several owners. Protests blocked roads and set tires on fire. In response, the Lebanese army brought reinforcements and security forces opened fire to disperse the crowd.⁴²⁷ In October, amid a massive wave of displacement in the country, clashes broke out in Hamra following an eviction order targeting IDPs who settled in an abandoned hotel.⁴²⁸ Protesters gathered outside, chanting slogans and setting fire to overturned bins,⁴²⁹ while security forces responded with force.⁴³⁰ This incident occurred in light of statements made by former Interior Minister

⁴²³ HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement. (2024, August 26). *Peaceful Assembly Under Fire: Authorities' Violations of the Right to Protest in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://humena.org/peaceful-assembly-under-fire-authorities-violations-of-the-right-to-protest-in-lebanon/>

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ The National News. (2024, February 8). *Beirut army veteran pension protest*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/lebanon/2024/02/08/beirut-army-veteran-pension-protest/>

⁴²⁷ Annahar. (2024, May 18). *Motorcycle Revolution... Calm Returns to Al-Marijah after Tension, No Truth About Detainees Escaped (Video)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.annahar.com/320288>

⁴²⁸ L'Orient Today. (2024, October 21). Agreement reached with police during eviction of displaced people in abandoned Hamra hotel. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientjour.com/article/1432274/agreement-reached-with-police-during-eviction-of-displaced-people-in-abandoned-hamra-hotel.html>

⁴²⁹ Al-Monitor. (2024, October 21). *Anger in Beirut as security forces attempt eviction of displaced persons*. Retrieved from: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/10/anger-beirut-security-forces-attempt-eviction-displaced-persons>

⁴³⁰ L'Orient Today. (2024, October 21). Agreement reached with police during eviction of displaced people in abandoned Hamra hotel. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorie>

Bassam Mawlawi, who had vowed to "remove any encroachments on public and private property in Beirut."⁴³¹

In March 2024, there were additional incidents of repression against peaceful protesters exercising their right to freedom of assembly. Member of Parliament Melhem Khalaf, alongside several political activists, was violently attacked during a sit-in outside the Beirut Courts of Justice, where protesters demanded the resumption of the Beirut Port investigation.⁴³²

Freedom of Association

While Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution guarantees the freedom of association, Lebanese law bans undeclared associations and gives power to the government to reject new associations and dissolve former ones. In addition to that, Lebanese legislation includes repressive requirements for various kinds of associations formed, such as syndicates of employees and employers.⁴³³

In February, the Committee of Day Workers at Electricité du Liban (EDL) declared an open-ended strike and refused to report to work,⁴³⁴ demanding the regularization of their employment status and fair compensation.⁴³⁵ The workers rejected temporary contract extensions under outdated terms and called on the authorities to fill critical staffing gaps at the institution. The committee also denounced intimidation tactics and wage threats to end the strike, underlining the lack of effective union protections and the broader climate of labor repression.⁴³⁶

Although Lebanese NGOs continue to operate openly, several limitations restrict their work. NGOs must notify the government of their formation and wait for a notification number from the MoIM. This process can take up to a few years, leaving many organizations in administrative limbo. With no checks on the process by other government bodies or external organizations, the MoIM has the discretionary power to suspend or delay issuing notification numbers. The MoIM has often used these techniques to intimidate activists.

Over the past few years, the civic space for NGOs continued to shrink as Lebanese authorities and security agencies cracked down on civil society organizations, especially those among them providing services to Syrian refugees. NGOs were repeatedly asked to submit lists with personnel details to be allowed into camps, and some were even requested to submit lists with the personal information of their beneficiaries.

⁴³¹ Al-Monitor. (2024, October 21). *Anger in Beirut as security forces attempt eviction of displaced persons*. Retrieved from: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/10/anger-beirut-security-forces-attempt-eviction-displaced-persons>

⁴³² L'Orient Today. (2024, March 13). *Melhem Khalaf assaulted in front of Justice Palace*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1371298/melhem-khalaf-assaulted-in-front-of-justice-palace.html>

⁴³³ ICNL. (2007). *Notification or Registration? Guarantees of Freedom of Association in Non-Democratic Environments: Case Studies of Lebanon and Jordan*. Retrieved from https://www.icnl.org/resources/research/ijnl/notification-or-registration-guarantees-of-freedom-of-association-in-non-democratic-environments-case-studies-of-lebanon-and-jordan#_ftn8

⁴³⁴ Elnashra. (2024, February 18). *The Electricity of Lebanon's Day Workers Committee announced the continuation of the open-ended strike*. Retrieved from <https://www.elnashra.com/news/show/1657871>

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

Right to Participate in Government, Public Service, and Elections

Right to Take Part in Government and Equal Access to Public Service

Article 12 of the Lebanese Constitution stipulates that “every Lebanese shall have the right to hold public office; no preference shall be made except on the basis of merit and competence, according to the conditions established by law.”⁴³⁷ Nevertheless, the 1943 National Pact, a verbal understanding agreed on after Lebanon’s independence, has set a customary precedent that restricts the Presidency to Maronite Catholic Christians, the office of the Speaker of Parliament to Shia Muslims, and that of the Prime Minister to Sunni Muslims. Additionally, parliament seats are distributed on a religious and geographic basis among Lebanon's officially recognized sectarian groups and districts.

To hire a civil servant, the Civil Service Board (CSB) is entrusted with recruitment and its conditions, appointment, promotion, and transfer of employees, as well as all their personnel affairs based on Lebanese laws and regulations.⁴³⁸ While the CSB is supposed to establish equal access to public service for all Lebanese individuals, there has been a failure to guarantee this right. This is primarily based on the *quid pro quo* established from a customary rule of sectarian balance in almost all government positions. In many cases, the applicants’ efforts are in vain because they fall short of belonging to a particular sect group after submitting their official documents and undergoing an extensive examination.

Government

As usual, political deadlocks and negotiations have excessively hindered government formation, weakening governmental accountability and democratic legitimacy. Delays have also gravely affected an already-troubled economy that urgently needs reform.

In October 2022, President Michel Aoun’s six-year term ended, without a successor as the Lebanese Parliament failed four times before his departure to elect a new president.⁴³⁹ Since then, the Parliament has held twelve rounds and failed every time, with no candidate gaining enough support to be elected head of state.⁴⁴⁰ According to Article 62 of the Lebanese Constitution, the president’s powers are transferred to the Cabinet in case of a presidential vacuum. However, with a mere caretaker government, the country was left with a double vacuum, deadlock, and additional instability.⁴⁴¹ Following the authorization of the ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel on the 27th of November 2024, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri set the 9th of January 2025 for a parliamentary session to elect a new president.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁷ Lebanese Parliament (1926, May 23). *The Lebanese Constitution*. Retrieved from <https://www.lp.gov.lb/backoffice/uploads/files/Lebanese%20%20Constitution-%20En.pdf>.

⁴³⁸ Lebanese Civil Service Board. Functions of the Civil Service Board. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/3uxnd5y5>

⁴³⁹ Al-Monitor. (2022, November 1). *Crisis-hit Lebanon faces power vacuum without president*. Retrieved from <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/11/crisis-hit-lebanon-faces-power-vacuum-without-president>

⁴⁴⁰ Al-Monitor (2024, November 28). *Lebanon to hold January presidential elections amid fragile ceasefire*. Retrieved from <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/11/lebanon-hold-january-presidential-elections-amid-fragile-ceasefire>

⁴⁴¹ Heinrich Böll Stiftung Beirut. (2014, July 4). *Caught between constitution and politics: the presidential vacuum in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://lb.boell.org/en/2014/07/04/caught-between-constitution-and-politics-presidential-vacuum-lebanon>

⁴⁴² L’Orient Today (2024, November 28). *Berri sets Jan. 9 as date for parliamentary session to elect president*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1437340/berri-sets-jan-9-as-date-for-parliamentary-session-to-elect-president.html>

Parliamentary Elections

Calls for an early legislative election have been on the rise, with the current parliament only halfway through its term. One reason behind such calls is the current political deadlock in the presidential elections. In fact, both Parliamentary Deputy Speaker Elias Bou Saab and Tripoli MP Faysal Karame made such calls, with the latter adding that a modification of the electoral law would also help break the deadlock.⁴⁴³

Electoral Law

In 2017, Parliament had approved an amended electoral law,⁴⁴⁴ decree-law no. 44, which provided a significantly reformed framework for parliamentary elections in Lebanon based on proportional representation while keeping confessional quotas. Among other things, the law stipulated a preferential vote, out-of-country voting, and pre-printed ballots.⁴⁴⁵ While the new electoral law has allocated seats slightly more representative between constituencies, there are still discrepancies in the required votes to get a seat due to the constitutionally mandated fixed allocation of confessional seats – which does not consider the shifting demographics of the different confessions.⁴⁴⁶ Some legal observers say the preferential voting system still privileges specific candidates.⁴⁴⁷ Further controversial principles are the exclusion of a significant number of citizens, including those under 21, naturalized citizens for the first ten years after their naturalization, military voting, convicts,⁴⁴⁸ and pre-trial detainees.⁴⁴⁹

Lebanese civil society's election-related demands include abolishing Lebanon's current sect-based model of parliamentary representation. Some activists also called for a proportional allocation of seats based on the percentage of votes won by candidates.

It is worth noting that passing a new electoral law is only one part of electoral reform. Unequal access to media and finances leads to greater exposure for traditional politicians than the recent civil society movement.⁴⁵⁰ Chapter IV of decree-law no. 44 sets the legal framework for electoral media and advertising in campaigns, including guidelines for media coverage and candidate advertising during the election period, which allowed televised candidate debates for the first time in Lebanon. However, because commercial Lebanese TV stations charged candidates over 6,000 USD per minute of airtime (150,000 USD to 250,000 USD per interview), wealthier traditional politicians enjoyed a significant advantage over the recently emerged opposition or independents regarding their access to voters.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴³ L'Orient Today (2024 May 23). *Behind the recurrent calls for early legislative elections*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1414831/behind-the-recurrent-calls-for-early-legislative-elections.html>

⁴⁴⁴ The New Arab. (2018, May 6). *Polling begins in Lebanon's first election in 9 years*. Retrieved from <https://www.newarab.com/news/polling-begins-lebanons-first-election-9-years>

⁴⁴⁵ National Democratic Institute (2018). *Lebanon 2018 Parliamentary elections final report*. Retrieved from https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Lebanon%202018%20Parliamentary%20Elections_Final%20Report%20%28v.3%29_0.pdf.

⁴⁴⁶ EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Lebanon. (2017, June 6). *Parliamentary elections 2018*. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final_report_eu_eom_lebanon_2018_english_17_july_2018.pdf.

⁴⁴⁷ Al-Monitor. (2020, February 4). *Why protestors want Lebanon's new government to pass a new electoral law*. Retrieved from <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/02/lebanon-protesters-new-electoral-law-ruling-political-elite.html>.

⁴⁴⁸ Democracy Reporting International. (2018, April 30). *Assessment of the Lebanese Electoral Framework ahead of the 6 May Elections*. <https://democracy-reporting.org/en/office/lebanon/news/assessment-of-the-lebanese-electoral-framework-ahead-of-the-6-may-elections>.

⁴⁴⁹ EU Election Observation Mission Lebanon (2018, May 8). *Preliminary Statement*. Retrieved from http://www.eods.eu/library/eu_eom_lebanon_2018_preliminary_statement_may_8.pdf.

