

Universal Periodic Report | 20 25

➤ **4th
Cycle
Lebanon**

➤ **Universal
Periodic
Report**

➤ **(UPR)
Lebanon**

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PREFACE

INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS & REAL-WORLD CHALLENGES IN LEBANON

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Lebanon joined the third round of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism during the 37th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC). The review session was held in January 2021, and its outcomes were adopted in July of the same year when the Lebanese state submitted its position on the recommendations. In 2021 Lebanon received 297 recommendations and accepted 179; most of the recommendations Lebanon supported in the 2021 UPR have not been effectively implemented due to ongoing political paralysis, economic collapse, and institutional dysfunction. Key unimplemented areas include Accountability for human rights violations (especially from the 2019 protests and Beirut port explosion). Judicial independence and anti-corruption reforms. Protection of vulnerable groups — refugees, migrant workers, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Ratification of pending international treaties and alignment of domestic laws with human rights obligations.

This report is part of national preparations for the fourth round of the mechanism, which Lebanon is scheduled to present before the UN HRC during the 51st session of the Working Group in

Geneva from January 19 to 30, 2026. The report outlines the human rights situation in Lebanon over recent years and offers practical recommendations to strengthen the state's commitment to international human rights standards.

The coalition comprises more than 75 local and national organizations. It is part of the ongoing joint efforts of Lebanese civil society to follow up on the implementation of previous recommendations and assess legislative and practical developments. The sectoral reports prepared within this track covered civil and political rights, economic and social rights, freedom of opinion, expression and assembly, attacks on journalists by Israeli forces, women's rights, children's rights, the rights of Palestinian and Syrian refugees, human rights in Lebanese prisons, the rights of persons with disabilities, climate justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

This round of reviews coincides with a critical moment for Lebanon and the whole region. Recent years have witnessed profound geopolitical changes that have impacted the Lebanese landscape. In the Middle East, regional conflicts have intensified, and new alliances and disputes have emerged, impacting regional security and economic stability. The devastating war experienced by the Lebanese people in 2024 affected civilians and infrastructure and caused an unprecedented wave of internal displacement and humanitarian crises.

Against this turbulent backdrop, Lebanon has witnessed significant domestic political developments. In 2022, Lebanon held parliamentary elections that partially altered the traditional landscape, allowing civil and independent forces to enter Parliament and marking a limited step toward breaking the monopoly of the ruling political elite. Following a nearly two-year presidential vacuum, the

Lebanese parliament elected a new president and appointed a prime minister from outside the traditional political and economic system. The new government pledged to launch a comprehensive reform process at the political, security, administrative, economic, and social levels. Municipal elections were also held after a three-year postponement. This achievement is expected to be completed by holding periodic legislative elections in 2026, which will restore order to democratic life and enshrine the principle of power rotation.

Despite these political developments, Lebanon continues to struggle under the burden of its ongoing crises since 2019. The financial and economic collapse has led to widespread poverty, unemployment, and social insecurity. At the same time, state institutions continue to suffer from paralysis and division, hindering any real progress in reform and accountability. The 2020 Beirut Port explosion and the subsequent lack of justice and accountability continue to symbolize the deepening crisis of confidence in the judiciary and state institutions, amid a severe decline in public freedoms and freedom of expression, and the persecution of journalists and activists based on their opinions.

In parallel, Lebanon has committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is based on the principles of justice, equality, and the right to development. These commitments include combating poverty, hunger, and unemployment, providing quality education for all, promoting social protection and gender equality, and ensuring access to fair and comprehensive health services. Lebanon also commits to combating climate change, building strong and transparent institutions, and providing access to justice for all without discrimination. However, the reality on the ground demonstrates slow progress in achieving these goals due to the absence of

integrated policies, conflicts of interest, and the state's lack of the necessary political will to implement its international obligations.

The gap between official rhetoric and actual practice remains wide. Sectarian quotas continue to perpetuate discrimination and exclusion, while unfair laws against women and marginalized groups remain unamended. Human development policies, including comprehensive social protection and improvements in the quality of education and overall life, are lacking. The state's approach to refugee issues remains based more on security and politics than on rights, exposing these groups to repeated violations and undermining Lebanon's humanitarian and international obligations.

This report views the UPR as an opportunity to renew a genuine commitment to human rights, rather than a mere formal obligation. It aims to provide a comprehensive and objective reading of the human rights situation in Lebanon from 2021 to 2025, based on international standards and conventions to which the Lebanese state has committed. It also seeks to offer practical, implementable recommendations that constitute a roadmap toward reforming public policies, strengthening the rule of law, ensuring accountability, and achieving social justice and effective equality among all citizens and residents of Lebanon.

This CSO joint effort is not limited to monitoring violations; it seeks to contribute to building a comprehensive national human rights process that translates Lebanon's international commitments into tangible measures that positively impact people's lives and establish a just state in which human dignity is protected and the principles of citizenship and equality before the law are entrenched.



A.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

SUBMITTED BY:

-ANND
-CESSRA
-SKOUN
-LEBANESE OBSERVATORY FOR WORKERS

GENERAL BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

This joint submission for the Universal Periodic Review of Lebanon is prepared by ANND, CESSRA, Skoun, Lebanese Observatory for Workers and Employers Rights and with human rights experts contributing on the right to health and education sections. The report builds on joint and continuous monitoring efforts of the civil society towards¹ ensuring full enjoyment of human rights in Lebanon and to enhance accountability for state obligations.

From last cycle review to date, Lebanon has been engulfed in one of the most severe and protracted economic and financial crises. Triggered in 2019 by the reversal of capital inflows that had long sustained an unsustainable economic model, the crisis has manifested as a devastating combination of sovereign debt default, a banking sector collapse rendering deposits inaccessible, a currency that has lost over 98 percent of its value, persistent inflation decimating incomes, and a catastrophic surge in poverty and unemployment². The 2020 Beirut port explosion further compounded these hardships, and the economic fallout of the Israeli war 2023/2024 further exacerbates poverty and perpetuates cycles of deprivation in the country, destroying farmland, livestock and infrastructure, causing damage and violations to access to electricity and water among other services. Additionally, the 2023/2024 Israel war on Lebanon led to tens of thousands being wounded and thousands of dead, and approximately one million and a half internally displaced persons. Economic losses are estimated at 8.5 billion Dollars, with vital sectors of agriculture, education, and health sustaining losses of 5 billion with unemployment rates expected to rise to 33%³. Amid this context, the report sheds light on the state obligations to use maximum available resources for the full enjoyment of economic and social rights, and addresses poverty, inequality, unemployment, social justice calling for remedial action with the set of recommendations developed.

a. The Right to an Adequate standard of living

1. In the 3rd UPR cycle, Lebanon supported recommendations to enhance its socio-economic response, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable development. However, conditions have since deteriorated. The right to an adequate standard of living, including access to food, water, and housing, has worsened significantly.
2. The Lebanese Lira lost over 90% of its value, while inflation peaked at 171% in 2022 and remained high through 2024⁴, causing a general and severe deterioration of living conditions of the putting 3/4 of the population under a certain form of need and poverty.
3. 30% of the population faces acute food insecurity as 2025 begins, malnutrition risk remains⁵. Moreover, the escalation of hostilities during the Israeli war 2023/2024 has severely impacted farmers' livelihoods, as well as agricultural assets and infrastructure, leading to heightened food insecurity.
4. Access to affordable and adequate housing, though a fundamental human right, remains violated. The housing crisis has deepened over the years, fueled by decades of market speculation operating in a complete absence of fair housing policies, the commodification of land, and the lack of equitable housing policies. As inflation continues to rise, rental prices soar, forcing many households into unsustainable debt. Rental and housing services account for 85% of the total income of households living in Beirut, and 100% in the most vulnerable neighborhoods⁶.

5. The 2023/2024 Israeli war caused damage to vast infrastructure – including residential and non-residential buildings (including public property), roads, water and electricity networks, among others. Over 19,537 buildings – 42,384 units (not necessarily all residential) – were estimated to be totally or partially destroyed in South, Nabatiyeh, Baalbek-Hermel and Bekaa governorates, based on post-ceasefire (December 2024/January 2025) satellite images – with the largest proportion detected in Nabatiyeh Governorate, followed by South Governorate⁷.
6. Whereas the state's obligation to fulfill the right to an adequate standard of living requires it to mobilize maximum available resources; the Lebanese state has been heavily dependent on indirect taxation as a source of revenue. This places the bulk of the tax burden on the most vulnerable segments of the population. For 2024, indirect tax revenues have been forecast to constitute 59.9% of total revenues, a marked increase compared to 40% in 2019. Regarding direct taxes, less than 7% of revenues are sourced from taxes on corporate profits and capital gains, a significant decline compared to 2019 when it stood at 35%⁸.

7. Recommendations:

- 7.1. Commit to recognition of the right to adequate standard of living and the economic and social rights for all, without any discrimination.
- 7.2. Address structural weaknesses in the current system through a comprehensive recovery plan that includes public sector reform, rights-based financial policy, and broadening fiscal space through progressive taxation and redistribution.
- 7.3. Create adequate fiscal space through progressive taxation and reallocation of resources.
- 7.4. Address poverty and deprivation and transition from short-term poverty-targeting schemes to a sustainable, rights-based universal social protection system that addresses the structural causes of inequality.

b. The Right to Social Protection

1. The social protection system in Lebanon is characterized by a scattered contributory-based system, as well as palliative ad hoc social assistance service provisions targeting vulnerable categories of the population. This system has been severely weakened by the ongoing economic crisis since October 2019, COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut Port explosion in 2020, and political instability and geopolitical interference.
2. Against this backdrop, the historical and structural shortcomings of Lebanon's social protection system become even more apparent, revealing deep-rooted fragmentation and limited coverage that fail to respond to the scale and diversity of current needs. Short-term interventions, with little movement toward integrating a rights-based approach to social protection and reliance on poverty-targeted programs like the NPTP, DAEM, and ESSN to mitigate poverty remained fragmented and as loan-dependent interventions. Unable to address structural inequalities; they provide only limited, short-term assistance.
3. Despite some progress⁹ Lebanon's efforts to expand social protection coverage remain limited. Universal and inclusive protection is still unachieved. Lebanon has launched small-scale, donor-supported pilot initiatives promoting women's economic empowerment¹⁰. However, social protection remains insufficiently tailored to the specific needs of older persons, and persons with disabilities¹¹. Women-headed households, especially single mothers, faced persistent challenges accessing care, education, and income due to financial hardship and gender-based exclusion. Rural and conflict-affected areas are particularly underserved.
4. In contrast to the 3rd cycle, where no overarching policy existed, Lebanon endorsed its first National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) in 2022¹²; yet that remains to date, lacking a clear operationalization plan.
5. In December 2023, the Government of Lebanon adopted a pension reform law aimed at replacing the outdated end-of-service indemnity system with a contributory, inflation-indexed monthly pension scheme for private sector workers. The law also introduces disability and survivor benefits, alongside governance reforms for the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), including digitalization and enhanced oversight.

However, implementation is expected to take up to two years, and amid ongoing economic and political instability, concerns remain about the system's ability to be truly inclusive and shock responsive.
6. Support for refugees, stateless, and displaced persons continued since the 3rd cycle and Lebanon has since expanded coordination mechanisms (e.g., LCRP, IOM's DTM). However, these remain largely humanitarian and do not integrate displaced or foreign populations into national social protection systems¹³.

➤ 7. Recommendations

- 7.1. Set national social protection priorities based on population needs, and encourage donor alignment with these priorities, particularly in livelihoods, social services, and social development sectors.
- 7.2. Ensure the full implementation of the NSPS through adequate budgeting, legal frameworks, and effective institutional coordination, while adopting the necessary legislation to operationalize Lebanon's NSPS without further delay.
- 7.3. Ensure the inclusivity of the NSPS by extending its scope to cover non-nationals, including refugees, migrants, and stateless persons, in line with the principles of universality and non-discrimination.
- 7.4. Review and update the financing mechanisms of the NSPS to reflect the current economic context, including rising poverty, currency devaluation, and subsidy removal, ensuring its long-term financial sustainability.
- 7.5. Integrate adaptive measures into the NSPS to respond to ongoing and emerging crises, including conflict-related displacement and economic shocks.
- 7.6. Integrate all cash transfer programs, and the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP), into a comprehensive national social protection framework designed to cover all individuals across the lifecycle.
- 7.7. Guarantee inclusive access to social protection for refugees and migrants by aligning legal frameworks with CESC recommendations and amend the Social Security laws to extend NSSF coverage to informal workers, the self-employed, migrants, and other excluded groups.
- 7.8. Develop and implement universal schemes across the life cycles, including old-age pensions, unemployment benefits, and disability allowances, that reflect the needs of the population beyond household-level assistance.
- 7.9. Guarantee a democratic and participatory implementation process of the NSPS that includes citizen engagement, transparency, and oversight to strengthen accountability and equitable access.
- 7.10. Establish a unified national body for social protection that ensures inclusive and participatory policymaking by involving relevant ministries, public institutions, labor organizations, syndicates, and civil society actors in the design, implementation, and oversight of social protection reforms; recognize and strengthen the complementary role of civil society in advocating for social and economic rights, while reaffirming the state's primary responsibility for service provision.
- 7.11. Guarantee transparency and accountability in donor funding, ensuring that all support to the government is tied to rights-based structural reforms and not squandered.
- 7.12. Ensure gender-sensitive social protection, aligned with CEDAW and ILO Convention No. 183, with tailored measures for women, girls, and caregivers.

c. The Right to Health

1. Lebanon's healthcare system¹⁴ remains primarily curative, with a dominance of the private sector for care. Furthermore, the absence of universal social protection or universal health coverage continues to be a significant barrier to achieving the right to health for all in Lebanon.
2. The healthcare system in Lebanon has been significantly impacted by compounded crises, reflected through increasing healthcare costs and the mass emigration of healthcare workers. These crises also have an impact on the determinants of health (such as food, water, electricity, fuel, and shelter), further hindering the attainment of the right to health.
3. In January 2023, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and WHO launched the "National Health Strategy: Vision 2030" to harmonize health financing and benefit packages toward universal health coverage (UHC). A draft UHC law is under discussion, but progress is slow¹⁵.
4. Only about 49% of the population have health insurance coverage, while the MoPH sometimes acts as the "insurer of last resort." Several groups remain excluded from publicly available schemes, including those working informally, the unemployed, older persons, retirees, migrants, and refugees.
5. Health expenditure as a % of GDP was 7.95% in 2020. Those without any form of healthcare coverage and who cannot afford private insurance end up spending more on healthcare services out of pocket, with an estimation in 2022 that patients were covering as much as 90% of their hospital expenses out of their own pocket¹⁶. High out-of-pocket spending may push families further into poverty and lead to catastrophic health expenditures.¹⁷ Those who can afford private insurance (often paid in US dollars) are able to access care in the private sector¹⁸, further contributing to inequity in healthcare access.
6. At its peak, the financial and economic crisis affected medication imports, while the government also lifted subsidies off some essential medicines. Prices of medications remain unaffordable for many and, in some cases, are not available altogether. A shortage of medicines is likely to directly affect the health of patients, especially those suffering from chronic or severe illnesses.
7. In its most recent war against Lebanon, Israel perpetrated at least 137 recorded attacks on healthcare, including on healthcare infrastructure and medical vehicles, further stretching an already weakened healthcare system and in direct violation of international humanitarian law. In November 2024, at least 15 hospitals (amounting to about 10% of all hospitals in the country) were out of service or were only partially functioning, making it difficult or impossible to meet the healthcare needs of the population, including the needs of the over 17,000 people who were injured during the war, some of them needing specialized trauma care and rehabilitation.¹⁹ The war also resulted in the closure of primary healthcare centers in targeted areas—almost half were closed by October 16, 2025²⁰. As of March 25, 2025, at least three hospitals and 26 primary healthcare centers remained closed²¹. The attacks on healthcare disproportionately affected the southern governorates of Lebanon; for example, 40% of hospital bed capacity was lost in Nabatieh alone²².

8. Almost half of these attacks (47%) on health resulted in the death of at least one health worker or patient²³. Over 530 health workers and patients were killed, while thousands of health workers were internally displaced or emigrated.
9. The destruction also disrupted childhood vaccination and increased the risk of disease outbreaks due to damaged water and sanitation infrastructure. Mental health needs have significantly risen²⁴.
10. Although drug use is legally recognized as a health issue, implementation remains limited. Only about 2,000 individuals accessed treatment due to punitive judicial practices and centralized services. Lebanon's drug law criminalizes personal consumption, with over 35,000 people arrested or interrogated from 2016–2023²⁵. Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) is not classified as essential medication²⁶, limiting its availability. Stigmatization and criminalization of drug use obstruct access to treatment and harm reduction, undermining health rights and service continuity²⁷.

➤ 11. Recommendations

- 11.1. The government must continue to prioritize its work toward achieving universal health coverage while ensuring that this coverage extends to all residents of Lebanon, including migrants and refugees. This will require implementing the Universal Health Coverage Law and more efficient healthcare financing.
- 11.2. Efforts should also be made to strengthen preventive and primary healthcare, including through increasing investments in primary healthcare centers and improving their quality and accessibility.
- 11.3. Priority should also be given to rebuilding and strengthening public healthcare infrastructure, starting with hospitals and primary healthcare centers that remain out of service after the war. Efforts should also be made to enhance healthcare system preparedness in the face of conflicts and crises.
- 11.4. In line with ongoing efforts by the National Mental Health Program at the MoPH, efforts must be made to scale up mental health services and improve their accessibility and affordability for all, especially after the most recent Israeli war on Lebanon.
- 11.5. Reform drug policies, shifting away from punitive models and adopt drug policies based on health and human rights that recognize and advance the rights of people who use drugs and ensure safe and uninterrupted access to Opioid Agonist Treatment in crisis settings.

d. The Right to Free and Quality Education

1. Since the last UPR, Lebanon has experienced successive crises that have had a significant impact on the full enjoyment of the right to education and on the quality of education. At the beginning of the economic crisis, the number of teaching days was reduced from 175 to 120 in 2017 to reduce spending. The school year continued to be reduced to 92 days after the health pandemic, necessitating a reduction of curricula by more than half.
2. Whereas the severe economic crisis led to general decline in the standard of living in the country and depreciation of Lebanese lira, administrative and educational staff were also severely impacted. As a result of the economic crisis, teachers and public sector employees have become increasingly vocal in demanding wage adjustments. Strikes have recurred since the COVID-19 pandemic. Undoubtedly, the economic crisis has affected all segments of society. However, education is a female-dominated sector, with women constituting more than 81% of the workforce, and vulnerable or contract work in education constituting 70% of the workforce. As the crisis has worsened, wages have declined in general, especially for contract workers in education, the vast majority of whom are women. This has left scars on the value of their work and their community participation, rendering them subordinate to men's work due to their low income. Lebanon had achieved progress in gender equality, but today, in the education sector in particular, women's role is being marginalized socially and economically.
3. As reported by UNICEF, the war also compounded Lebanon's challenging education situation which had already left over 500,000 children out of school after years of economic strife, teacher strikes and the impact of COVID-19. Schools were destroyed or heavily damaged in the war and hundreds more were used as shelters for some of the 1.3 million people who were internally displaced due to the conflict. The war that swept through southern Lebanon prior to the 2023 school year prevented more than 11,000 students from border villages from reaching their schools. The war completely destroyed 33 schools and damaged hundreds in the South, Nabatieh, and the southern suburbs. As of the time of writing this report, students in these areas, particularly those in the border areas, had not returned to school since 2023.
4. As the war expanded in September 2024, all public schools in Lebanon were closed and transformed into shelters, completely disrupting the educational process in schools, vocational institutes, and universities. Minister Halabi allowed only private schools and universities in safe areas to open, while more than a million students and university students remained out of school until the ceasefire, creating a further gap between public/private education and a divide between social and geographic groups.
5. Despite the lack of any specific recommendation on closing this gap during the 3rd cycle, it is important to note that Lebanon is characterized by a hybrid education system, where public education represents only 28% of enrollees, and private education accounts for 70% of enrollees. There is an annual decline in the number of Lebanese students enrolled in public schools due to poor quality and educational services, or reluctance to enroll due to transportation costs and families' limited educational spending, which undermines the right to free education, access, and quality. The gap between public and private education deepens amid wage crisis; as many teachers left the teaching profession in search of better living opportunities. The public sector lost highly qualified staff, being replaced by contractors with little experience and educational qualifications.