⁴⁵⁰ The free library (2018, May 5). *Lebanon 2018 Parliamentary Elections Final Report*. Retrieved from chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Lebanon%202018%20Parliamentary%20Elections_Final%20Report%20%28v.3%29.pdf

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

Corruption

In 2022, the Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International ranked Lebanon 150th out of 180.⁴⁵² The rank remained somewhat stagnant in 2023, and by 2024, it slightly increased, reaching a rank of 154th out of 180.⁴⁵³

Although several national and international anti-corruption laws and policies have been adopted in recent years, there is a lack of political will to properly implement these mechanisms due to the systematic nature of corruption in Lebanon.⁴⁵⁴ Lebanon has been a member of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) since 2009. This legally binding international instrument⁴⁵⁵ stipulates the mandatory establishment of mechanisms for preventing corruption, its criminalization, and possible reparations. However, some laws, policies, and mechanisms were only adopted to counter corruption in the country in 2020.

In 2020, the Lebanese Parliament approved a law lifting banking secrecy from the accounts of state officials involved in crimes of corruption, financing terrorism, and money laundering. The Lebanese Cabinet also adopted the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, which aims to strengthen accountability and transparency in the country by restricting the discretionary power of public administration. Although implementation challenges persist as of 2024, accomplishments were reported, including the activation of the Public Procurement Authority, and the implementation of key laws and regulations that align with international standards, like the Access Information Law and lifting bank secrecy.⁴⁵⁶

Parliament also passed Law 175/2020 on Combatting Corruption in the Public Sector and the Establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). The Commission became operational in December 2022, after its members were elected.⁴⁵⁷ It has since strengthened international partnerships,⁴⁵⁸ including a March 2024 agreement with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), to ameliorate the Lebanese government in terms of accountability, transparency, participation and performance management.⁴⁵⁹

The Public Procurement Law (PPL) 244/2021, which entered into force in July 2022,⁴⁶⁰ introduced international standards⁴⁶¹ and established the Public Procurement Authority as an independent administrative authority responsible for regulating, supervising, monitoring, and developing procurement regulations and performance.⁴⁶² However, a 2024 assessment reveals that two-thirds of

⁴⁵² Transparency International. (2022). *CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX*. Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>

⁴⁵³ Transparency International. (2024). *CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX*. Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2024>

⁴⁵⁴ Chatham House. (2021, June). *Breaking the curse of corruption in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/2021-06-29-breaking-curse-corruption-lebanon-merhej.pdf>.

⁴⁵⁵ UNDP. (2021, January 13). *United Nations Convention against Corruption*. Retrieved from <https://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/projects/anti-corruption-for-trust---lebanon-/united-nations-convention-against-corruption.html>.

⁴⁵⁶ ., (2024). *رئيس ميثاقتي يري حفل اطلاق التقرير الثاني بشأن تنفيذ الاستراتيجية الوطنية لمكافحة الفساد* (May 13). Retrieved from <http://www.pcm.gov.lb/arabic/subpg.aspx?pageid=24079>

⁴⁵⁷ LCPS. (2023, June 22). *The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) and Curbing Rampant Corruption in Lebanon*. Retrieved from [https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/en/articles/details/4793/the-national-anti-corruption-commission-\(nacc\)-and-curbing-rampant-corruption-in-lebanon](https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/en/articles/details/4793/the-national-anti-corruption-commission-(nacc)-and-curbing-rampant-corruption-in-lebanon)

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ German Agency for International Cooperation. (2024, November). *Promoting good governance and supporting reforms*. Retrieved from <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/201976.html>

⁴⁶⁰ Global Legal Insights. (2024, May 12). *Bribery & Corruption Laws and Regulations 2025 – Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.globallegalinsights.com/practice-areas/bribery-and-corruption-laws-and-regulations/lebanon/>

⁴⁶¹ Institut des Finances Basil Fulehain. (2021, August) *Public Procurement Reform in Lebanon Public Procurement Law 244 / 2021*. Retrieved from <https://lp.gov.lb/backoffice/uploads/files/Presentation%20-%20Public%20Procurement%20Law%20in%20Lebanon%20-%20Aug2021%20-%20English.pdf>

⁴⁶² Ibid.

procuring entities continued to operate without the establishment of a dedicated unit⁴⁶³ as stipulated in Article 73 of PPL 244/2021.⁴⁶⁴

Following the implementation of PPL, in May 2022, the Council of Ministers approved the Public Procurement Reform Strategy of 2022-2024, an action plan that would help ensure cases of corruption are identified, properly investigated, and sanctioned. Specifically, one operational objective was accountability and support of application, divided into two activities. The first one, which the Public Procurement Authority is responsible for, focuses on conducting a legal review on applicable laws and regulations related to anti-corruption to make sure notions of integrity are defined and applicable; whereas the second activity, under the Council of Ministers, was to take measures for the effective and efficient implementation of anti-corruption laws.⁴⁶⁵ Yet, in October 2024, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental body responsible for formulating and advancing policies to prevent money laundering and the financing of terrorism, placed Lebanon on the grey list, indicating it as a jurisdiction under increased monitoring. Specifically, the FATF reported not only a lack of enforcement, but also the misalignment of investigations and prosecutions with the country's risk profile.⁴⁶⁶

A prominent anti-corruption case pursued by the government is the arrest of Riad Salameh, the former central bank governor of Lebanon. He was arrested in September 2024 on fraud charges and was later questioned by public prosecutor Judge Jamal al-Hajjar regarding several corruption cases.⁴⁶⁷ In one of these cases, Salameh was accused of hiring Optimum, a company that allegedly manipulated financial statements and concealed financial losses, while he also allegedly accrued more than \$110 Million.⁴⁶⁸ By December 2024, Salameh had submitted three requests for acquittal, with the first two being denied. He currently awaits a response for his third submission.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶³ Institut des Finances Basil Fulehain. (2024, December) *Status of Implementation of Lebanon's Public Procurement Law 244/2021 and Assessment of skills' gaps and training needs*. Retrieved from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099011425210510057/pdf/P180975-743040a4-2a18-4eff-8c27-64aa24d4d28b.pdf>

⁴⁶⁴ Institut des Finances Basil Fulehain. (2021, August) *Public Procurement Reform in Lebanon Public Procurement Law 244 / 2021*. Retrieved from <https://lp.gov.lb/backoffice/uploads/files/Presentation%20-%20Public%20Procurement%20Law%20in%20Lebanon%20-%20Aug2021%20-%20English.pdf>

⁴⁶⁵ Institut des Finances Basil Fulehain. (2022, April). *Public Procurement Reform Strategy 2022-2024*. Retrieved from https://institutdesfinances.gov.lb/sites/default/files/2024-06/Lebanon-PPR-strategy-Final-April22-Approved-by-COM-Eng-1_0.pdf

⁴⁶⁶ World Bank. (2024, December 9). *Lebanon Economic Monitor - Fall 2024 : Mounting Burdens on a Crisis-Ridden Country (English)*. Retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099907512092469298>

⁴⁶⁷ Reuters (2024, September 3). *Lebanon ex-central bank chief Riad Salameh arrested over alleged financial crimes*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanon-former-central-bank-governor-riad-salameh-arrested-judicial-source-says-2024-09-03/>

⁴⁶⁸ Al-Jazeera. (2024, September 3). *Lebanon's former central bank chief Riad Salameh arrested*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/3/lebanons-former-central-bank-chief-riad-salameh-arrested>

⁴⁶⁹ L'Orient Today. (2024, December 18). *Optimum Invest: Riad Salameh seeks acquittal for the third time*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1440324/optimum-invest-riad-salameh-seeks-acquittal-for-the-third-time.html>

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Right to Social Security

In Lebanon, the National Social Security Law (NSSL) covers illness, maternity, labor accidents, illness due to work injury, and family and educational allowances for workers and their families. However, the Lebanese Social Security Law includes several gaps highlighted by both local and international stakeholders in the country.

Social Security

The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) includes the sickness and maternity fund covering healthcare expenses, the end-of-service indemnity fund for retirement, and the family allowances fund. The NSSF also planned for a workplace accident branch and an occupational hazard branch, but those have yet to be implemented. The NSSF is mainly funded by employers' contributions, which corresponds to 25.5% of an employee's salary, as well as by government subsidies and employee contributions (3% of their salary).⁴⁷⁰

The NSSF law significantly constrains the eligibility for benefits for foreign workers. Thus, NSSF insurance is not common practice, even for Palestinians and Syrians who formally work in the country.⁴⁷¹ The NSSF only covers foreign employees if their country of origin offers social security benefits to Lebanese workers, i.e., nationals of France, Italy, Belgium, or the UK. As a result, Palestinian refugees working in the formal sector, who are required to contribute to the NSSF, do not receive social security benefits in return, except for the end-of-service indemnity, which corresponds to only a fraction of their contribution.⁴⁷² Moreover, according to the NSSL and Legislative Decree No. 136 of 1983, which deals with occupational accidents, dependents of a foreign worker cannot receive benefits if they resided outside Lebanon at the time of the accident.⁴⁷³ The family allowances fund also discriminates against women beneficiaries, who can only transfer their benefits to their husband if he is over 60 years old or disabled. In contrast, men can do so simply if their wife is unemployed. The NSSF has been criticized for functioning very bureaucratically, rendering its performance and efficiency very weak, as beneficiaries sometimes wait months to receive their due reimbursements.⁴⁷⁴

The NSSF has also been facing major financial difficulties, as payments of government subsidies to the fund have been delayed for several years. The devaluation of the Lebanese pound also plummeted the value of the NSSF's reserves and the fund's end-of-service payments and reimbursements for its beneficiaries. Additionally, there is a lack of transparency and accountability around the work of the NSSF because it is not subjected to the scrutiny of the Central Inspection, as opposed to most public

⁴⁷⁰ Trading Economics. (2022). *Lebanon Social Security Rate for Employees*. Retrieved from <https://tradingeconomics.com/lebanon/social-security-rate-for-employees>

⁴⁷¹ International Labour Organization. (2021, June). *Assessing Informality and Vulnerability among Disadvantaged Groups in Lebanon: A Survey of Lebanese, and Syrian and Palestinian Refugees*. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_816649.pdf.

⁴⁷² OHCHR. (2021, November 12). *Statement by Professor Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur>

⁴⁷³ MoL (1963, September 26). *Social Security Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.labor.gov.lb/Temp/Files/f18fd301-c38a-45c8-b0e2-2da6134641ad.pdf>.

Government of Lebanon. (1983, September 16). *Legislative Decree No. 136*. <http://www.legallaw.ul.edu.lb/LawView.aspx?opt=view&LawID=194093>.

⁴⁷⁴ L'Orient Today. (2020, October 27). *The National Social Security Fund Explained*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1238349/the-national-social-security-fund-explained.html>.

institutions.⁴⁷⁵ The crisis Lebanon has been going through in the past few years has thus made the NSSF almost non-operational. Generally, people in Lebanon increasingly rely on private insurance schemes and NGOs to receive social safety net benefits, which results in an inconsistency in aid over Lebanese territories.⁴⁷⁶

Pension Law 319, passed in 2023, creates a comprehensive pension system for private sector workers.⁴⁷⁷ The law introduces a more robust pension calculation method, disability benefits, and survivor transfers,⁴⁷⁸ but remains insufficient to address problems related to adequacy of benefits, solvency and coverage.⁴⁷⁹ Moreover, workers in the informal sector – particularly women, refugees and migrant workers – are still excluded from these protections, exacerbating their vulnerability.⁴⁸⁰ In addition to this, the law does not address the allocation of financial risks among government, employers, workers and retirees,⁴⁸¹ raising concerns about further exclusion. The law's proper and timely implementation will be key to realizing these rights in practice, particularly given the country's ongoing economic challenges and the need for swift issuance of implementation decrees.

The escalation of the war in September 2024 overwhelmed existing capacities due to the magnitude of displacement.⁴⁸² In this context, Lebanon's social protection system has struggled to demonstrate its shock-responsiveness and resilience potential.⁴⁸³ It also faced the challenge of developing new mechanisms,⁴⁸⁴ as the situation could have been preempted by a disaster and emergency response plan prior to the outbreak of the war.⁴⁸⁵

Retirement Fund

Lebanon's pension system comprises separate schemes for public- and private-sector employees. The public sector schemes cover civil service and military personnel.⁴⁸⁶ Pension Law 319 introduced a public pension system where working-age individuals contribute to fund the benefits of current retirees.⁴⁸⁷ It marks a significant milestone for Lebanon, as it was one of 16 out of 179 countries

⁴⁷⁵ OHCHR. (2021, November 12). *Statement by Professor Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/11/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur>

⁴⁷⁶ Anera. (2021, November 10). *Falling Through the Social Safety Net in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.anera.org/blog/falling-through-the-social-safety-net-in-lebanon/>.

⁴⁷⁷ National News Agency. (2023, December 15). *Lebanon Approves Historic Social Security Reforms*. Retrieved from <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/en/miscellaneous/662860/lebanon-approves-historic-social-security-reforms>

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Malcom H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center. (2024, May 15). *Pension Reforms in Lebanon: Good Intentions, Uncertain Outcomes*. Retrieved from: <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/05/pension-reform-in-lebanon-good-intentions-uncertain-outcomes?lang=en¢er=china>

⁴⁸⁰ Amnesty International. (2024, December 2). *"The Country is Dissolving and No One Cares"*. Retrieved from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde18/8685/2024/en/>

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Arab Reform Initiative. (2024, October 14). *Lebanon's Social Protection System Suffers Amidst the Current War: Urgent Action Needed! - Policy Paper (October 2024)*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanons-social-protection-system-suffers-amidst-current-war-urgent-action-needed-policy-paper-october-2024>

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ International Monetary Fund. (2016, March 2). *Sustainability and Equity Challenges: Some Arithmetic on Lebanon's Pension System*. Retrieved from <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp1646.pdf>

⁴⁸⁷ Malcom H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center. (2024, May 15). *Pension Reforms in Lebanon: Good Intentions, Uncertain Outcomes*. Retrieved from: <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/05/pension-reform-in-lebanon-good-intentions-uncertain-outcomes?lang=en¢er=china>

worldwide without a pension scheme that would provide periodic benefits for workers in the private sector in case of old age, disability, and death.⁴⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it has yet to be implemented.⁴⁸⁹

In response to growing public debt, the Lebanese Cabinet approved an austerity budget in July 2019.⁴⁹⁰ Retirement pensions for army veterans are now subject to income tax. Furthermore, a monthly deduction of 1.5 percent on retirement pensions of former soldiers - which will be used to cover their health insurance - was implemented.⁴⁹¹ The approval was accompanied by tremendous protests from retired military and security personnel,⁴⁹² which continued through 2024. For instance, around 300 retired military personnel staged a demonstration in front of the Parliament building and Grand Serail, demanding an increase in their retirement benefits amid the backdrop of socio-economic collapse.⁴⁹³

In addition to the aforementioned benefit cuts, the Lira Pound exchange rate depreciation leads to a deteriorating financial situation of benefits from pension schemes.⁴⁹⁴ It is worth noting that the whole Lebanese pensions system is based on Lebanese pounds.⁴⁹⁵ Moreover, approximately 80% of the Lebanese population has no formal pension coverage, forcing many elderly people to rely on family members or other types of collective care.⁴⁹⁶ This situation reflects an alarming reality as the country is becoming one of the fastest-aging societies in the region.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁸⁸ International Labour Organization. (2019, March 6). *Minister of Labour and ILO officials discuss designing a pension system for Lebanon and reforming the labour law*. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_675188/lang--en/index.htm.

⁴⁸⁹ Arab Reform Initiative. (2024, October 3). *Lebanon's Social Protection System Suffers Amidst the Current War: Urgent Action Needed!*. Retrieved from: <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/lebanons-social-protection-system-suffers-amidst-the-current-war-urgent-action-needed/>

⁴⁹⁰ The New Arab. (2019, May 27). *Lebanon cabinet approves austerity budget as public sector protests escalate*. Retrieved from <https://www.newarab.com/news/lebanon-cabinet-approves-austerity-budget-amid-public-sector-protests>

⁴⁹¹ L'Orient Today. (2019, July 29). *The main provisions of 2019 budget*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1180771/the-main-provisions-of-2019-budget.html>

⁴⁹² Al-Jazeera. (2019, July 19). *Lebanon's parliament passes 2019 austerity budget*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2019/7/19/lebanons-parliament-passes-2019-austerity-budget>

⁴⁹³ L'Orient Today. (2024, February 8). *"All I ask is to live with dignity": Retired soldiers hold tense protest in Beirut*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1367482/all-i-ask-is-to-live-with-dignity-retired-soldiers-hold-tense-protest-in-beirut.html>

⁴⁹⁴ Middle East Transparent. (2019, November 23). *Lebanon: Anatomy of a currency crisis*. Retrieved from <https://middleeasttransparent.com/en/lebanon-anatomy-of-a-currency-crisis/>.

⁴⁹⁵ VOA News. (2020, February 24). *Economists call for restructuring: Lebanon's Public Debt*. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/economists-call-restructuring-lebanons-public-debt>

⁴⁹⁶ Malcom H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center. (2024, May 15). *Pension Reforms in Lebanon: Good Intentions, Uncertain Outcomes*. Retrieved from: <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/05/pension-reform-in-lebanon-good-intentions-uncertain-outcomes?lang=en¢er=china>

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

Right to Work, Protection against Unemployment, and Join Trade Unions

Right to Work

Every resident of Lebanese territory has the right to work in Lebanon, giving Lebanese citizens the right and obligation to register their work contracts at the NSSF and foreigners to obtain a work permit. However, Lebanon's Labor Law and other national legislation do not address the issue of refugees, economic migrants, or other special groups living in Lebanon, except for Palestinian refugees. The law governs the work of any man, woman, or adolescent but does not apply to domestic workers employed in private households, agricultural corporations that have no connection with trade or industry, family businesses employing only family members, day laborers in municipal or government services, staff of "Electricite du Liban," and wage-earners who Civil Servant Regulations do not govern.⁴⁹⁸

Choice of Employment

In general, workers in Lebanon enjoy the freedom to choose their employment and cannot be forced into it. However, socio-economic conditions in the country, especially since 2019, have forced many people into jobs they do not wish to work in. Children in disadvantaged communities are particularly vulnerable to forced labor, as their parents push them to join the labor force to increase the family's income sources.

More directly, the Lebanese Labor Law prohibits women from driving machines with extremely large engines, working underground in mines, slivering mirrors, or occupying 16 other stereotypically male jobs.⁴⁹⁹ Several decrees issued by the MoL also list over 30 occupations, including all liberal professions, strictly restricted to Lebanese citizens – effectively limiting foreigners' choices of employment in Lebanon.

Conditions of Work

Although the Lebanese Labor Law provides several guarantees for work conditions on its territory, some of these provisions still fall short of providing a just and favorable work environment. For instance, maternity leave is set at 10 weeks,⁵⁰⁰ four weeks less than the ILO minimum standard of 14 weeks, and paternity leave is set at three days only – inapplicable in most companies in Lebanon.

The country's worsening lack of job opportunities has also forced many employees to work overtime, without resting or taking the leave days they are entitled to, to avoid being dismissed. However, as living conditions continue deteriorating in Lebanon, many employers have fallen short of meeting international requirements.

Protection against Unemployment

In 2024, the ongoing armed conflict has led to severe short-term economic disruptions, with sectors like tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, trade, and services experiencing contractions. These disruptions - driven by damaged supply chains, trade route blockages, direct shelling, and declining

⁴⁹⁸ MoL (1946, September 23). *Lebanese Labor Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.labor.gov.lb/Temp/Files/574b61dd-1233-4507-9da1-d4a3e3a6129a.pdf>.

⁴⁹⁹ MoL (1946, September 23). *Lebanese Labor Law*. Retrieved from [574b61dd-1233-4507-9da1-d4a3e3a6129a.pdf](https://www.labor.gov.lb/Temp/Files/574b61dd-1233-4507-9da1-d4a3e3a6129a.pdf) (*labor.gov.lb*)

⁵⁰⁰ MoL (1946, September 23). *Lebanese Labor Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.labor.gov.lb/Temp/Files/574b61dd-1233-4507-9da1-d4a3e3a6129a.pdf>.

consumer demand - led many businesses to suspend or cease operations. According to estimates published by UNDP in October 2024, the national unemployment rate was projected to reach 32.6 percent by the end of the year, potentially impacting approximately 1.2 million workers.⁵⁰¹

In response to rising job insecurity and economic strain, members of the Lebanese Forces party in September 2024 called for stricter labor laws aimed at limiting the employment of Syrian workers, citing concerns over job competition and wage suppression.⁵⁰² Although protections against arbitrary dismissal exist in the Lebanese labor law, many employers have resorted to laying off workers arbitrarily as the country's economic crisis continues exacerbating.⁵⁰³

Remuneration

Since 2012, the minimum wage in Lebanon has been set at 675,000 L.L. per month, is equivalent to around 450 USD. However, as the currency in Lebanon continues to devalue, the monthly minimum wage has also been devaluating.⁵⁰⁴ In April 2024, the caretaker Government agreed to raise the official minimum wage in the private sector to 18 million L.L., equivalent to 200\$ at the rate of 89,500 L.L. to the dollar, more than double the amount of 9,000,000 L.L. set the previous year.⁵⁰⁵ The decision followed a wave of labor-related mobilizations underscoring the growing frustration among various sectors over the worsening economic conditions and stagnant compensation. On the 5th of February, employees of Lebanon's mobile operators announced a strike to protest inadequate salaries that had failed to keep pace with the deteriorating situation.⁵⁰⁶ A few weeks later, on the 22nd of February, retired soldiers and civil servants organized protests across multiple regions, demanding fair pensions and better financial support amid the ongoing crisis.⁵⁰⁷ The deteriorating situation in the country has also created an imbalance in the society between employees who earn their remuneration in LBP, consequently diminishing their purchasing power as inflation skyrockets, and those who earn it in cash USD and have thus been capable of preserving their purchasing power, although to a limited extent.