6. However, the private education sector has been affected by the economic crisis as well, with parents, tuition-payers, and educational institutions most affected. As a result of the crisis, the salaries of retired teachers have fallen to approximately \$30 per month due to the deterioration in the value of the compensation and retirement fund in private schools. This prompted teachers to call for a strike after losing their compensation, health, and social security benefits. Meanwhile, annual tuition fees in the private sector continued to rise, exceeding 25 times the new minimum wage, reaching an average of \$3,000 per year.
7. Lebanon has supported the recommendation calling for an inclusive education and developing a national strategy on the education of children with disabilities, in June 2023 the National Policy on Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Lebanon was launched. The policy, financed by the European Union and Education Cannot Wait, aims to provide a national framework for an inclusive education implementation in Lebanon, based on the lessons learned from the Inclusive Education Pilot Program and international best practices. With these initiatives the inclusive schools are noted to reach 110. However, children with special needs have not had equal access to education, as public schools equipped for people with disabilities are very few and the number of those enrolled in free public education does not exceed 13% of the total number of people with special needs enrolled. The limited number of schools equipped for people with disabilities and the cost of transportation prevent the majority of these students from accessing education, and they lack access to basic services.
9. It is important to note that part of the international support was allocated to the education of Syrian refugees, while the other portion was allocated to public education. It was allocated to operating schools, providing social assistance to teachers and students, textbooks, strengthening the ministry's administration, renovating and maintaining school buildings, building schools, and developing curricula. However, the results were regressive, and the spending was ineffective, achieving only quantitative targets for enrolling refugee students, while enrollment among Lebanese students declined. A striking decision by the previous government in 2023 denied access to education to refugee children who did not hold official residency documents or UN documents, a clear violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their right to education. Consequently, the number of refugee children enrolled in afternoon schools fell by half, having reached 156,000 in previous years.

➤ 10. Recommendations

- 10.1. Increase public expenditure on education, enhance the quality of public education, develop a new unified modern curriculum taking into consideration digital and technological developments, establishing and implementing quality-oriented strategies especially for public schools in rural areas and adapting the school environment to the basic needs of children and people with disabilities.
- 10.2. Activate and modernize governance systems and national oversight institutions to control spending, efficiency, and quality control in the education sector.
- 10.3. Develop remedial plans to reduce school dropout and reluctance to enroll in education, and promote compulsory and free education, enhance the motivation of children and families to enroll, as well as enhancing the motivation of graduates to choose teaching as a future career.
- 10.4. Restore the leadership role and quality of education by strengthening the role and competencies of educational and administrative bodies.
- 10.5. Strengthen the national education budget: salary scale, model infrastructure, administrative training and qualification, school map, etc.
- 10.6. Establish a system for monitoring, controlling, evaluating, and following up on the SDG Goal 4 and its targets by taking a comprehensive and holistic approach to sustainable development.
- 10.7. Complete administrative appointments and filling vacancies in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and its affiliated institutions.

e. The Right to Work

1. Given the rentier economy in Lebanon, the lack of sustainable and decent job generation is evident. Employment policies remain inadequate. According to the 2022 Follow-up Labour Force Survey²⁸ Lebanon's unemployment rate rose from 11.4% in 2018/2019 to 29.6% in 2022, driven by the severe financial and economic crisis that the country has been facing since 2019. Although no recent accurate numbers are available, UNDP estimated in October 2024 that unemployment was expected to reach 32.6% in 2024, mainly due to the loss of labour in key sectors²⁹.
2. The informal employment and its associated issues remain: the majority of non-citizens, particularly Palestinian and Syrian refugees continue to work informally and they face several barriers to obtaining a legal work permit (for example, prohibitive cost) or regarding the sectors in which they are allowed to work. This labor force is deprived of all types of social, health, and educational benefits.
3. Although states are obliged to ensure fair wages, equal pay for equal work, and equal remuneration for work of equal value and workers should be guaranteed a minimum wage that allows for a decent living for themselves and their families, since last UPR, and during the financial and economic collapse and the COVID-19 pandemic, most prominent consequences for workers and on their living conditions were the collapse of salaries' value to about 10% of its pre-collapse value in both the public and private sectors, and the collapse of health coverage value from insurance institutions, the State Employees Cooperative for public sector employees, social security for private sector workers, and the loss of the value of end-of-service compensation.
4. The minimum wage in the private sector has been raised to 28 million liras in June 2025 which is equivalent to \$313 today, while the minimum wage before the financial collapse was \$450. The Lebanese state has granted several salary increases, but they were all paid as aid and incentives and were not included in the salary, which negatively affects the retirement pension later on.
5. Violating Article 6 of the Arab Labor Agreement, which explicitly stipulates the right of workers to receive wages for days off due to their control, many workers remained laid off during Corona period³⁰, and later during the port explosion³¹. The war on Lebanon impacted everyday lives of workers with the destruction of thousands of industrial establishments and the dismissal of thousands of workers without compensation, many of whom are still unemployed today.
6. As for retirement and social security law, the Lebanese Parliament passed the Retirement and Social Protection Law in 2023 that represented a significant gain for male and female workers, as it includes all health and social security guarantees, and replaces the "financial compensation" with a retirement pension. However, this is a pending gain because the implementing decrees for the law have not been issued.

7. The right to work for persons with disabilities is legally recognized in Lebanon, yet practical implementation remains limited. Employment rates are critically low, with only 11.1 % of working-age individuals with disabilities employed, while 35.8% are unemployed (ILO & UNICEF, 2021).
8. Domestic workers are still not covered by the provisions of the Labor Law due to Article 7, and they are still subject to the unfair and slavery-based sponsorship system. Previously, a gain was achieved for domestic workers through the Unified Labor Contract, the issuance which allowed them to obtain a number of benefits, including working hours, an independent room, a day off, and a minimum wage. However, all of this was overturned by the State Shura Council's decision to freeze the unified contract after the intervention of the "mafia" controlling the recruitment offices for female workers.
9. Lebanese law does not recognize Palestinian workers as residents, exempting them from certain restrictions. Though required to register for all three branches of Social Security (sickness and maternity - family compensation - and end of service), they only receive end-of-service compensation, despite contributing to health insurance and family benefits. To date, no decrees have been issued implementing Laws 128 and 129, which regulate Palestinian workers and exempt them from work and residence permits.
10. The labor arbitration councils have been in a state of paralysis in issuing rulings due to the strike of government commissioners. Their weaknesses are reflected in their limited numbers, regional concentration, and reliance on civil courts over expedited mechanisms, often resulting in prolonged delays.

➤ 11. Recommendations

- 11.1. Amend the outdated Labor Law to reflect evolving work realities, recognize informal and new sectors, and ensure safe, equitable, and inclusive working conditions and Strengthen labor arbitration and appoint full-time judges, fill council vacancies, increase sessions, and streamline trial procedures to ensure timely and fair rulings.
- 11.2. Amend Article 50 to protect against unfair dismissal, particularly for unionized workers.
- 11.3. Apply ILO Convention 87 to guarantee the right to independent worker organization.
- 11.4. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in the labor law, promote inclusion and equality, enforcing employment quotas for persons with disabilities (Law 220/2000), ensuring equal pay and protections for women, including maternity and reproductive rights, extend legal protections to refugees, migrants, informal workers, and LGBTQ+ persons.
- 11.5. Safeguard children from labor exploitation.
- 11.6. Enact special legislation to ensure workers' rights to compensation and reinstatement after the 2024–2025 war, similar to the protections granted after the Lebanese civil war under Decree No. 17 of 1977.

f. The Right to Water and Sanitation

1. During the last cycle Lebanon received only one recommendation, calling for ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation to all. Yet, the country's water supply suffers greatly from poor and declining quality, contaminated from stormwater, agricultural, industrial and household waste runoff in the absence of rigorous protection and monitoring frameworks and capacities. Coastal water supply is particularly impacted by increasing salinity caused by saltwater intrusion into over-abstracted coastal aquifers.
2. Lebanon's public water sector has been significantly weakened by a combination of economic and political challenges, leading to chronic understaffing and widespread vacancies that severely hinder the ability of authorities to effectively manage and deliver essential services. This decline stems largely from political decisions and ongoing funding shortages, further exacerbated by donor-imposed hiring freezes as part of austerity conditions tied to conditional loans.
3. The legal framework for water in Lebanon is burdened by legal pluralism, in which overlapping, and often competing, normative systems organizing the water sector exist. This has greatly impacted the governance over water resources and wastewater treatment, and ultimately the access to clean drinking water and sanitation.
4. The organisational capacity to manage water supply and wastewater has not been developed³². This has greatly impacted not only water tariff collection rates, hindering the recovery of operational costs, but it has greatly limited reinvestment in infrastructure and management capacities within Regional Water Establishments.
5. Access to water and sanitation has also been critically disrupted by Israeli offensive bombardment since October 2023. Relentless attacks on water facilities have stripped 400,000 residents in Southern Lebanon of access to potable water. Over 30 water facilities were damaged as a result of the deliberate Israeli strikes or as collateral damage. These include pumping stations, treatment plants, canals and other water infrastructure. Losses suffered by the public water and energy sectors amount to an estimated \$480 million. Multiple Israeli airstrikes targeted the main water carriers of the Litani River, including a critical segment in the Erzi area, which forms an essential part of the Qasmiyeh irrigation project. The latter carrier transports over 260,000 cubic meters of water daily, irrigating approximately 6,000 hectares of agricultural land along Lebanon's southern coast. Such attacks, which blatantly violate international humanitarian law, have severely disrupted the Litani River's availability for use in the southern region, compromising access to safe drinking water and irrigation water³³. Beyond the immediate physical damage to water facilities, the use of white phosphorus munitions has increased the risk of the contamination of surface and groundwater by white phosphorus and heavy metals, rendering these vital water sources unsafe, and creating long-term barriers to their use. Additionally, the destruction of surrounding forested areas accelerates soil erosion and surface runoff, compounding environmental degradation and water quality degradation.

6. In Lebanon, 69.1% of households depend on bottled water as their primary source of drinking water, while only 21% use government-supplied piped water within their homes. These figures vary geographically, with 92% of households in Beirut relying on bottled or purified water, compared to 44.2% in Baalbak-Hermel. In Akkar around 4.6% of households do not have access to any drinking water source. Around 7% of households in Lebanon rely on protected springs, wells and boreholes as a source of drinking water³⁴.
7. When it comes to non-drinking, household or sanitation use, 78.3% of Lebanese households are connected to piped water, and 16.2% use wells. These piped sources suffer the same unreliability and quality issues as drinking water supply. Additionally, The cost of piped water in Lebanon is determined by a fixed annual subscription fee, rather than by actual consumption. Households typically pay a flat rate of USD 200 per year for an allocated supply of one cubic meter (m³) of water per day. Since water usage is not metered, the actual volume delivered is estimated based on the initial average supply figures provided by the water utility³⁵.

➤ 8. Recommendations

- 8.1. Enhance water monitoring and promote transparency by establishing a national water data portal that consolidates information from remote sensing, citizen science initiatives, and IoT devices. This platform would enable real-time tracking of water flows, leakages, water quality, pollution events, and aquifer levels, supporting greater accountability and informed decision-making. Water monitoring should be included in wider water safety planning.
- 8.2. Introduce a guaranteed free basic water allocation, such as a minimum daily amount per person, to ensure equitable access and uphold water as a fundamental right. This could be through progressive water tariffs, where the first consumption block is heavily subsidized to ensure affordability.
- 8.3. Introduce legislation that would explicitly ban or heavily regulate the privatization of water services, resources, and infrastructure, reinforcing water's status as a public good and a human right. This must include water tanker trucking and the exploitation of groundwater sources by water bottling companies.
- 8.4. Adopt a decentralized wastewater treatment model, relying on municipal-level collection, treatment, and reuse instead of large regional Wastewater Treatment Plants with high operational costs and required volumes. This could include amendments to the Water Code or Water Sector Strategy that clearly allocates responsibility and jurisdiction over wastewater and its treatment between RWEs, MoEW and municipalities.
- 8.5. Implement groundwater protection as a core component of water conservation and management. This would require the enacting of a groundwater law which requires landowners, users, farmers and municipalities to register all wells and gradually eliminate unregulated drilling. The law should also establish legally protected recharge and discharge zones to safeguard critical groundwater resources and ensure their sustainable use.



B.

CIVIL RIGHTS & LIBERTIES

SUBMITTED BY:

- ALEF - ACT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
- ANTI-RACISM MOVEMENT – ARM
- FRONTIERS RUWAD
- CEDAR CENTRE FOR LEGAL STUDIES – CCLS
- LEBANESE CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - CLDH
- COMMITTEE OF THE FAMILIES OF THE MISSING
- PROUD LEBANON
- WORLD ORGANIZATION AGAINST TORTURE - OMCT

a. Right to life, liberty, and security of person

1. Although the constitution doesn't explicitly protect the right to life, Lebanon abides by the UDR and ratified most international human rights conventions, including the ICCPR, the Convention against Torture, and its 2008 Protocol. However, it hasn't ratified the ICCPR's Second Optional Protocol on abolishing the death penalty.
2. The death penalty is the most severe criminal punishment. Although Lebanon hasn't signed OHCHR Resolution 59/2005 urging a moratorium on executions, and courts still issue death sentences, an undeclared moratorium has halted the practice since 2004³⁶.
3. During the last UPR, Lebanon didn't support most death penalty recommendations.
4. In 2022, two draft bills were presented to Parliament concerning prison overcrowding, including one reducing the death penalty to 25 years of imprisonment. However, no updates followed.
5. Arbitrary detention remains a pressing concern, often targeting individuals for politically motivated dissent.
6. Detention conditions in Lebanon are alarming, characterized by severe overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and widespread rights violations³⁸. Many detention centers function as prisons, despite failing to meet the required standards.
7. In 2025, authorities reactivated the Roumieh courtroom to accelerate hearings. While impact remains unclear, this addresses only one overcrowding challenge, transporting inmates to court. It fails to tackle structural causes, including pretrial detention overuse and lack of alternative sentencing.
8. Lebanon continues to suffer from homicides often seen as political assassinations linked to high-level security concerns, political motives, and judicial investigations, often targeting leading political, religious, and security figures, journalists, and thinkers³⁹.
9. Between 2022 and 2023, femicides saw an unprecedented 300% rise⁴⁰.
10. Over the last 5 years, sporadic armed clashes and insecurity threatened the right to life and security of residents, especially in the Beqaa, refugee camps, the Syria-Akkar border, and during the Israel-Hezbollah conflict.
11. While Lebanese law doesn't grant a right to bear arms, weapon permits are issued at the executive branch's discretion. Lebanese and non-Lebanese armed groups have long operated outside legal frameworks with government acquiescence. In 2004, the UNSC officially called for their disbandment and disarmament⁴¹ but without success. Additionally, there are millions of licensed guns, a majority effectively illegal. In the last 5 years, many shooting incidents caused deaths and injuries especially in rural areas. In 2025, the Defense Minister introduced measures to regulate licensed firearms requiring that licenses specify the serial number of each weapon, restricting individuals from owning multiple firearms under one license.

12. Armed violence kills hundreds yearly, including children. A key driver is Lebanon's 'gun culture', shown in celebratory gunfire at weddings, exams, funerals, and elections. A 1959 law prohibited 'anyone firing into residential areas or in a crowd, whether their gun is licensed or not', but remains unenforced despite stricter recent laws and penalties⁴².
13. Kidnappings are driven by ransoms, politics, or clan disputes. In the last five years, abductions rose sharply, increasing by 194%, between 2021 and 2022 alone⁴³.
14. In late 2023 and 2024, Lebanon experienced severe IHL violations amid the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. Between October 2023-November 2024, the Ministry of Public Health reported 15,244 casualties, including at least 231 children and 226 health workers⁴⁴. In South Lebanon, attacks on civilian infrastructures destroyed 25,000 houses⁴⁵.

➤ 15. Recommendations

- 15.1. Adopt a formal moratorium on executions through a Cabinet decision, as a step towards abolition, and halt all death sentences while Parliament considers reforms.
- 15.2. Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR abolishing the death penalty.
- 15.3. Reintroduce the draft bill proposing commutation of the death penalty to life imprisonment (or 25 years) and bring it to parliamentary vote.
- 15.4. Strengthen safeguards against arbitrary detention by ensuring judicial review within 48 hours, as mandated by Lebanese Law, ensure the presence of legal counsel during interrogations.
- 15.5. Improve detention conditions through comprehensive reforms that reduce overcrowding, ensure full-time healthcare in detention facilities, and prohibit prolonged solitary confinement.
- 15.6. Establish a national plan for the control of arms and weapons.
- 15.7. Strictly enforce the 1959 law prohibiting celebratory gunfire, including clear arrest protocols and public reporting on incidents.
- 15.8. Launch a public awareness campaign against gun violence, targeting youth and rural areas, coordinated by the Ministry of Information and CSOs.
- 15.9. Ensure independent investigations into alleged violations of IHL during the 2023–2024 conflict, including attacks on civilian infrastructure and medical personnel.
- 15.10. Adopt a national strategy to combat femicide, including legal reforms to classify femicide as a distinct crime, protection measures for at-risk women, and awareness campaigns.
- 15.11. Ensure impartial investigation and judicial accountability in cases of political assassination, including protection for whistleblowers and journalists.

b. Rights of Migrants

1. Before 2019, Lebanon hosted over 400,000 Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) from African and South/Southeast Asian countries, around 10% of the female population.⁴⁶ Due to the economic crisis and the Lebanese pound devaluation,⁴⁷ the number decreased by almost half, reaching a total 176,506 individuals by 2024.⁴⁸ Lebanon has repeatedly ignored UN recommendations to ensure workplace protection for these workers.
2. Lebanon failed to ratify key international instruments protecting MDWs, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW) and ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work.
3. Despite prior UPR commitments, Lebanese Labor Law excludes MDWs, leaving them under a sponsorship system that grants employers excessive control over their legal residency status and exacerbates their vulnerability. No protective reforms have been adopted yet.⁴⁹
4. Most MDWs are recruited through abusive agencies that enable human rights violations, including mistreatment and worker-paid recruitment fees.⁵⁰ Additionally, the Directorate General of General Security's (DGGS) regulations limit workers to a maximum of three sponsors throughout their stay, further restricting mobility.
5. MDWs face rampant abuses due to lack of control over their schedules and freedoms: denied rest, unpaid or underpaid wages, restricted movement, confiscated passport and IDs, and physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Despite no legal requirements, the DGGS mandates live-in arrangements with their employers for residency renewal.⁵¹ When employers refuse to renew residency permits, workers are criminalised instead of holding employers accountable. The DGGS enforces residency policies that hinder migrants fleeing abuse to maintain legal status in the country. State authorities fail to inspect abusive workplaces without an official mandate for the ministerial Labor Inspection Department to enter private homes.
6. Working conditions have led to an alarming number of suicide cases among MDWs. Those fleeing abusive workspaces risk detention and deportation, as their legal status depends on their employer. They instead seek the support network of migrant community groups, churches, and local supporters that provide them shelter, work, and legal aid.⁵² Alternatives, however, could expose them to further vulnerability.
7. By summer 2023, almost 60,000 MDWs were working in an unregulated shadow economy, with some reportedly being forced into labor or sex trafficking.⁵³
8. MDWs seeking justice for abuse or rape by employers often face counteraccusations like theft. Many are unable to pursue legal action due to financial constraints or deportation before trial. Inadequate language interpretation services in courts prevent them from defending themselves.⁵⁴

9. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) failed to ensure legal remedies for MDWs. A 2024 governmental directive prohibited notaries from issuing Powers of Attorney to migrants without valid residency permits and passports, blocking most from legal representation in the country when it comes to challenging deportation orders, recovering unpaid wages, and transferring sponsorship.
10. Due to legal restrictions and lack of political will, the Ministry of Labor (MoL) doesn't recognize the Domestic Workers Union, denying MDWs' right to unionize and push for change in Lebanon.⁵⁵
11. Following September 2024 hostilities, 61,000 MDWs in South Lebanon, Beqaa and Beirut⁵⁶, were at risk. Many were abandoned by employers, denied shelters, and excluded from government protection programs despite their vulnerability.⁵⁷ Several preventable deaths were reported⁵⁸ but due to the Kafala system, authorities failed to repatriate or identify the victims.⁵⁹
12. The IOM received at least 20,000 new requests from migrants and their embassies in Lebanon for travel assistance in November 2024.⁶⁰ Financial restrictions, limited flights, and insufficient embassy support left many feeling abandoned.⁶¹ Furthermore, widespread confiscation of identity documents made departure nearly impossible for workers.⁶²
13. Irregular migration from Lebanon rose over the last 5 years due to deteriorating living conditions. Many migrants embark on perilous sea journeys, often resulting in tragedies. For instance, in April 2022, a boat sank off Tripoli's coast, causing numerous deaths and disappearances. In December 2023, another boat carrying about 85 individuals vanished⁶³.