Trade Unions

Although freedom of association is guaranteed in Lebanon, the right to form and join trade unions is governed by special provisions under the Lebanese Labor Law. While the law establishes the right to form multiple trade unions for the same occupation, it discriminates between Lebanese citizens and foreign residents, as the latter are not allowed to create or join trade unions in Lebanon. The law also necessitates obtaining a license from the MoL before forming a trade union. It also excludes some categories of workers from the right to create one, especially those excluded from the law.⁵⁰⁸ Article 15 of Legislative Decree no. 112 (Employee Regulations) of 1959 prohibits public service employees from striking or inciting other workers to strike. It also prohibits them from organizing, joining, and

⁵⁰¹ UNDP (2024, October 23). *UN Development Programme warns of socio-economic crisis in Lebanon amidst escalation of hostilities*. Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/un-development-programme-warns-socio-economic-crisis-lebanon-amidst-escalation-hostilities>

⁵⁰² L'Orient Today (2024, September 4). *LF MPs urge 'stricter labor laws' curbing Syrian workers in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1426048/lf-mps-urge-stricter-labor-laws-curbing-syrian-workers-in-lebanon.html>

⁵⁰³ US State Department Bureau of Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2020). *Lebanon 2022 Human Rights Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LEBANON-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

⁵⁰⁴ L'Orient Today. (2023, April 18). *Cabinet raises minimum wage in the private sector to L.L.9 million*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1335054/cabinet-raises-minimum-wage-in-the-private-sector-to-l-l-9-million.html>

⁵⁰⁵ L'Orient-Le Jour. (2024, April 4). *Cabinet approves doubling the minimum wage for private sector employees*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1409268/cabinet-approves-doubling-the-minimum-wage-for-private-sector-employees.html>

⁵⁰⁶ L'Orient Today. (2024, February 5) *Mobile operator employees announce strike*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1367068/mobile-operator-employees-announce-strike.html>

⁵⁰⁷ L'Orient Today (2024, February 22) *Retired soldiers and civil servants protest in several regions of Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1369019/retired-soldiers-and-civil-servants-protest-in-several-regions-of-lebanon.html>

⁵⁰⁸ MoL (1946, September 23). *Lebanese Labor Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.labor.gov.lb/Temp/Files/574b61dd-1233-4507-9da1-d4a3e3a6129a.pdf>.

forming unions or professional organizations. Article 65 of the decree states that all employees taking part in a work strike must resign beforehand.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁹ Government of Lebanon (1959, December 6). *Legislative Decree No. 112*. Retrieved from <https://www.cib.gov.lb/lot/112.htm>.

Right to an Adequate Standard of Living for Health and Livelihood, Special Care and Assistance to Motherhood, and Social Protection of Children

Although not enshrined in any domestic legislation, Lebanon, as a signatory to the ICESCR, must guarantee the right to an adequate standard of living to all those within its borders.

Public Healthcare

Healthcare in Lebanon is covered in equal parts by government expenditure, private insurance, contribution-based schemes like the NSSF, and out-of-pocket expenditures. Since the civil war, the Lebanese health care system has become costly and fragmented, as the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) found itself increasingly outsourcing care to private hospitals, with its mandate shifting from running public health care to negotiating with the private sector. Today, the health sector is mainly focused on private health institutions and does not offer coherent healthcare plans for those unable to obtain private healthcare.⁵¹⁰

Although challenges in the healthcare sector existed well before 2019, the strain on the Lebanese healthcare sector due to the multilayered pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic, the worsening economic crisis, and the Port of Beirut explosion have contributed to a deteriorating healthcare infrastructure. In 2024, UNICEF continued its 2023 effort to prioritize sustainable energy solutions and ensure the continuity of healthcare services for children and communities in response to the ongoing economic and fuel crises. Solarization initiatives in 182 Public Health Care Centers and 14 Qadaa offices have played a role in stabilizing vital services, reducing reliance on costly fuel, and mitigating disruptions.⁵¹¹

Meanwhile, the healthcare system continues to recover from the escalation of hostilities following October 2023, with 47% of attacks on healthcare facilities resulting in at least one death. In addition to violating international law, this rate far surpasses the global average of 13.3% for the same period.⁵¹² Of the 137 attacks on healthcare facilities reported by November 2024, 65 have been fatal⁵¹³, with the deaths or injuries of over 530 health workers and patients.⁵¹⁴ As hospitals face an overwhelming demand for trauma care, the World Health Organization's (WHO) collaboration with the MoPH has been instrumental in scaling up trauma services, restoring healthcare infrastructure, and providing mental health training for healthcare providers. The destruction of more than 16,000 buildings has caused a surge in injuries, many of which require long-term rehabilitation. With one in four people suffering life-changing injuries that need rehabilitation, Lebanon's already strained healthcare system is unable to meet the rising demand for specialized services.⁵¹⁵

Additionally, the war has displaced over 2,500 cancer patients, forcing them to seek new treatment centers as at least eight hospitals in southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs were rendered non-operational due to Israeli shelling.⁵¹⁶ Many of these patients are unable to continue their

⁵¹⁰ National Library of Medicine. (1989). *Lebanon's Health Care Policy: A Case Study in the Evolution of a Health System under Stress*. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2681264/>

⁵¹¹ UNICEF (2024, 19 March) Ministry of Public Health, in partnership with UNICEF, invests in solar solutions to scale up healthcare results for children and communities across Lebanon. Retrieved from : <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/ministry-public-health-partnership-unicef-invests-solar-solutions-scale-healthcare>

⁵¹² WHO (2024, November 22) *Lebanon: a conflict particularly destructive to health care*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-11-2024-lebanon--a-conflict-particularly-destructive-to-health-care>

⁵¹³ WHO (2024, November 22) *Lebanon: a conflict particularly destructive to health care*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-11-2024-lebanon--a-conflict-particularly-destructive-to-health-care>

⁵¹⁴ WHO. (2024, December 20). *Lebanon: soaring needs for trauma treatment and rehabilitation*. Retrieved from : <https://www.who.int/news/item/20-12-2024-lebanon--soaring-needs-for-trauma-treatment-and-rehabilitation>

⁵¹⁵ Ibid

⁵¹⁶ Reuters. (2024, November 21). *Displaced by war, cancer patients in Lebanon struggle for survival*. Retrieved from : <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/displaced-by-war-cancer-patients-lebanon-struggle-survival-2024-11-21/>

therapies, with some needing expensive procedures like bone marrow transplants. The Cancer Support Fund at the AUB Medical Center has been vital in providing assistance, but the increasing number of displaced patients and escalating costs threaten its capacity to sustain support.⁵¹⁷

In 2024, UNICEF delivered 167 metric tons of medical supplies to support approximately 2 million people affected by the escalating conflict in Lebanon, with a focus on women and children.⁵¹⁸ This response came at a time when Lebanon's healthcare system was under severe strain, not only from rising medical needs but also from direct impacts on health infrastructure and personnel. According to the WHO, 68% of recorded attacks in the country affected healthcare workers, 63% disrupted health transport, and 26% targeted healthcare facilities.⁵¹⁹ Against this backdrop, UNICEF's deliveries - funded by the United Kingdom and including emergency kits, medications, and maternal health supplies - helped reinforce overstretched hospitals and mobile health teams. In addition, 135 metric tons of emergency relief were distributed to assist approximately 60,000 displaced persons, underscoring the scale and urgency of the humanitarian response.⁵²⁰ Similarly, in 2024, MSF provided fuel and trauma kits to multiple hospitals, strategically positioned 1,922 kilograms of medical supplies, and trained more than 400 healthcare professionals nationwide in trauma care and managing mass casualty situations.⁵²¹

Patients in Lebanon have also become increasingly unable to afford treatment. This has been straining public hospitals, which are often under-equipped and suffer from poor maintenance as well as the presence of inexperienced physicians and nurses.⁵²² Individuals with a limited income, including MDWs and refugees, have been facing difficulties in accessing health facilities due to costly private healthcare providers.⁵²³ Since 2019, the insurance sector has experienced a 25% decrease in non-life insurance premium sales and a significant 43.7% drop in life insurance policy sales, reflecting a decline in financial capacity amid ongoing economic challenges.⁵²⁴

In 2024, the MoPH announced important measures to improve medical coverage for patients treated at the ministry's expense. These decisions included increased coverage caps for hospitals and updated fees for doctors, to enhance patient access to care. The new measures, which were to cover approximately 50 additional medical procedures, were part of the ministry's broader efforts to restore healthcare services to 80% of their pre-crisis value.⁵²⁵ However, despite these announcements, the full implementation of these measures was not realized due to the ongoing conflict. The destruction of health facilities and the displacement of healthcare workers prevented the restoration of services to pre-crisis levels.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid

⁵¹⁸ UNICEF. (2024, October 8) *UNICEF provides medical supplies for about 2 million people in need in Lebanon*. Retrieved from : <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/unicef-provides-medical-supplies-about-2-million-people-need-lebanon>

⁵¹⁹ WHO. (2024, November 22) *Lebanon: a conflict particularly destructive to health care*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-11-2024-lebanon--a-conflict-particularly-destructive-to-health-care>

⁵²⁰ UNICEF. (2024, October 8) *UNICEF provides medical supplies for about 2 million people in need in Lebanon*. Retrieved from : <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/unicef-provides-medical-supplies-about-2-million-people-need-lebanon>

⁵²¹ Médecins sans frontières. (2024, 26 November). *War and economic strain worsen health conditions in Lebanon*. Retrieved from : <https://www.msf.org/war-and-economic-strain-worsen-health-conditions-lebanon>

⁵²² Amnesty International. (2023, February 9). *Lebanon: Government must address medication shortages and healthcare crisis*. Retrieved from : <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/lebanon-government-must-address-medication-shortages-and-healthcare-crisis/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20Lebanese%20authorities%20must%20urgently,necessary%20to%20safeguard%20human%20rights.>

⁵²³ Blominvest Bank. (2018, April 20). *The Lebanese Healthcare Sector: In Urgent Need of Reforms*. Retrieved from <http://blog.blominvestbank.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-Healthcare-System-in-Lebanon-1.pdf>.

⁵²⁴ L'Orient Today. (2024, June 3) *Lebanon's economic crisis affects the insurance market, sales of premiums decline*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1415970/lebanons-economic-crisis-affects-the-insurance-market-sales-of-premiums-decline.html>

⁵²⁵ L'Orient Today. (2025, August 28) *Lebanese hospitals to raise coverage ceiling in September*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1425306/lebanese-hospitals-to-raise-coverage-ceiling-in-september.html>

Persons with Disabilities

Law 220 on the Rights of Handicapped Individuals, passed in 2000 by the Lebanese Parliament, addresses the rights and entitlements of PwDs, as well as the role of the state in protecting and upholding their rights. However, the legal framework is limited to a non-rights-based approach that tends to exclude non-physical disabilities,⁵²⁶ and despite being issued over two decades ago, the concerned ministries have not set up implementation mechanisms for the proper administration of most of the law's provisions. The reasons for the lack of proper enforcement of this framework range from the lack of resources, the absence of executive decrees needed for the full implementation of the law, and a weak accountability framework regulating the work of public entities.

In Lebanon, approximately 13% of the population is estimated to have a disability, yet only 7% have access to protection services.⁵²⁷ In addition, 14% of Syrian refugees were found to have at least one type of disability in 2023, while 32% of Palestinian refugee households in Lebanon have at least one member with a disability.⁵²⁸ Currently, there are no existing structures to monitor the implementation of the 3% quota for PwDs in the workplace or to ensure fining employers who fail to comply.⁵²⁹

The Lebanese government did not provide an integrated scheme to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities in the 2024 humanitarian emergency response.⁵³⁰ Key needs such as accessible shelters, transportation, and inclusive communication were not addressed.⁵³¹ Although the war escalated in September, the MoSA only introduced a one-time cash transfer of \$100 for people with disabilities in November, which did not sufficiently address the needs of these individuals.⁵³² Furthermore, many disabled individuals faced challenges due to the lack of physical and informational accessibility in shelters. Moreover, some women with disabilities experienced sexual harassment in these shelters. Those living independently were often denied access to shelters because they did not have a caregiver.⁵³³

Children with Disabilities

While Law 220/2000 prohibits discrimination based on disability, its definition is overly narrow and excludes mental disabilities.⁵³⁴ The first barrier for children with disabilities in Lebanon is the absence of a systematic policy for providing reasonable accommodation for them, including accessible schools, inclusive curricula, and qualified teachers. In the context of the ongoing economic crisis, the gaps in a

⁵²⁶ Knowledge for Development. (2018, July 15). *Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Lebanon. Knowledge Learning and Evidence for Development*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b584da340f0b633af812655/Disability_in_Lebanon.pdf.