➤ 14. Recommendations

- 14.1. Ratify the ICRMW, ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work, and ILO Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment.
- 14.2. Develop a Cabinet-endorsed roadmap to reform the sponsorship system by amending residency and work regulations to delink migrant's legal status from employers, and transfer oversight to the MoL.
- 14.3. Investigate and prosecute recruitment agencies and employers violating workers' rights.
- 14.4. Amend Lebanese Labor Law to include MDWs under its protections, ensuring equal rights regarding working hours, leave, wages, and legal recourse, in consultation with labor rights NGOs and embassies of major sending countries.
- 14.5. Issue a binding directive to revise DGGS regulations to shift legal responsibility for residency status violations of MDWs from the workers to their employers, in line with criminal law principles and the workers' limited agency in the sponsorship process.
- 14.6. Establish and enforce a public accreditation system for recruitment agencies, with human rights compliance checks, penalties for violations, and a blacklist of abusive agencies.
- 14.7. Ban worker-paid recruitment fees via MoL directive and monitor contract conditions before arrival in Lebanon.
- 14.8. Enforce a revised, rights-based Standard Unified Contract for MDWs, mandating provisions on minimum wage, maximum working hours, weekly rest days, and abuse protections, including complaint and enforcement mechanisms. This contract should be legally binding for employers and recruitment agencies, with enforcement through inspections and a multilingual awareness campaign targeting workers and employers.
- 14.9. Mandate professional legal interpretation services in court proceedings involving MDWs, with court staff training and a certified interpreter registry maintained by the MoJ.
- 14.10. Establish a publicly funded legal aid scheme for MDWs pursuing claims of abuse, rape, or unpaid wages, with outreach through embassies and shelters.
- 14.11. Criminalize employers' confiscation of passports and IDs and enable anonymous complaints.
- 14.12. Recognize the Domestic Workers Union as a legal entity, in line with ILO Conventions 87 and 98, and amend the labor law to permit all workers, regardless of occupation or nationality, to form and join unions.
- 14.13. Guarantee migrants non-discriminatory access to healthcare, education, and emergency shelter, regardless of legal status, through a directive aligned with Lebanon's international human rights obligations.
- 14.14. Establish a specialized MoL unit to monitor migrant workers' conditions, including domestic workers, with a multilingual complaints mechanism, gender-sensitive staff, and the legal mandate to conduct unannounced workplace inspections, including in private homes where feasible and with privacy safeguards.
- 14.15. Strengthen Mediterranean search and rescue operations per international maritime law. Develop safe, legal pathways for migration, including humanitarian corridors and labor mobility schemes, in cooperation with IOM and relevant embassies to reduce irregular, deadly sea crossings.

c. Right to Identity

1. Lebanon's outdated 1951 Civil Events Registration Law excludes stateless persons, irregular migrants, and undocumented individuals. It relies on manual, unsupervised paper-based process and self-reporting, risking document loss, under-registration, and errors.
2. Modernization has been limited; in 2023, the Directorate General of Personal Status (DGPS) launched digital civil status extracts but still lacks a digital stamping system.
3. The 2024 war exposed Lebanon's manual registration system's vulnerabilities. Displacement and destruction of homes and registry offices led to document loss, complicating identity verification, even for the deceased. DGPS relocated physical registers under dangerous conditions, underscoring the urgent need for a digitized system. Ad hoc measures were required to register births and war-related deaths, as the current system proved inadequate for emergencies. The GoL enacted a law extending legal and contractual deadlines, including birth and death registrations, helping prevent statelessness among children.
4. Despite its importance, civil registration reform was absent from the 2022 National Recovery Plan, the 2023 National Social Protection Strategy, and the 2025 Government Policy Statement. This neglects civil registration's role in securing legal identity and rights, especially post-conflict. It also overlooks the state's need for comprehensive population data to guide recovery, public services, and long-term governance, something the current outdated fragmented system cannot provide. The issue nonetheless was timidly addressed, in 2023, the Prime Minister formed a National Commission on Undocumented Persons, evolving from a previous civil committee addressing unregistered Lebanese children. However, the Commission has been largely inactive.

Meanwhile, a mixed ministerial-civil society Working Group on Statelessness, active since 2012, continues to propose legal and policy reforms to uphold the right to legal recognition and identity.

5. In 2021, a Lebanese NGO⁶⁴ submitted a proposal for a universal, automated, and digitized civil registration law through an MP, but Parliament was inactive for most of these four years. This inaction, under the pretext of awaiting government input, reflects resistance to reform within both institutions.
6. Registering vital events for foreigners requires a valid residency permit, leaving many marriages and births among irregular migrants unregistered. A Lebanese man's marriage to an irregular foreign woman cannot often be registered automatically, leading to non-registration of children if he fails to declare the child's birth.
7. Lebanon adopted measures to allow the registration of Syrian children born between 2011 and 2025 regardless of legal deadlines, but didn't extend this to other foreign nationals, leaving their children at risk of statelessness. High costs and complex procedures for foreign documents highlight systemic flaws in the civil registration system.
8. Stateless individuals excluded from the civil registration framework and lacking official records are invisible to the State. Their inability to register vital events, such as marriages, births, or deaths, perpetuates intergenerational non-registration. Furthermore, Lebanon lacks any legal framework and determination procedures for statelessness, leaving thousands of individuals unrecognized and undocumented.

➤ 9. Recommendations

- 9.1. Modernize Lebanon's civil registration system by digitizing vital event records and reforming the legal framework to ensure inclusive, automatic, and accessible registration. Adopt legal and technical reforms, prioritizing marginalized groups including stateless persons, migrants, and refugees.
- 9.2. Issue a circular to reduce barriers to civil registration by waiving or lowering documentation and authentication fees for vulnerable groups, especially migrants and displaced persons, and ensure local registries apply simplified procedures uniformly.

d. Right to Fair Trial by an Independent Judiciary

1. Although the Lebanese Constitution enshrines⁶⁵ both the principle of the separation of powers⁶⁶ and the independence of judges and the judiciary⁶⁷, systemic issues undermine these rights for both Lebanese citizens and non-citizens.
2. CCLS has documented numerous cases where individuals face arbitrary detention, such as the case of Rabih Fadel Zakaria⁶⁸, lack of legal representation, and trials in courts failing to⁶⁹ meet international standards of independence and impartiality.
3. The existence of exceptional courts - the Military Tribunal, the Judicial Council, the Supreme Court, and the Personal Status Courts – violates the principle of the natural judge.
4. Corruption, political interference, and encroachment undermine Lebanon's judiciary. The current system still allows executive and political actors to exert influence⁷⁰, especially through judicial appointments tied to sectarian interests.⁷¹
5. The judiciary's institutional independence is contradicted by the executive's control over judge appointments and transfers. For instance, the Beirut Blast investigation, stalled by political pressure, demonstrates how this influence blocks accountability and transparency.
6. Internal and external pressure weaken Judges' individual independence. External pressure persists due to no legal guarantee of judges' immovability, weak safeguards against outside influence, and minimal penalties for interfering with rulings, treated only as minor offenses. Internally, oral components in judicial entry exams along with opportunities offered to some judges to lucrative positions or specialized committees deepens the problem.
7. Ensuring impartial courts in the presence of the Military Court is difficult where only one civilian judge sits alongside military officers – some without legal training and tied to the Defense Ministry. This structure raises doubts about the courts' independence and impartiality, especially when trying civilians. While Parliament is discussing a draft law to reform the Court's mandate, it has yet to be voted on.
8. Judicial accountability processes lack transparency. Besides disciplinary decisions terminating judges, all inspection and discipline proceedings are confidential, increasing litigants' doubts and weakening their trust in the accountability mechanisms, as complainants remain unaware of outcomes. The Disciplinary Council doesn't publish its decisions or issue periodic reports, preventing citizens from monitoring its work.
9. In March 2023, nine MPs introduced two draft laws strengthening judicial independence and preventing political interference⁷². The proposals aim to stop politically connected individuals from using legal loopholes to suspend investigations, especially in high-profile cases like the Beirut port explosion. The bills would require a court decision to pause probes curbing impunity and protecting justice.⁷³

10. In August 2022, amid Lebanon's economic collapse, judges went on strike for months to demand higher wages, better working conditions, and judicial independence free from political interference.⁷⁴ The strike froze the judiciary, as over 450 out of 560 judges stopped working, leaving many detainees stuck without trial.⁷⁵
11. Prolonged hearing delays and lack of prisoner transport leave many waiting months in pretrial detention. Some detention centers have failed to comply with the Cassation Public Prosecution circular, counting one prison month as 20 days, using 30 instead – unlawfully extending detention. Others keep prisoners beyond their sentences due to unresolved file reports, violating their rights after judgment.
12. Inconsistent administrative fees hinder prisoners as some courts directly waive fees for prisoners' requests while others impose them disproportionately, affecting those with limited resources.
13. Delays in executing arrest warrants and judgments keep detainees in custody long after decisions, awaiting transfer to the DGGS, deportation or release. Indictments face long hold-ups – sometimes over three years- leaving detainees without final judgment.
14. Bail requests are often rejected without proper legal reasoning, and investigation records aren't automatically included in case files. Judges frequently fail to review files unless a trial is scheduled, causing delays. Processing varies by region – cases in Beirut proceed faster, while in Mount Lebanon they can drag on due to administrative inefficiencies, undermining access to justice.
15. Detaining minors in unsuitable facilities, particularly military barracks, violates children's rights under international human rights standards. Growing use of military detention and transfer delays to juvenile centers deny them timely legal, psychological, and social assistance.

➤ 16. Recommendations

- 16.1 Adopt and implement legislation guaranteeing institutional independence of the judiciary, including the transfer of authority to appoint and discipline judges from the executive branch to a fully independent authority.
- 16.2. Amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to abolish the Justice Council and transfer its jurisdiction to ordinary courts, ensuring all cases are handled by independent civilian courts.
- 16.3. Adopt new legislation to regulate the judicial, administrative, and financial judiciaries, in line with international standards of judicial independence and the 1985 UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary.
- 16.4. Amend the laws governing judicial governance bodies (e.g. Supreme Judicial Council, State Council Bureau, Court of Audit Bureau) to allow the election of at least a majority of their members.
- 16.5. Transfer oversight of judicial institutions, such as the Judicial Inspection Authority and the Institute of Judicial Studies, from the MoJ to the Supreme Judicial Council (SPJ).
- 16.6. Establish transparent, merit-based judicial appointment procedures, prohibit political interference, and enshrine immovability in law. Empower the SPJ to manage judicial careers without Cabinet approval and allow judges to appeal career-related decisions.
- 16.7. Define judicial misconduct in law and establish proportionate disciplinary sanctions, with due process guarantees at all stages. Mandate the publication of all disciplinary rulings and annual reports by the Disciplinary Council, overseen by an independent inspectorate under the SPJ.
- 16.8. Establish a fully funded national legal-aid system accessible to vulnerable groups and ensure timely trial scheduling and verdict issuance by enforcing statutory time limits.
- 16.9. Mandate training on international human rights standards for law enforcement, judicial, and military personnel.
- 16.10. Allocate sufficient MoJ funds to ensure timely and non-discriminatory transportation of detainees to court hearings, including vehicles, personnel, and logistics, with judicial oversight to track compliance.
- 16.11. Enforce court hearing timelines by establishing case-specific delay limits and requiring quarterly reporting by judges on compliance.
- 16.12. Issue directives to ensure uniform application of the Cassation Public Prosecution circular calculating one month of detention as 20 days.
- 16.13. Adopt a unified MoJ fee schedule to standardize legal fee and stamp costs, ensure equal treatment for all litigants.
- 16.14. Redistribute court caseloads across jurisdictions based on case volume and judicial capacity.
- 16.15. Issue a binding circular requiring juveniles to be transferred to juvenile facilities within 48 hours of arrest.