⁵²⁷ Handicap International. (2024). *Devastating impact of conflict on persons with disabilities living in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hi-canada.org/en/news/Devastating-impact-of-conflict-in-Lebanon#:~:text=Living%20with%20disabilities%20in%20Lebanon&text=Persons%20with%20disabilities%20in%20displacement,from%20access%20to%20basic%20services>.

⁵²⁸ The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. (2024, May 22). *Reform Monitor | Status Review of Disability Rights in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/en/articles/details/4879/reform-monitor-%7C-status-review-of-disability-rights-in-lebanon>

⁵²⁹ HI. (2024, December 3). *Protecting persons with disabilities, the forgotten victims of humanitarian crises*. Retrieved from <https://www.hi.org/en/news/protecting-persons-with-disabilities--the-forgotten-victims-of-humanitarian-crisis>

⁵³⁰ Handicap International. (2024). *Devastating impact of conflict on persons with disabilities living in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hi-canada.org/en/news/Devastating-impact-of-conflict-in-Lebanon#:~:text=Living%20with%20disabilities%20in%20Lebanon&text=Persons%20with%20disabilities%20in%20displacement,from%20access%20to%20basic%20services>.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² UNOCHA. (2024, December 3). *In Lebanon, people with disabilities isolated, abandoned by war*. Retrieved from <https://www.context.news/socioeconomic-inclusion/in-lebanon-people-with-disabilities-isolated-abandoned-by-war>

⁵³³ Ibid

⁵³⁴ Human Rights Watch. (2018, March 22). *I would like to go to school*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/03/22/i-would-go-school/barriers-education-children-disabilities-lebanon>.

national strategy for children with disabilities have also had to be bridged by emergency aid from NGOs and international organizations.⁵³⁵

The escalation of hostilities in 2024 has worsened existing challenges for children with disabilities and their families, particularly in accessing education.⁵³⁶ Based on a survey conducted by the Centre for Lebanese Studies, approximately 17% of children have an intellectual disability and only 25% of parents believed their child with a disability was ready to resume schooling amid bombings.⁵³⁷

Reproductive Health

The lack of national regulations and criminal laws that directly and explicitly address issues related to reproductive health is still one of the biggest concerns in Lebanon. Although there have been no cases of female genital mutilation reported to occur in practice within the country, there are no criminal laws that directly address or legally prohibit the issue.⁵³⁸ Moreover, there are no laws in Lebanon that explicitly address surrogacy, and legislation for such treatment is almost impossible due to the vastly different stances of religious communities.⁵³⁹ Furthermore, fertility treatments, like in-vitro fertilization (IVF), have become a common procedure. However, the lack of regulation on the issue allows healthcare providers to open an IVF clinic and regulate it themselves. Without a national law addressing this, ethical and legal dilemmas, like gender selection and regulating sperm and egg donation, are left up to the physicians' and patients' discretion.⁵⁴⁰ In addition, until today, insurance companies and the NSSF in Lebanon have not recognized infertility as a disease and do not cover any kind of medication or treatment.⁵⁴¹

Lebanon's Presidential Decree No. 13187 and Articles 539 to 546 of the Penal Code state that abortions may only legally occur if the woman's life is in danger. This law prohibits the dissemination of information on abortion, the facilitation of methods used for abortion, and the selling of objects designed to perform an abortion. Even with the woman's consent, the person who performs the abortion is subjected to one to three years of imprisonment, and the woman herself is subjected to six months to three years. As a result of the high-risk factors involved, abortions are expensive, and the procedures are typically performed in private clinics or homes in unsanitary environments. These conditions put women's lives at risk and can lead to severe physical and mental health conditions.⁵⁴²

People living with Sexually Transmitted Diseases are perceived as outcasts within Lebanese society and fall victim to very negative attitudes about their illness. They face stigma due to misconceptions about the ways by which a person may contract infections such as HIV.⁵⁴³ For example, even when chances are high for Sexually Transmitted Infections to progress into cervical cancer, cervical cancer is not as prominent in the national conversation about cancer diagnosis and treatments as other forms

⁵³⁵ Legal Agenda (2021, December 8). *The absence of a national strategy to support people with special needs deepens inequality in Lebanon in light of the crisis*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/2t5ym4ze>

⁵³⁶ Center for Lebanese Studies. (2024, November 26). *Education Under Fire: A Rapid Study of Parents' and Teachers' Readiness for School Amidst Israeli Attacks on Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://lebanesestudies.com/publications/education-under-fire-a-rapid-study-of-parents-and-teachers-readiness-for-school-amidst-israeli-attacks-on-lebanon/>

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ UNDP. (2018, December 8). *Lebanon: Gender Justice and the Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/publications/gender-justice-and-law-study>

⁵³⁹ The Free Library. (2014, September 13). *Surrogacy not an option in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Surrogacy+not+an+option+in+Lebanon.-a0406242943>

⁵⁴⁰ AMA Journal of Ethics. (2018, March). *Is Lower Quality Clinical Care Ethically Justifiable for Patients Residing in Areas with Infrastructure Deficits?* Retrieved from <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/lower-quality-clinical-care-ethically-justifiable-patients-residing-in-areas-infrastructure-deficits/2018-03>

⁵⁴¹ Springer Opener. (2020, September 10). *Infertility within the Lebanese population: beliefs and realities*. Retrieved from <https://mefj.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s43043-020-00037-0>

⁵⁴² The A Project. (2015, June 24). *Abortion in Lebanon: Practice and Legality?* Retrieved from <http://www.theaproject.org/content/abortionlebanon-practice-and-legality>

⁵⁴³ SIDC (2018, April). *Human Rights & Hiv Monitoring System*. Retrieved from <http://sidc-lebanon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Final-ENG-Speak-UP-Final-report-EN.pdf>

of cancer are due to false perceptions about contraction methods.⁵⁴⁴ The fact that sexual education remains scant and almost non-existent in Lebanese schools contributes to these misconceptions and lack of awareness.⁵⁴⁵ Even in schools where sex education starts in the teen years, the content is limited, censored, and never comprehensive.

Additionally, although all types of modern contraceptive methods, and even emergency contraception, are accessible in Lebanese pharmacies and medical clinics, practical and financial obstacles induced by deteriorating socio-economic conditions,⁵⁴⁶ as well as lack of education and awareness along with social and religious stigma, still shames and limits access to such health services.⁵⁴⁷ This enhances the likelihood of early and unwanted pregnancies and STDs, which pose a threat to the health of both men and women. Barriers to accessing reproductive health services, triggered by a series of cumulative psychological, sociological, and environmental factors, specifically affect adolescent girls⁵⁴⁸, including those living in vulnerable communities.

Unfortunately, discrimination due to stigma has also become a significant barrier hindering access of HIV patients to treatment and healthcare.⁵⁴⁹ Access to medicine has also become increasingly expensive and out of reach in the current economic crisis, and patients increasingly rely on NGOs for tests and treatment.⁵⁵⁰ Although the MoPH provides HIV treatment free of charge to Lebanese citizens, Palestinian refugees, and all Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR, as well as some refugees from other nationalities. In 2024, the National AIDS Program reported a concerning rise in HIV cases in Lebanon, with 261 new HIV-positive diagnoses recorded in the previous year.⁵⁵¹

In 2024, ongoing Israeli bombardment displaced over half a million women and girls in Lebanon, severely disrupting their access to reproductive healthcare and essential hygiene products. Among those affected, many have been cut off from the medical support they previously relied on, leading to increased vulnerability, especially in displacement settings with poor living conditions and limited resources.⁵⁵²

These conditions - marked by inadequate lighting and a lack of gender-segregated toilets - have amplified protection risks for women and girls. Adolescent girls and women have also faced difficulties managing their menstruation due to water shortages and limited access to safe and private bathroom

⁵⁴⁴ Annahar (2018, March 13). *Sexual health, a pressing issue in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.annahar.com/english/article/773530-sexual-health-a-pressing-issue-in-lebanon>

⁵⁴⁵ Al Jazeera (2017, April 24). *Tackling Lebanon's blushes about sex*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/02/tackling-lebanon-blushes-sex-170223105205807.html>

⁵⁴⁶ CARE. (2021, May). *Lebanon: Cash Transfers for Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) within Protection*. Retrieved from <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CVA-SRHR-Case-Study-Lebanon.pdf>.

⁵⁴⁷ Annahar. (2018, March 13). *Sexual health, a pressing issue in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://en.annahar.com/article/773530-sexual-health-a-pressing-issue-in-lebanon>

⁵⁴⁸ Center for Public Health Practice of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the American University of Beirut / Ministry of Public Health / UNICEF Lebanon. (2020, December). *Adolescent Girls Access to Primary Healthcare Services in Lebanon: Barriers and Facilitating Factors*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/5711/file/AG_Access_to_PHC.pdf

⁵⁴⁹ SIDC (2017). *Human Rights and HIV: A Legal Mapping Study in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <http://sidc-lebanon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/EN-Final-executive-summary-SIDC-updated-NS-NOV-2018.pdf>.

⁵⁵⁰ Organisation Mondiale de la Sante (2024). *Lebanon HIV/AIDS* Retrieved from <https://www.emro.who.int/fr/lbn/programmes/hiv-aids.html>

⁵⁵¹ SIDC Lebanon (2024, February 20) *Strengthening HIV Awareness and Testing Efforts in Lebanon: SIDC's Commitment to Community Health in 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://sidc-lebanon.org/strengthening-hiv-awareness-and-testing-efforts-in-lebanon-sidcs-commitment-to-community-health-in-2024/>

⁵⁵² L'Orient Today. (2024, November 13). *Women displaced by the war face an ever-worsening health crisis in Lebanon*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1435350/women-displaced-by-the-war-face-an-ever-worsening-health-crisis-in-lebanon.html>

facilities.⁵⁵³ In response to these worsening conditions, UNFPA mobilized resources to strengthen healthcare services across affected regions.⁵⁵⁴

Mental Health

in 2024, 129 suicide deaths were recorded,⁵⁵⁵ marking a 23.2% decrease from the previous year . While this decrease is encouraging, it should be interpreted with caution, as no single factor can explain this reduction.⁵⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the escalation of hostilities in September intensified existing distress from years of economic crisis and instability.⁵⁵⁷ The same month also recorded the year's highest suicide rate, with 19 reported cases.⁵⁵⁸ Demand for mental health services spiked in parallel.⁵⁵⁹

The National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Hotline established through a partnership between the MoPH's National Mental Health Program and Embrace, received an average of 805 calls per month between January and June 2024.⁵⁶⁰ ⁵⁶¹ On-site assessments revealed the profound psychological toll on displaced populations, marked by high levels of distress,⁵⁶² severity of illness,⁵⁶³ an a 17% increase in suicidal ideation.⁵⁶⁴ However, the true extent of the mental health crisis may be under-reported due to cultural stigma and taboos surrounding suicide, with some families potentially concealing such deaths.

In June 2024, a minor died by suicide following sexual assault and blackmail.⁵⁶⁵ Prior to the September escalation, Lebanon's mental health crisis was exacerbated by political and social instability, especially after the start of clashes with Israel in southern Lebanon in October 2023. The impact on children was particularly severe. In conflict-affected areas, such as the South Governorate and Nabatieh, 46% of children were reported to be experiencing anxiety. Palestinian children were disproportionately affected, with 47% experiencing anxiety and 30% depression, compounded by poor living conditions, factional clashes, and the emotional toll of the war in Gaza.⁵⁶⁶

Some improvements have occurred in terms of mental health awareness over the past two decades in Lebanon, with the introduction of mental health issues in media outlets. However, there is still stigma and a lack of awareness of mental health issues among patients and even health professionals

⁵⁵³ UNFPA. (2024, November 11). *Lebanon Situation Report #3 - November 2024*. Retrieved from : <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-situation-report-3-november-2024>

⁵⁵⁴ UNFPA. (2024, October 30). *Mass displacement of pregnant women requires mobilization of maternal health services in Lebanon, Syria*. Retrieved from : <https://www.unfpa.org/news/mass-displacement-pregnant-women-requires-mobilization-maternal-health-services-lebanon-syria>

⁵⁵⁵ Embrace. (2025, February 12). *Suicide rates in Lebanon dropped from 168 deaths in 2023 to 129 in 2024*. Retrieved from: https://www.instagram.com/embrace_lebanon/p/DF-Grn3Mkz9/?img_index=1

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Now Lebanon. (2024, October 23). *Mental Health Spiralling Amid War*. Retrieved from: <https://nowlebanon.com/mental-health-spiralling-amid-the-war/>

⁵⁵⁸ Embrace. (2025, February 12). *Suicide rates in Lebanon dropped from 168 deaths in 2023 to 129 in 2024*. Retrieved from: https://www.instagram.com/embrace_lebanon/p/DF-Grn3Mkz9/?img_index=1

⁵⁵⁹ Think Global Health. (2024, October 10). *Pagers, Walkie-Talkies, and Psychological Warfare in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/pagers-walkie-talkies-and-psychological-warfare-lebanon>

⁵⁶⁰ Embrace. (2024). *Lifeline Quarterly Report Jan-Mar 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://embracelebanon.org//Media/publications/pdfs/0aeacfd6-86d4-4f1a-abfb-be9bbdabd27f.pdf>

⁵⁶¹ Embrace. (2024). *Lifeline Quarterly Report Apr-Jun 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://embracelebanon.org//Media/publications/pdfs/c82520f5-1731-47ee-a1cf-26621e54cc60.pdf>

⁵⁶² Embrace. (2024, November). *2 MONTHS OF WAR IN LEBANON. What are the Mental Health and Psychological Support Needs of Persons Impacted and the Recommendations for Mental Health Service Delivery Post-war?*. Retrieved from: <https://embracelebanon.org//Media/publications/pdfs/2302f330-eedf-452c-88ce-1a32ccd9422a.pdf>

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Embrace. (2024). *Humanitarian Emergency Response Update*. Retrieved from: <https://embracelebanon.org//Media/publications/pdfs/cb16c45f-568e-4988-8d27-b0a589e0fd79.pdf>

⁵⁶⁵ This is Lebanon. (2024, June 11). *A minor commits suicide after sexual assault... Here's the full story*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thisislebanon.com/lebanon/337983/>

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

in Lebanon, resulting in insufficient care. Mental health is not considered essential or primary healthcare.⁵⁶⁷ Besides the remaining stigma around mental health issues, the low outreach of mental health services in Lebanon can be traced back to the barriers to accessing treatment and its high costs.⁵⁶⁸ The gap between public healthcare's limited coverage for mental illnesses and that of private insurance is increasingly bridged by NGOs.

Livelihood

Living standards in Lebanon have been deteriorating dramatically as the economic collapse continues.⁵⁶⁹ The extreme devaluation of the Lebanese Pound has been the livelihood of people in the country, as salaries in Lebanese pounds did not adequately adjust to the hyperinflation, thus drastically reducing people's purchasing power. Indeed, over 73% of the country's population was below the poverty line in 2024, compared to 53% in 2019 before the crises began. Imported goods are most subject to hyperinflation due to the currency crisis, and subsidized products – which include essential goods such as fuel, wheat, and medicine – have become increasingly scarce or unaffordable.

Lebanon witnessed a period of relative calm in terms of price volatility in 2024, with the annual inflation rate dropping to 45% from 221.3% in 2023.⁵⁷⁰ This was mainly driven by BDL's monetary policies, which helped ease inflation pressures.⁵⁷¹ By spring, the exchange rate settled at around 89,500 Lebanese pounds per dollar, down from the peak of 140,000 in 2023.⁵⁷² Monthly inflation rates remained modest, with most price changes staying below 1% with the exception of price surges in clothing (8.55%), food and non-alcoholic beverages (5%), alcoholic beverages and tobacco (2.75%) and housing (1.35%).⁵⁷³ The most significant monthly increase in the Consumer Price Index was recorded in the region of Bekaa at 3.19%.⁵⁷⁴

Nevertheless, the economic crisis was further compounded by the escalation of hostilities since October 2023, which had tremendous effects on key sectors such as tourism and agriculture.⁵⁷⁵ The conflict also severely damaged civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, water plants, and power stations, deepening the humanitarian crisis. By November, the WFP's Market Functionality Index (MFI) revealed rising costs in both food and non-food items, major market disruptions, and limited operational capacity of shops in conflict-affected areas, while markets in Beirut and Mount Lebanon remained relatively functional.⁵⁷⁶

In early 2024, Lebanon faced the threat of a renewed fuel crisis as fuel-importing companies halted deliveries in protest of a new tax introduced in the 2024 budget.⁵⁷⁷ Although the Lebanon-Iraq fuel

⁵⁶⁷ The 961 News. (2021, November 13). *Patients found under terrible conditions in Lebanese mental health unit (videos)*. Retrieved from <https://www.the961.com/patients-mental-health-hospital-terrible-conditions/>.

⁵⁶⁸ National Center of Biotechnology Information. (September 24, 2021). *Mental health in Lebanon: Tomorrow's silent epidemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8503814/>

⁵⁶⁹ World Bank (Spring 2021). *Lebanon Economic Monitor: Lebanon Sinking (to the top 3)*. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-economic-monitor-lebanon-sinking-top-3-spring-2021-enar?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw8MG1BhCoARIsAHxSiQkAKKRwY_EqbXWYNrHHZC42pjGZn6j-vMwpNlfMesgVtsAiw6j1pysaAg7cEALw_wcB

⁵⁷⁰ Arab News. (2025, January 23). *Lebanon's inflation rate drops to 45% in 2024, marking a return to double-digit figures*. Retrieved from: <https://arab.news/gtt5h>

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ L'Orient Today. (2024, November 21). *Consumer prices in Lebanon rise again in October*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1436659/consumer-prices-in-lebanon-rise-again-in-october.html>

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Anera. (2024, December 13). *Lebanon Situation Report | December 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://www.anera.org/blog/lebanon-situation-report-december-2024/>

⁵⁷⁶ WFP. (2024, December 27). *WFP RAM | Food Security Analysis – Lebanon Market Monitor, November 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/wfp-ram-food-security-analysis-lebanon-market-monitor-november-2024>

⁵⁷⁷ L'Orient Today. (2024, January 31). *Fuel importing companies suspend deliveries to protest to protest 2024 budget tax*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1366396/fuel-importing-companies-suspend-deliveries-to-protest-2024-budget-tax.html>

agreement came into force in 2021, allowing Iraq to supply Lebanon with 1.5 million to 2 million tons of fuel,⁵⁷⁸ the country has⁵⁷⁹ In August, a major outage hit major facilities and infrastructure, including Rafik Hariri International Airport, the Port of Beirut, prisons, wastewater treatment facilities and drinking water pumping stations.⁵⁸⁰

Furthermore, water and sanitation conditions remained strained throughout 2024. In September, Lebanon confirmed its first case of Cholera since 2023, when the outbreak had been declared over. By the end of 2024, at least 40 water facilities had been damaged by Israeli attacks,⁵⁸¹ disrupting water supply for close to half a million people.⁵⁸² Moreover, ongoing security challenges do not allow for frequent and scaled repair.⁵⁸³

Motherhood

The special protection of mothers before and after childbirth in Lebanon is not coherent across all regions in the country. Indeed, the maternal mortality ratio per live births and the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel differ from district to district depending on residents' access to quality healthcare in their region. This disparity in motherhood protection has created an inequality between mothers in Lebanon based on geographic and social status. Moreover, working mothers across the country are accorded a fully paid leave of 10 weeks, a period considered insufficient compared to global standards.

During the year 2024, more than 11,000 pregnant women were directly affected by the escalated bombardment in Lebanon, many of whom were displaced and faced significant barriers to accessing essential maternal care.⁵⁸⁴ UNFPA supported maternal health services for these women through 30 hospitals across the country.⁵⁸⁵ This support included covering the costs of delivery procedures and providing critical medicines and supplies to ensure safe births and access to emergency obstetric care. To reach displaced populations more effectively, UNFPA deployed mobile medical units to shelters nationwide, where they conducted needs assessments, delivered basic healthcare services, and facilitated referrals for further treatment. In addition, refresher training on emergency obstetric care was provided to staff at government hospitals, enhancing healthcare providers' capacity to recognize danger signs in pregnancy, diagnose reproductive health infections, and offer contraceptive counseling.⁵⁸⁶ This has illustrated Lebanon's heavy dependence on international humanitarian organizations to deliver basic healthcare services that the state cannot adequately provide.

⁵⁷⁸ L'Orient Today. (2023, July 21). *Lebanon, Iraq reach agreement over second yearly extension of fuel deal*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1344166/lebanon-iraq-reach-second-yearly-extension-of-fuel-deal.html>

⁵⁷⁹ L'Orient Today. (2024, August 22). *Another blackout: How did Lebanon get here?*. Retrieved from: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1424635/seemingly-endless-blackout-how-did-lebanon-get-here.html>

⁵⁸⁰ Middle East Monitor. (2024, August 18). *Lebanon faces nationwide power outage after last production unit shuts down*. Retrieved from: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240818-lebanon-faces-nationwide-power-outage-after-last-production-unit-shuts-down/>

⁵⁸¹ HRW. (2025, February 17). *Lebanon: Destruction of Infrastructure Preventing Returns*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/02/17/lebanon-destruction-infrastructure-preventing-returns>

⁵⁸² Anera. (2024, December 13). *Lebanon Situation Report | December 2024*. Retrieved from: <https://www.anera.org/blog/lebanon-situation-report-december-2024/>

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ UNFPA. (2024, October 30). *Mass displacement of pregnant women requires mobilization of maternal health services in Lebanon, Syria*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unfpa.org/news/mass-displacement-pregnant-women-requires-mobilization-maternal-health-services-lebanon-syria>

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

Social Protection of Children

Child Labor and Exploitation

Decree No. 8987 by the Ministry of Labor sets out the worst forms of labor children in Lebanon are protected from, including labor that could limit their education or harm their health, safety, and morals.⁵⁸⁷ Although the Lebanese Labor Code prohibits the employment of children under sixteen, its provisions still include many gaps that have yet to be addressed. This includes the employment of children in the agriculture sector, which is allowed so long as the child is not involved in specific dangerous activities.⁵⁸⁸

Although child labor has long existed in Lebanon,⁵⁸⁹ the situation for vulnerable children in Lebanon deteriorated in 2024⁵⁹⁰, driven by the effects of armed conflict, a deepening economic crisis, and the prolonged after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Children who have been separated from their families or caregivers - especially those displaced by airstrikes - faced heightened risks of exploitation, abuse, and neglect. The International Rescue Committee has reported severe levels of anxiety among these children, many of whom have lost access to essential services, particularly education⁵⁹¹.