e. Right to Family Life

1. In Lebanon, religious laws govern personal status matters such as marriage, spousal rights, kinship, and inheritance, while civil law handles their registration. This creates challenges, including cases where religiously valid marriages cannot be legally registered.
2. This fragmented system enables legal maneuvering, complicating family rights governance. For instance, individuals may change denominations to remarry, even if their original faith prohibits polygamy and the first marriage is registered.
3. These loopholes disproportionately affect women and children. Women often lack legal recourse against polygamous marriages contracted without their knowledge or consent. Most religious laws grant men greater rights and authority in marriage and dissolution, with primary control over family matters and children. In many Muslim laws, men can unilaterally divorce or through religious courts, while women face limited access to divorce and must often forfeit financial rights or rely on narrow, court-approved grounds. In practice, women are pressured to abandon custody or financial claims to obtain divorce, undermining their autonomy.
4. Children from such unions may struggle to access civil registration, depriving them of legal identity and essential services like healthcare and social care, while increasing their risk of statelessness and marginalization.
5. Lebanon's personal status system operates across multiple religious laws, each setting distinct rights based on religious affiliation. This creates disparities in marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance, and kinship, undermining equality and reinforcing sectarian divides. Legal protections and obligations vary by religion rather than being governed by universal human rights standards.
6. A major legislative gap is the absence of an accessible domestic civil marriage system. Citizens must marry abroad to have civil marriages, which are then recognized for registration. This two-tiered system favors those who can afford to travel, while denying other alternatives to unsuitable religious marriage frameworks.
7. In 2022, a Lebanese NGO⁷⁶ submitted a civil marriage and personal status law to Parliament, supported by nine Members of Parliament. However, the proposal remains unexamined, highlighting the persistent institutional resistance to reform and the deeply entrenched discriminatory systems governing family life.
8. Lebanon lacks a unified minimum legal age for marriage, with each religious community setting its own, many below international standards, enabling child marriage, especially for girls. The 2021 Sunni law sets it at 18, with exceptions for ages 15-18, but early informal marriages still occur and are later registered.
9. Without a unified civil law, loopholes facilitate child and forced marriage, exposing girls to harm, and undermining Lebanon's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW. A 2017 NGO⁷⁷ bill to raise the marriage age remains unpassed in Parliament.

10. Child custody laws set low custody ages for mothers, varying by religious group. Once children exceed this age, custody typically shifts to the father, reflecting patriarchal interpretations of the child's "best interest", often overlooking the mother's rights and the child's needs. In mixed-faith marriages, religious courts often favor the Muslim parent (usually the father).
11. High-profile custody disputes in recent years⁷⁸ have exposed deep flaws in Lebanon's personal status system, highlighting the urgent need for a unified, child-centered framework that ensures equal parental rights and prioritizes the child's welfare.
12. Another concern is the frequent risk of family separation involving migrant workers, mainly women, married to Lebanese nationals. The right to family unity is often ignored, especially when marriages aren't registered or officially recognized. Deportation decisions usually ignore family ties and children's well-being, violating the state's duty to protect family life.

13. Recommendations

- 13.1. Adopt a unified civil personal status law that guarantees equal rights in family matters regardless of religion or gender, in line with Lebanon's international human rights obligations.
- 13.2. Pass legislation to set a unified minimum legal marriage age at 18 for all individuals, without exception, in alignment with international child protection standards.
- 13.3. Reform custody laws to prioritize the child's best interests, regardless of sect, by amending existing religious court practices and adopting interim protective measures, until a unified personal status law is enacted.
- 13.4. Withdraw Lebanon's reservation to Article 16 of CEDAW to affirm legal equality in marriage, divorce, and custody, with national legal reforms initiated thereafter.

f. Right to have a Private Life

1. Lebanon has ratified major international treaties that uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The Constitution guarantees equality before the law. However, Lebanon hasn't ratified any convention explicitly addressing sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIESC), and LGBTQ+ rights. Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals persists.
2. Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code criminalizes "sexual intercourse contrary to nature," enabling the criminalization and persecution of LGBTIQ+ persons. This has led to arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment, invasive bodily searches, and psychological abuse. Although several courts, including military tribunals, have issued rulings disregarding Article 534, these remain a minority and lack national consistency. Judges have occasionally suspended penalties but left marks on civil records, further stigmatizing the accused. The law's vague wording allows broad interpretation and misuse by security forces and prosecutors.
3. In 2023, Proud Lebanon submitted a draft law to repeal Article 534, backed by nine MPs. The initiative sparked major backlash from political and religious figures who condemned it as a threat to "family values." Former Minister Mohammad Murtada countered with a law criminalizing the "promotion" of homosexuality, proposing up to five years of imprisonment. This legislative retaliation was supported by anti-LGBTIQ+ campaigns led by religious and political institutions. Murtada sponsored and took part in anti-LGBTIQ+ events organized by groups such as the Lebanese Council of Women, who hosted conferences in Beirut and Tripoli in 2023 and 2024.
4. Over the past 5 years, hate speech has intensified, with judges, clerics, and conservative media framing LGBTIQ+ identities as perversions. State institutions, like the ministry of culture, have amplified this rhetoric by sponsoring anti-LGBTIQ+ events, further legitimizing institutional discrimination.
5. Anti-LGBT activists like Jnoud El Rab and Jnoud El Fayhaa have spread anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric, intimidated providers, and suppressed advocacy, severely limiting safe spaces and essential services, particularly in northern Lebanon.
6. Digital platforms have been weaponized for blackmail, with individuals targeted on dating apps, harassed, and extorted. Fear of prosecution under Article 534 discourages complaints, as law enforcement often exploits private data on personal devices without judicial warrants, using them to extract confessions.
7. Meanwhile, anal probe tests, though discouraged by the Lebanese Order of Physicians, remain legally permissible. In the absence of a legislative ban, detainees remain vulnerable to torture and invasive procedures.
8. LGBTIQ+ individuals are systematically subjected to HIV and drug testing upon arrest by the morality police in Ras Beirut and are sometimes transferred to the overcrowded Ramlet El Bayda station. Those who test HIV-positive are segregated in the Blue Building of Roumieh prison, a facility associated with mental illness, contributing to further stigmatization.

9. Transgender and HIV-positive individuals are often denied services or treated unethically. Post-crisis, WHO suspended support for the National AIDS Program (NAP), which was merged with the TB program. In early 2024, ART shortages led to expired medications being distributed. Essential services for vulnerable populations have been severely disrupted. In Tripoli, key community centers cut access to critical HIV and SRHR services.
10. LGBTIQ+ students in Lebanon face bullying, exclusion, and a lack of institutional protection. Academic freedom is increasingly under threat, especially on gender and sexuality topics —illustrated by a recent case where a thesis on LGBTIQ+ mental health was blocked at Lebanese University under religious pressure, highlighting unethical interference in academic standards and growing censorship.
11. Discrimination in employment is widespread, particularly for transgender individuals who face systemic exclusion from the labor market. LGBTIQ+ persons are frequently denied job opportunities, harassed in the workplace, or forced to conceal their identities to avoid discrimination and retaliation.
12. LGBTIQ+ individuals arrested under suspicion of drug use or other charges often face added abuses tied to their perceived sexuality, including coerced confessions, invasive searches, and extortion.
13. In 2023, the Beirut Bar Association hosted and sponsored the launch of an anti-LGBTIQ+ book, endorsed by its then-president. The book used derogatory terminology and presented LGBTIQ+ persons as a threat to societal values, reflecting the normalization of institutional discrimination.

➤ 14. Recommendations

- 14.1. Ensure that Article 534 of the Penal Code isn't used to criminalize consensual same-sex relations by issuing binding guidance from the Public Prosecution Office affirming its interpretation in line with the rights to privacy and non-discrimination, in accordance with Lebanon's international human rights obligations.
- 14.2. Adopt and enforce a national law against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, with implementation across employment, education, health, and housing sectors.
- 14.3. Secure consistent funding for HIV and SRHR services, especially in high-risk areas, and scale up LGBTIQ+-inclusive healthcare and psychosocial support.
- 14.4. Condemn and sanction hate speech by public officials, including anti-LGBTIQ+ incitement.

g. Missing Persons and Enforced Disappearances

1. Since the Lebanese civil war, thousands of enforced disappearances remain without justice. While most cases date to then, disappearances continued, notably by Israeli forces (until 2000) and the Syrian Army (until 2005).
2. Of the 17,415 Lebanese citizens reported disappeared, approximately 2,300 were officially registered with the ICRC.⁸⁰ The GoL has still failed to assess the scale of enforced disappearances, passing only a 1995 law declaring the missing dead.⁸¹ Since 2012, the ICRC identified 5,000-8,000 missing, a fraction of the total as data still emerges.
3. Lebanon signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2007 but has yet to ratify it⁸².
4. After Parliament approved Law 105 on the missing and forcibly disappeared in 2018, the Cabinet established the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared (NCMFD) in 2020. However, four members resigned in 2021 in protest to internal elections, revealing that the election procedures weren't abided by.
5. Governmental inertia has stalled the implementation of Law 105. The Commission faces challenges in operationalizing its mandate, including investigating mass graves and DNA testing. Lack of political will and resources fails to answer families who have waited decades for information⁸³. With its mandate expiring in July, calls to renew appointments have mounted.
6. Since the last UPR, Lebanon hasn't made progress on the fate of thousands of disappeared. Mass graves remain unexamined, investigations stalled, and families still await truth, reparations and a centralized database.
7. Women whose loved ones have disappeared face legal, economic, and social challenges. Without legal recognition of the status of the disappeared, they're often denied inheritance rights, guardianship, and social protections —forcing many to declare relatives dead.
8. The fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 hasn't led to the hoped-for disclosure of information. Despite testimonies from released detainees and defectors indicating potential locations of mass graves and detention centers, no joint Syrian-Lebanese investigations have occurred. The Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon confirmed one identity and a Lebanese man imprisoned since 1992 was freed by Syrian rebels.⁸⁴

9. Then-caretaker Minister of Justice coordinated efforts with the ISF, DGGS, and the State Security to gather information the authorities might have.⁸⁵ Caretaker Minister of Interior also announced 9 Lebanese inmates were freed from Syrian prisons following the regime's fall and returned home safely.⁸⁶ Although the government was coordinating with different groups working on the issue, a formal institution in Syria to collaborate with and provide information to the GoL remains non-existent.⁸⁷
10. Since 2023, CCLS has submitted 12 complaints to the Public Prosecutor of the Cassation Court and referred these cases to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID). Among these are the cases of Rafaat Falih⁸⁸, a Syrian refugee who disappeared after being detained by Lebanese authorities in January 2024; M.A., a young Syrian man last seen in the custody of military intelligence in May 2024⁸⁹; and Abdullah Al Zohouri⁹⁰, who was forcibly disappeared after his arrest in Bekaa in May 2024. These cases highlight ongoing enforced disappearances in Lebanon and the urgent need for accountability and transparency —especially in protecting refugees. Impunity continues to block justice for victims and families.