Nearly one in ten families send their children to work⁵⁹² due to factors such as statelessness, increase in poverty and hunger, and lack of education. In 2024, poverty affected 44% of Lebanon's population - a rate that has more than tripled over the past decade - pushing many families to depend on their children's income to meet basic needs.⁵⁹³ By 2023, child labor had become a widespread coping mechanism, particularly among Syrian households, where nearly one in four reported relying on children's work.⁵⁹⁴ While the country continued to deal with the economic and social impacts of the ongoing conflict, the emergence of IPC Phase 4 - 'emergency' hunger conditions - was recorded for the first time in Lebanon in the city of Baalbek.⁵⁹⁵ These conditions reflect alarming levels of food insecurity, where households face high rates of malnutrition and are forced to adopt extreme survival strategies, including child labor, illegal activities, or unsustainable levels of debt.⁵⁹⁶

In response to the growing visibility of street and working children in Beirut, UNICEF, the Beirut municipality, public institutions, and civil society organizations launched a local action plan in January 2024 to protect and support these children through coordinated and complementary interventions.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁸⁷ UNICEF - FAO. (2019, July 24). *Child Labour in Agriculture, the demand side*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/child-labour-agriculture-demand-side>.

⁵⁸⁸ MoL. (2012, October 2). *Decree No. 8987*

⁵⁸⁹ Terre des Hommes. (2016). *Because we struggle to survive*. Retrieved from https://www.tdh.ch/sites/default/files/because_we_struggle_to_survive_neuste_version_formatiert_final.pdf.

⁵⁹⁰ International Rescue Committee (2024, November 20). *Unaccompanied and separated children face severe anxiety, harassment and exploitation in Lebanon, warns the IRC*. Retrieved from : <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/unaccompanied-and-separated-children-face-severe-anxiety-harassment-and-exploitation>

⁵⁹¹ International Rescue Committee (2024, November 20). *Unaccompanied and separated children face severe anxiety, harassment and exploitation in Lebanon, warns the IRC*. Retrieved from : <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/unaccompanied-and-separated-children-face-severe-anxiety-harassment-and-exploitation>

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ UNICEF. (2021, June 11). *Now, I'm the head of the family; I bring home the only money to buy food and pay rent*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/stories/now-im-head-family-i-bring-home-only-money-buy-food-and-pay-rent>.

⁵⁹⁴ UNICEF. (2023, June) *Future on hold. Lebanon's worsening crisis is breaking children's spirits*. Retrieved from : <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/10336/file/Future%20on%20Hold%20Report%20EN.pdf>

⁵⁹⁵ Save the children (2025, 20 January). *Lebanon : nearly a third of children facing crisis levels of hunger as country reels from year of conflict*. Retrieved from : <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/lebanon-nearly-third-children-facing-crisis-levels-hunger-country-reels-year-conflict>

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ UNICEF. (2024, January 31) UNICEF and the Beirut Governorate in partnership with the Government of the Netherlands commit to empower and protect street and working children in Beirut. Retrieved from : <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/unicef-and-beirut-governorate-partnership-government-netherlands-commit-empower-and-protect-street-and-working-children-beirut-enar>

Early Marriage

As Lebanon still has no standard minimum age for marriage, child marriage has been a recurrent issue in the country. According to Articles 483 and 486 of the Lebanese Criminal Code, a guardian or civil court judge can approve the marriage of a minor.⁵⁹⁸ The number of child marriages occurring in Lebanon has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic⁵⁹⁹ and due to the economic crisis pushing families in vulnerable communities to marry off their kids, especially girls, to relieve themselves of the financial burden they perceive them to be.⁶⁰⁰ Generally, young girls from marginalized groups in society are most affected by the decline in access to sexual and reproductive health services and the reduction of social support. Without these services, increases in teenage pregnancies and violence are inevitable.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ Government of Lebanon. *Lebanese Penal Code*. Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/89873/103350/F300391946/LBN89873%20Arab.pdf>.

⁵⁹⁹ Al Arabia News. (2020, September 18). *Lebanon: More families are marrying off teenage daughters as economic despair sets in*. Retrieved from <https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2020/09/18/Lebanon-More-families-are-marrying-off-teenage-daughters-as-economic-despair-sets-in>.

⁶⁰⁰ World Bank Blog. (2020, October 9). *Child marriage: the unspoken consequence of COVID-19*. Retrieved from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/child-marriage-unspoken-consequence-covid-19>.

⁶⁰¹ UNFPA. *Child Marriage in the Context of Covid-19*. Retrieved from chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/child_marriage_in_the_context_of_covid-19-_mena_regional_analysis_high_res_1.pdf.pdf

Right to Education

Access to Education

In Lebanon, education is compulsory until the sixth grade in theory, but, in practice, many children are still out of school. While education in public institutions is free of charge, the level of education and equipment in public schools differ significantly from those in private institutions.⁶⁰² In 2024, steep tuition increases for private schools trapped many Lebanese citizens: on one hand, private schools had gradually become too expensive, and on the other hand, public schools' education had limitation.⁶⁰³ Moreover, due to escalating regional instability, Lebanon's Ministry of education and higher education (MEHE) announced the suspension of in- person classes across all schools and institutions as of the 9th of October, turning most public schools into shelters, thus mandating a shift to distance learning.^{604 605} One in three school-aged children is now out of school due to war-related disruptions and systemic underfunding.

Public schools rely entirely on donor aid with no domestic government funding for operational costs.⁶⁰⁶ Prior to Lebanon's economic collapse, public school teachers received a contracted hourly wage of \$13. However, as the currency crisis deepened, their contracted hourly wage stagnated at \$8. In fact, over 14,000 teachers depend on USD-denominated stipends.⁶⁰⁷ Between the 23rd of September and 7th of October, student transit was endangered due to Israel-Hezbollah violence and war escalation.⁶⁰⁸ Despite plans to resume classes in November 2024 for 387,000 326 public schools, effective learning was disrupted due to the war. 60% of schools remained occupied as shelters for displaced families, forcing relocation of students and teachers and delaying the academic year by over a month.⁶¹⁰

The education sector faced new tensions in September 2024 when the caretaker Government approved decision No. 63, allowing Syrian students without residency permits or UNHCR documentation to register for the academic year. This decision intended to fulfill Lebanon's international obligations but sparked immediate backlash from right-wing political parties, denouncing the measure as "illegal" and demanding its cancellation.⁶¹¹ These parties insisted that Syrian children must regularize their status or return to Syria.⁶¹²

Equal Access to Higher Education

Although higher education in Lebanon is provided by universities and colleges that offer undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate studies in a wide variety of majors, only one public

⁶⁰² Nuffic. (2016, December 1). *Educational System Lebanon*. Retrieved from <http://data.infopro.com.lb/file/Lebanese%20Education%20System%20compared%20with%20Dutch,%20Nuffic,%202016.pdf>

⁶⁰³ IM LEBANON Sep 9 2024 <https://www.imlebanon.org/2024/09/09/school-fees-7/>

⁶⁰⁴ ReliefWeb. (2024, October 9). *Education disrupted for sixth year for 1.5 million children in Lebanon, with half of public schools used as shelters*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/education-disrupted-sixth-year-15-million-children-lebanon-half-public-schools-used-shelters>

⁶⁰⁵ UNHCR, 2024 <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/112673>

⁶⁰⁶ Unicef, 2025, <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/international-day-education-unicef-strengthens-its-commitment-childrens-right#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20out%20of,school%20or%20out%20of%20learning.>

⁶⁰⁷ UNICEF,2025 <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/international-day-education-unicef-strengthens-its-commitment-childrens-right#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20out%20of,school%20or%20out%20of%20learning.>

⁶⁰⁸ OJL,2024 <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1428703/closure-of-schools-and-universities-been-extended-until-oct-7.html>

⁶⁰⁹ OJL,2024 <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1428160/fermeture-des-ecoles-lundi-et-mardi-dans-la-banlieue-sud-de-beyrouth-et-au-liban-sud.html>

⁶¹⁰ UNICEF,2024 <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/children-lebanon-go-back-learning>

⁶¹¹ OJL,2025 <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1427396/government-to-reconsider-controversial-decision-on-syrian-students.html>

⁶¹² OJL 2024 <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1427396/government-to-reconsider-controversial-decision-on-syrian-students.html>

institution, the Lebanese University, provides it free of charge.⁶¹³ In some Lebanese communities, most students' higher education is out of reach. One of the most prominent reasons for not pursuing higher education is the lack of funds to attend university.⁶¹⁴ Furthermore, over 52,000 students at private universities face interrupted education in governorates affected by the war.⁶¹⁵

Availability of Technical and Professional Education

Lebanon's health and economic situation have repeatedly prompted the closure of technical schools.⁶¹⁶ The quality of learning deteriorated in the technical and professional branch even more than in regular schools or higher education institutes,⁶¹⁷ as these fields often require in-person training for manual skills and crafts.

⁶¹³ Ministry of Education and Higher Education. *Institution Types & Credentials*. <https://www.mehe.gov.lb/ar/Pages/Structure/Higher%20EDU/EducSys.aspx>.

⁶¹⁴ Crisis24. (June 20, 2019). *Lebanon: Lebanese University teachers and students protest in Beirut June 20*. Retrieved from <https://crisis24.garda.com/alerts/2019/06/lebanon-lebanese-university-teachers-and-students-protest-in-beirut-june-20>

⁶¹⁵ MEHE, 2024, [https://www.mehe.gov.lb/ar/SiteAssets/Lists/News/AllItems/Revised-Education%20Emergency%20Costed%20Response%20Plan%20\(EECRP\)%20September%202024%20Crisis%20in%20Lebanon%20\(dated\).pdf](https://www.mehe.gov.lb/ar/SiteAssets/Lists/News/AllItems/Revised-Education%20Emergency%20Costed%20Response%20Plan%20(EECRP)%20September%202024%20Crisis%20in%20Lebanon%20(dated).pdf)

⁶¹⁶ L'Orient Today. (February 1, 2022). *Halabi announces closure of public and private schools and universities tomorrow*. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientjour.com/article/1289480/halabi-announces-closure-of-public-and-private-schools-and-universities-tomorrow.html>

⁶¹⁷ EU Neighbours. (2021, March 10). *Lebanon: EU supports vocational and technical training at distance*. Retrieved from <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/lebanon-eu-supports-vocational-and-technical-training-distance>.

Right to an Adequate Environment

In 2024, Lebanon ranked 126th on the Environmental Performance Index.⁶¹⁸ Nationally, Lebanon signed into law Environment Law 444 in 2002, considered the most comprehensive legislation for environmental management and protection. However, serious environmental challenges show that the implementation of this law remains incomplete.