➤ 11. Recommendations

- 11.1. Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and recognize the competence of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances.
- 11.2. Fully implement Law 105/2018 by giving the NCMFD proper funding, staff, and authority, with a dedicated state budget line, full member appointments, and public activity plan to enable the Commission to fulfil its mandate.
- 11.3. Consolidate existing ICRC, security agency, and civil society records in a unified and protected database, under the NCMFD's mandate, and operationalize a national forensic identification program to assess all missing and forcibly disappeared persons in Lebanon, including civil war and post-war cases.
- 11.4. Develop and adopt a national action plan on mass graves with a clear timeline, budget, and coordination mechanism to protect grave sites, identify remains, and fulfil families' right to know.
- 11.5. Develop a coordination mechanism with the Syrian government, Syrian civil and humanitarian actors, and international bodies, for cooperation on enforced disappearance cases, especially in tracking and verifying the fate of the Lebanese disappeared in Syria.
- 11.6. Ensure that the investigation and documentation of disappeared persons' fate and hold perpetrators accountable in accordance with international standards.
- 11.7. Adopt a transitional justice and truth-telling policy framework, including a national Remembrance Day, public archives, and non-recurrence guarantees.
- 11.8. Ensure full cooperation with international mechanisms by providing timely and substantive responses to all communications from the UNWGEID.



C.

POLITICAL RIGHTS

SUBMITTED BY:

-CLDH
-TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL LEBANON
-LADE
-ALEF
-ALTERNATIVE PRESS SYNDICATE APS

a. Right to Access to Information

1. Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the press, implying a broader right to access information.
2. On February 10, 2017, the Right to Access to Information (RATI) Law No. 28 was adopted by the Lebanese Parliament. This legislative reform only saw light eight years after Lebanon's ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), as well as the submission of the initial draft law to Parliament in 2009. The RATI Law was the first comprehensive legal instrument that binds Lebanese administrations to proactively disclose specific information pertaining to their activities, as well as to respond to any request to access information from the public.
3. The enactment of the RATI Law reflects the Lebanese Government's commitment to upholding international human rights standards—particularly Article 19 of the UDHR and ICCPR, which affirm the right to seek, receive, and share information freely. Beyond legal compliance, the law serves as a cornerstone for building accountable and transparent institutions, aligning with SDG 16 on justice and good governance. It also paves the way for Lebanon's accession to the Open Government Partnership, restores public trust in state institutions, attracts investment, and fosters healthy competition among public and private entities bound by transparency obligations. One of the law's positive features is its inclusion of proactive disclosure obligations, which require public bodies to publish key categories of information without waiting for a request.
4. Initially, the law's implementation faced major obstacles, including legal ambiguities, the absence of an implementation decree, and the lack of an operational oversight body. The RATI Law was amended in July 2021, alongside the issuance of its Implementation Decree No. 6940/2020, making access to information faster, more inclusive, and less burdensome for citizens.
5. Despite the adoption of the RATI Law, its amendment, and the issuance of its implementation decree, compliance across public administrations remained inconsistent. While the law lays the foundation for transparency and accountability, without genuine commitment from public administrations, it risks remaining little more than ink on paper. To monitor this, TI-LB developed the Right to Access to Information Index, which evaluates and ranks public institutions based on their proactive disclosure behavior[1]. In June 2024, six key ministries were assessed across six criteria, including publication of information in accessible formats, proactive disclosure of key documents, ability to submit information requests electronically, and details about assigned information officers. Results revealed major gaps: the Ministry of Economy and Trade scored highest (58.33%), while the Ministry of Telecommunications scored zero, lacking even a functional website. The assessment highlights persistent shortcomings in transparency and uneven law implementation across public administrations.
6. On the ground, citizens who try to exercise their right to access information often encounter frustrating bureaucratic roadblocks. In many cases, public employees are simply unaware of the law's provisions, leading to unjustified rejections. Some departments refuse to issue a notification of receipt, an essential step that activates legal deadlines, effectively stalling the process. Others insist on in-person follow-ups, creating unnecessary burdens for the requester. In more troubling cases, administrations reject requests without explanation, refer citizens to higher authorities, or hide behind vague claims of confidentiality, all of which undermine the purpose of the RATI law.

7. The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) was established under Law No. 175/2020 to handle complaints of non-compliance, it only became operational in January 2022 with the appointment of its six members. Since becoming operational, the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) has taken concrete steps to enforce the RATI Law. In response to complaints submitted by TI-Lebanon, the NACC issued two decisions, on 6 March and 30 May 2024, requiring the Ministry of Public Works and CMA Beirut Terminal subsidiary of CMA CGM to disclose the contract for managing the Port of Beirut's container terminal. While the private company complied indirectly, the Ministry failed to respond despite being formally notified. This case underscores the continuing challenges of enforcement and highlights how transparency and accountability ultimately depend on the willingness of public administrations and companies managing public facilities to comply with oversight mechanisms and legal obligations.
8. In parallel, on July 13, 2020, the Ministerial Anti-Corruption Committee adopted the national plan to implement the RATI Law, which aims to address its weak enforcement. The plan consists of ten action points focused on developing effective, transparent, and accountable public institutions, with a two-year timeframe for full execution. However, five years have passed, and a substantial part of the plan has yet to be executed.
9. In April 2025, the Lebanese Parliament passed a law amending banking secrecy regulations. The reform allows key oversight bodies—such as the Central Bank, the Banking Control Commission, and independent auditors—to access banking data going back up to ten years. While this is a positive step toward enhancing transparency and accountability for politicians and public figures, its impact is limited by the 10-year timeframe.
10. **The right to access information in Lebanon continues to face numerous legal and practical obstacles, including:**
 - 10.1. *Lack of Deterrent Penalties for non-compliance with the decisions of the National Anti-Corruption Commission, rendering such decisions susceptible to disregard and stripping Law No. 28/2017 (as amended by Law No. 233/2021) of its enforceability.*
 - 10.2. *Broad Exceptions in Article 5 of Law No. 28/2017, which prevent the disclosure of certain information without clearly providing the opportunity to apply a “public interest test[2],” potentially conflicting with international standards.*
 - 10.3. *Inability to enforce the NACC's decisions through judicial means in cases of non-compliance, due to the absence of a clear legal provision allowing recourse to the State Council or other responsible entities to compel public administrations to implement these decisions.*
 - 10.4. *Challenges in Monitoring the Private Sector, even when it holds the requested information, as there is no legal and effective tool to compel its cooperation or enforce decisions against it.*
 - 10.5. *The proposed amendments aim to close these gaps and strengthen the right to access information by embedding the principles of transparency and accountability more firmly in Lebanon.*

➤ 11. Recommendations

We urge the Working Group and the members of the Human Rights Council to call upon the Lebanese government to:

- 11.1. Implement the Right to Access to Information Law effectively, appoint an information officer in every public administration to receive and process citizen requests, and adhere to their proactive disclosure obligation.
- 11.2. Amend both the Right to Access to Information Law (Law No. 28/2017) and the Law establishing the National Anti-Corruption Commission (Law No.175/2020), to introduce clear and binding penalties for non-compliance with the Commission's decisions, including the following recommendations:
- 11.3. Introduce appropriate accountability mechanisms, including the possibility of financial penalties, to encourage compliance by public administration officials.
- 11.4. Automatically dismiss officials from their positions if they persist in non-compliance after receiving a formal warning.
- 11.5. Introduce a "public interest test" into Article 5 of the Right to Access to Information Law, so that exemptions are not absolute, and any potential harm is weighed against the public benefit of disclosure.
- 11.6. Empower the National Anti-Corruption Commission to impose coercive penalties on private sector entities that refuse to provide requested information, based on the provisions of Article 569 of the Code of Civil Procedure to ensure the enforcement of the Commission's decisions.
- 11.7. In cases where the National Anti-Corruption Commission issues a decision in favor of an information requester and the concerned entity fails to comply, individuals and institutions shall be granted the right to appeal to the State Council to compel implementation, through the adoption of a fast-track judicial mechanism to ensure timely and effective redress.
- 11.8. Ensure that the Lebanese Official Gazette is made freely accessible to the public in line with international transparency standards. The Gazette should be searchable, readable, and downloadable online without charge, presented in a user-friendly format to enable all citizens, including those with limited financial means or digital literacy, to stay informed about laws, decrees, and public decisions.
- 11.9. Establish a centralized national online platform to publish all public information and documents — including budgets, government contracts, oversight reports, laws, and decrees — ensuring it is freely accessible and user-friendly for the general public.
- 11.10. Conduct a nationwide awareness campaign targeting both public servants and the general public, and mandate training for designated information officers in public administrations on processing information requests and distinguishing between public and protected information.
- 11.11. Create specialized units within each ministry to oversee the implementation of the Right to Access to Information Law, and require them to submit annual compliance reports to the Cabinet, Parliament, and the general public, detailing challenges, number of requests received and responded to, and measures taken to improve transparency.
- 11.12. Develop national performance indicators and regular assessment standards to evaluate the level of compliance of public administrations with the law, and ensure these are established and monitored in cooperation with civil society organizations to strengthen transparency and public accountability.

b. Right to Free Vote and Democratic Election

1. The right to free vote and democratic elections in Lebanon continues to face serious challenges, as recurring violations, weak oversight, and the absence of meaningful reform continue to undermine the integrity of the electoral process. Despite holding elections, the process itself remains fraught with systemic flaws that prevent it from meeting international democratic standards.
2. The 2022 Lebanese parliamentary elections were a stark example of these issues. Numerous dysfunctional aspects of Electoral Law No. 44/2017 remained unaddressed, including the unequal distribution of electoral constituencies, the lack of regulation around blank ballots, unreasonably high campaign spending ceilings, the absence of a women's quota, and opaque vote-counting procedures. The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) observers documented hundreds of violations both during the campaign period and on election day, ranging from vote buying and media bias to violations of electoral silence and the misuse of public resources.
3. Additionally, the results of the 2022 Parliamentary Elections Observatory Report identifies a representative survey of women candidates among which 51 % experienced a form of violence or intimidation during their campaign. These violations highlight concerns regarding the democratic nature of these elections and their alignment with international standards.
4. From 2021 to 2025, these concerns persisted and were further amplified by the repeated postponement of municipal elections, originally scheduled for 2023 and eventually rescheduled for May 2025. This delay deprived citizens of basic political representation at the local level and raised concerns about the extent to which democratic obligations are being prioritized over political considerations. While the election of a president in early 2025 ended a prolonged institutional vacuum and offered a window for political reactivation, it did not lead to any significant progress on electoral reform.
5. During this period, LADE continued to play a central role in monitoring the electoral environment, advocating for reform, and raising awareness about the importance of electoral integrity. Civil society organizations emphasized that holding elections on time is only one part of the democratic equation; equally important are fairness, transparency, and inclusion. As the country prepares for municipal elections in May 2025, the government faces increased pressure to ensure these elections meet democratic standards and are free of the violations observed in previous cycles.