Waste Management

Lebanon's lack of a solid waste management strategy comes at a considerable cost to the environment and public health.

Despite the adoption of Law 80 in 2018, aimed at establishing an integrated waste management system, implementation has stalled due to the absence of regulations and weak coordination between national and local authorities. The 2019 financial crisis further strained the sector. Severe budget cuts and currency devaluation have led to reduced waste services, especially in urban centers, thereby increasing public health and environmental risks.⁶¹⁹ Most municipalities now spend over 75% of their budgets - or run deficits - to manage waste, limiting their ability to provide other essential services.⁶²⁰

The government often awards contracts for garbage collection, street cleaning, and landfill management to companies affiliated with political elites, which artificially inflates prices for garbage disposal.⁶²¹ Thus, to dispose of the piling garbage, communities kept openly burning waste on at least 150 of the more than 941 open dumps across the country, putting the environment and health of residents in the country at risk.⁶²² This lack of progress was further underscored in September 2024, when a fire broke out at the Burj Hammoud landfill.⁶²³ Involving plastics and hazardous waste, the fire was difficult to extinguish, raising renewed concerns over landfill management, safety, and the continued reliance on overwhelmed disposal sites without sustainable alternatives.

In the aftermath of the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, Lebanon faces a daunting environmental and logistical crisis: the management of an unprecedented volume of demolition waste. Entire neighborhoods, particularly in the southern suburbs of Beirut and in regions such as South Lebanon and Baalbeck-Hermel, have been reduced to rubble, with early estimates suggesting that between 50 and 100 million tons of debris remain.⁶²⁴ This mountain of waste poses a significant challenge for a country with a history of poor environmental practices, as seen in the aftermath of the 2006 war when millions of tons of rubble were dumped into the sea. On December 6, just days after the cease-fire took effect, the Ministry of the Environment issued detailed guidelines emphasizing the

⁶¹⁸ Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy. (2024) *Environmental Performance Index*. Retrieved from <https://epi.yale.edu/measure/2024/EPI>

⁶¹⁹ L'Orient Today. (2023, July 14). *Household waste management: A system on the brink*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1343456/household-waste-management-a-system-on-the-brink.html>

⁶²⁰ The World Bank. (2023, June). *Summary of the Lebanon Solid Waste Roadmap for 2023-2026*. Retrieved from : <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099112023054014380/pdf/P179435059e4c00080bd5a091bc0270002d.pdf>

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Human Rights Watch. (2020, June 9). *Lebanon: Huge Cost of Inaction in Trash Crisis*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/09/lebanon-huge-cost-inaction-trash-crisis>; Waste&Recycling. (January 25, 2018). *Campaign to end waste crisis in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.wasterecyclingmea.com/news/waste-management/campaign-to-end-waste-crisis-in-lebanon>

⁶²³ L'Orient Today. (2024, September 13). *Burj Hammoud landfill fire contained overnight*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1427016/burj-hammoud-landfill-fire-contained-overnight.html>

⁶²⁴ L'Orient Today. (2024, December 16). *Millions of tons of rubble: The hidden controversy of conflict zones*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1439946/millions-of-tons-of-rubble-the-hidden-controversy-of-conflict-zones.html>

need to avoid uncontrolled disposal and prioritize sorting, recycling, and the use of environmentally degraded sites for temporary storage and final disposal.^{625 626}Water Crisis

Access to sanitary drinking water and a sustainable plan for securing future water supplies is still a pressing issue in Lebanon. A missing or fragile infrastructure and an absent comprehensive sanitation system mainly hamper reliable water supply. About 70% of Lebanon's natural water supply is polluted with bacteria.⁶²⁷

Lebanon typically receives between 700 and 1,000 millimeters of rainfall annually, with a substantial share - approximately 20 to 30% - usually occurring in January.⁶²⁸ In contrast to historical averages, January 2024 saw a significant deviation, with an average of only 191 millimeters of rainfall compared to near-zero precipitation in the same period this year.⁶²⁹ The lack of rainfall during a period of water replenishment has disrupted the natural hydrological cycle, limiting the recharge of reservoirs and aquifers and increasing vulnerability across sectors that depend on water. In light of these challenges, the Lebanese government has launched the National Water Sector Strategy (2024–2035), a long-term framework designed to enhance water governance, upgrade infrastructure, and promote sustainable water resource management.⁶³⁰

The fragmentation of decision-making in the country, lack of accountability, and inconclusiveness of policy practices are the key institutional and legal factors behind Lebanon's poor water governance.⁶³¹ Resources are not managed effectively, and the existing legal framework is neither well organized nor structured. Government mismanagement and overlapping responsibilities worsen this problem, with stakeholders and actors without clearly defined mandates increasingly involved in the distribution of water. The Solid Waste Roadmap for Sector Reform and Priority Interventions, developed in 2023 in collaboration with the World Bank, highlighted these critical deficiencies.⁶³²

Simultaneously, intermittent water supply and non-functional wastewater treatment plants posed significant health risks in 2023, affecting approximately 2.6 million people, exacerbated by the previous year's cholera outbreak.⁶³³ The situation was particularly dire in southern Lebanon, where cross-border conflicts further compromised water and sanitation services.⁶³⁴

Following the Israeli Defense Forces' bombardment of southern Lebanon, which included internationally banned white phosphorus, the region's agricultural sector, responsible for up to 80% of local GDP, suffered immense destruction. The attacks resulted in severe contamination of water

⁶²⁵ Ibid

⁶²⁶ UNDP Lebanon. (2024, April 5). *Launching of Rehabilitation Works of Karantina Sorting Facility*. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/lebanon/press-releases/launching-rehabilitation-works-karantina-sorting-facility>

⁶²⁷ PubMed Central. (2021, July 20). *Nationwide Assessment of Water Quality in Rivers across Lebanon by Quantifying Fecal Indicators Densities and Profiling Antibiotic Resistance of Escherichia coli*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8300662/>

⁶²⁸ Anera (2025, January 31) *A Climate Change Wake-Up Call: Lebanon Faces Historic January Drought*. Retrieved from : <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/climate-change-wake-call-lebanon-faces-historic-january-drought>

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

⁶³⁰ Lebanese Republic Ministry of Energy and Water. (2024, June). *Towards a Sustainable Water Sector: Lebanon's National Water Strategy 2024 – 2035*. Retrieved from : https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/mee_lebanon_s_national_water_strategy_2024_2035_2024_executive_summary_.pdf

⁶³¹ American University of Beirut. (2020). *Lebanon's Water Laws: Bridging Policy Frameworks to Address New Challenges*. Retrieved from https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/policy_briefs/2019-2020/20200512_lebanon_water_laws.pdf.

⁶³² World Bank (2023, June). *Summary of the Lebanon Solid Waste Roadmap for 2023-2026 Towards an Integrated Solid Waste Management System*. Retrieved from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099112023054014380/pdf/P179435059e4c00080bd5a091bc0270002d.pdf>

⁶³³ UNHCR (2024, December 31). *Lebanon Response Plan: WaSH Sector Dashboard - Q2 2024*. Retrieved from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/110435>

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

wells and underground reserves. Additionally, over 37 villages, farms, and orchards were decimated during the conflict, further deepening the environmental and economic crisis.⁶³⁵

Air Pollution

In 2024, air pollution continued to pose environmental and health challenges in Lebanon, particularly in Beirut. Ongoing electricity shortages have led to the widespread use of diesel generators, which emit pollutants such as PM2.5, NOx, and SO₂.⁶³⁶ These emissions have been linked to respiratory illnesses and cancer. Over the past year, local health data reported a 30% increase in cancer cases in Beirut, with exposure to air pollution considered a contributing factor⁶³⁷.

This local context is reflected in broader environmental assessments. In 2024, according to the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), the country ranked 124th out of 180 countries, with an overall score of 40.1 out of 100. This placed Lebanon below both global and regional averages, ranking 10th among Arab nations.⁶³⁸

Wildfires

As temperatures rise and extreme weather conditions increase, wildfires have become more frequent throughout the Lebanese territory. Due to the lack of preparedness and the growing lack of resources of the Lebanese Government and the Civil Defense to quickly and efficiently fight such fires, these fires stretched for hours without being controlled, burned large portions of Lebanese lands and forests, and even often reached the homes of residents in the affected areas.

By November 2024, satellite data confirmed that over 10,800 hectares of land had been scorched by wildfires - ten times the country's annual average and equivalent to an area four times the size of Beirut.⁶³⁹ The southern governorates of Nabatiyeh and South Lebanon were the most heavily impacted, with fires penetrating up to 10 kilometers inland along the 120 km southern border.⁶⁴⁰

A prolonged period of dry weather, combined with strong autumn winds, created highly flammable conditions across the country. In October alone, Lebanon recorded at least a dozen major fires in regions including Chouf, Aley, North Lebanon, Metn, and Kesrouan.⁶⁴¹ Nine forest fires unrelated to military activity broke out simultaneously across five districts in a single day, stretching Civil Defense capacities to their limits.⁶⁴²

What set 2024 apart from previous years, however, was the direct environmental impact of ongoing hostilities. Reports pointed to the likely role of white phosphorus munitions, used in southern Lebanon

⁶³⁵ euronews. (2024, December 12) *Lebanon's olive groves and water table contaminated by Israeli munitions*. Retrieved from <https://www.euronews.com/green/2024/12/15/scorched-olive-trees-and-poisoned-water-what-is-the-environmental-cost-of-war-in-lebanon>

⁶³⁶ The Guardian (2024, April 22). 'Where can you hide from pollution?': cancer rises 30% in Beirut as diesel generators poison city. Retrieved from : <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/apr/22/where-can-you-hide-from-pollution-cancer-rises-30-in-beirut-as-diesel-generators-poison-city>

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ This is Beirut (2025, May 7). *Lebanon Ranks 124th Globally in 2024 Environmental Performance Index*. Retrieved from : <https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/articles/1314893/lebanon-ranks-124th-globally-in-2024-environmental-performance-index#:~:text=Lebanon%20ranked%20124th%20out,both%20regional%20and%20global%20averages>.

⁶³⁹ AUB (2024, November). *The 2024 Israeli War on Lebanon: A Devastating Blow to Agriculture and the Environment*. Retrieved from : <https://www.aub.edu.lb/fafs/news/Pages/2024-The-2024-Israeli-War-on-Lebanon-A-Devastating-Blow-to-Agriculture-and-the-Environment.aspx>

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ L'Orient Today. (2024, October 26). *A dry October sends firefighters across Lebanon battling flames*. Retrieved from : <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1433056/a-dry-october-sends-firefighters-across-lebanon-battling-flames.html>

⁶⁴² Ibid.

during Israeli military operations.⁶⁴³ This substance, known for its capacity to ignite on contact and burn until fully consumed, can remain active for weeks and reignite without warning. Its use in vegetated areas sharply increased the likelihood of wildfires.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴³ AUB (2024, November). *The 2024 Israeli War on Lebanon: A Devastating Blow to Agriculture and the Environment*. Retrieved from : https://www.aub.edu.lb/fafs/news/Pages/2024_The-2024-Israeli-War-on-Lebanon-A-Devastating-Blow-to-Agriculture-and-the-Environment.aspx

⁶⁴⁴ University of Balamand. (2020). *State of Lebanon's wildfires in Lebanon*. Retrieved from <http://ioe-firelab.balamand.edu.lb/ForestFires/ForestFires2019.pdf>