6. The ongoing attacks in Southern Lebanon have created an unsafe environment, making it difficult for some citizens to vote. The looming threat of Israeli airstrikes led to lower voter turnouts in every district for the 2025 municipal elections. The Ministry of Interior noted drops in voter turnout by as much as 15.67% in Bint Jbeil and 12.54% in Marjayoun. In Akkar, Northern Lebanon, a man allegedly stole a ballot box, an incident that was formally denied by the Minister of Interior and Municipalities. Numerous indicators pointed to an unsafe election environment in this region, including an incident in which a physical altercation between a citizen and a soldier resulted in the citizen's stabbing. A total of 405 complaints were filed regarding the municipal elections in the country, with 43% originating in Akkar alone. While celebratory gunfire is a widespread tradition in Lebanon, it poses serious risks; in Ain al-Dehab, a fatality was reported following gunfire that erupted after the announcement of the election victors. In response to such incidents, on May 15, 2025, Parliament approved an urgent amendment to Law No. 71, doubling the penalties for firing gunshots into the air.
7. Women's representation in local government saw a notable increase during the 2025 municipal elections, with women elected to 10.37% of positions - up from 5.4% in the 2016 cycle. While this marks a positive step toward gender parity, significant gaps remain, particularly regarding the ongoing debate over instituting a quota for women in elected office.

8. Recommendations

Reforms are crucial not only for restoring public trust, but also for laying the groundwork for democratic elections in the future. Moving forward, we reiterate the urgent need for:

- 8.1. Adopt a Comprehensive electoral reform, especially with parliamentary elections on the horizon.
- 8.2. Revise the electoral law to ensure equitable representation and district drawing, enforcing realistic and enforceable campaign spending limits.
- 8.3. Introduce mechanisms to increase women's political participation
- 8.4. Improve the transparency and efficiency of the vote-counting process.
- 8.5. Establish an independent and permanent electoral management body with full administrative and financial autonomy to oversee all stages of the electoral process, from planning to implementation.
- 8.6. Introduce clear legal definitions and enforceable penalties for electoral offenses to ensure accountability and deter violations.
- 8.7. Guarantee equal access to media and impartial coverage for all candidates and political lists, and establish a media monitoring unit during elections to detect violations and impose sanctions as appropriate.
- 8.8. Adopt a mandatory quota of at least 30% for women and 10% for youth in both parliamentary and municipal elections to promote gender equality and enhance the political participation of women and youth.
- 8.9. Ensure full accessibility for persons with disabilities during the electoral process by adapting polling stations and training election staff on inclusive and non-discriminatory practices.
- 8.10. Promote diaspora voting rights by facilitating remote voting mechanisms for Lebanese citizens abroad while safeguarding the integrity and transparency of the process.
- 8.11. Ensure the timely and transparent publication of election results and related data — including turnout rates, vote counts by polling station, and details of appeals or cancellations — on an official, accessible, and user-friendly online platform.
- 8.12. Develop and implement crisis contingency plans to guarantee voter access and safety in border or conflict-affected areas, including through mobile voting stations, enhanced security coordination, or alternative voting arrangements.

c. Freedom of Opinion and Expression

1. Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution guarantees: "The freedom to express one's opinion orally 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". Still, the limits of the law remain wide, and the Lebanese State sometimes uses broad defamation laws to criminalize free speech and expression.
2. From 2020 to 2024, Lebanon experienced a rapid decline in freedom of expression and press. Repressive measures, once considered exceptions, gradually became the norm in the government's approach to dealing with the media and civil society. Moreover, media and artistic materials continue to be censored arbitrarily under the pretext of threatening national security or inciting sectarian strife.
3. The year 2020 marked a pivotal turning point in this trajectory. In the aftermath of the October 17, 2019, uprising and the Beirut port explosion on August 4, 2020, authorities chose to escalate security measures and media repression rather than addressing citizens' demands. This shift led to the establishment of a police state mentality, where security and military forces were mobilized to suppress protests. Journalists and photographers faced physical assaults, their equipment was destroyed and they were targeted with rubber bullets and tear gas.
4. Simultaneously, dozens of journalists and activists were summoned for social media posts, using vague legal provisions related to slander and defamation. These summonses were often accompanied by pressure to delete content or sign pledges. During this period, cultural workers were summoned before the military court.
5. Lebanese authorities reinstated a practice from the Syrian occupation era, requiring journalists to obtain prior authorization from the military's Directorate of Guidance before conducting street interviews.
6. In 2020, Lebanon refused to sign the final statement of the second World Press Freedom Conference, citing objections to provisions supporting LGBTQ+ rights. This refusal signaled an official, hostile stance towards individual rights.
7. By 2021, the situation further deteriorated, marked by the assassination of political activist and writer Lokman Slim, who had previously been the target of smear and incitement campaigns. This year also witnessed the militarization of public discourse due to significant incidents such as the Tayouneh clashes, along with an escalating hostile rhetoric against Judge Tarek Bitar, who was leading the investigation into the port explosion.
8. In 2022, Lebanon saw a decline in its ranking on the Press Freedom Index issued by Reporters Without Borders. Attacks and threats against journalists increased, particularly from ideologically driven "electronic armies." Artists also faced bans on their works. Media institutions were increasingly impacted by the ongoing economic crisis, struggling to pay salaries, provide health coverage, or maintain employee insurance. Some institutions were forced to lay off staff, while others closed their doors entirely.
9. By 2023, authoritarian practices deepened. Journalists faced prison sentences and the loss of civil rights, while legal procedures were applied outside the legal framework against journalists and activists. Insulting public authorities carries a sentence of up to 1 year imprisonment; insulting the President carries a sentence of up to 2-years

imprisonment; and insulting religious rituals and the Military carries a sentence of up to 3 years imprisonment. Articles 582 and 584 of the Criminal Code lay down the general charge for libel of private citizens. This carries up to a 3-month prison sentence or a 50,000 LL to 400,000 LL fine.

10. There was also the deliberate targeting of journalists by Israel in the south, constituting a war crime that resulted in the killing of photographers Issam Abdallah and Rabih Maamari, and reporter Farah Omar, with no accountability until today. Seven other journalists were also injured.
11. The Lebanese state has failed to adequately protect journalists and to fulfill its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. Although the Lebanese government initially adopted a decision to grant the International Criminal Court (ICC) jurisdiction to investigate alleged war crimes committed by Israeli forces, this measure was subsequently undermined and the required steps to formally accept the ICC's jurisdiction over crimes committed in Lebanon were not taken. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reportedly declined to formally notify the ICC of the decision, and failed to file the required declaration with the court. Within a month, the government reversed its position. This reversal has significantly weakened prospects for international accountability for war crimes committed in Lebanon and has denied victims a credible path to justice.
12. Beirut Pride and similar initiatives have been shut down repeatedly. In 2023 and 2024, public events and discussions have been canceled or banned, often justified as preserving "public morality." These restrictions were essentially the result of social pressure led by violent hate groups supported by religious entities, who incited public outrage and targeted LGBTIQ+ initiatives through coordinated campaigns of intimidation and misinformation. A harsh crackdown on the LGBTQ+ community took place, with the Bar Association intervening to suppress lawyers' free speech.
13. Lebanon's media are still mainly legislated through the 1962 Press and Publication Law and the 1994 Audiovisual Law, which are outdated and lack amendments regarding the digital revolution. Although Parliament has been discussing changes to the media laws for years, the law has yet to pass. However, one of the draft law's weaknesses is that it fails to protect citizens from defamation charges since only journalists are protected from arrest on defamation or libel grounds.
14. Since 2020, numerous journalists in Lebanon have been subjected to arbitrary and retaliatory dismissals by media institutions, often without the provision of legally mandated compensation. These dismissals have been justified on economic grounds or as responses to journalists' political opinions and union activities. For example, the Lebanese TV station MTV terminated the employment of Elsy Moufarrej, the Alternative Press Syndicate, allegedly due to her labor organizing efforts. Similarly, the BBC reportedly dismissed journalist Nada Abdel Samad following her public stance on the war in Gaza and her expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people.
15. This situation is exacerbated by systemic dysfunction within Lebanon's labor judiciary. Many journalists have refrained from filing complaints before the labor courts due to the courts' prolonged ineffectiveness since 2023. Others who have pursued legal recourse have seen no resolution, primarily because the government has failed to appoint its representatives to the tripartite labor courts, rendering these bodies inoperative and denying complainants access to justice.

16. Censorship of musical, cultural, and media public broadcasts continues to exist in Lebanon and is subject to the Law of November 17, 1947. This allows censorship for the following reasons: maintenance of public order, respect for public morals, prevention of sectarian incitement, and insulting public authorities. The Directorate General of General Security (DGGs) exercises the function of applying the law, but does so loosely, using a high degree of discretion. Even though the Ministry of Culture sometimes interferes in allowing the broadcast of specific works, there are widespread complaints about the excessive influence of religious authorities and fundamentalists on the DGGs's decisions regarding the evaluation of cultural works.
17. In 2024, there was a continuation of violent targeting of journalists, particularly in the south. Israeli airstrikes targeted gatherings of journalists, despite their clear identification. The most violent attack occurred when several journalists were targeted while sleeping in Hasbaya. Legal provisions were increasingly used to criminalize opinions expressed on social media. Independent media institutions faced political and financial pressures, while journalists were subjected to both digital and physical threats.

➤ 18. Recommendations

- 18.1. Amend or repeal laws criminalizing insult, slander, and defamation, particularly where it is being used to prosecute activists, journalists, and critics of the government. The laws should be reformed to ensure they are not used to silence dissent or stifle free speech.
- 18.2. Implement stronger protections for journalists, including clear legal provisions to safeguard them from harassment, intimidation, or arbitrary detention. Ensure that those who threaten or attack journalists are held accountable.
- 18.3. Ensure that a law proposal on the Military Court is enacted, suspending its use for trying civilians, particularly in cases related to expression or peaceful protest, and transferring all such cases to civilian courts.
- 18.4. Abolish the practice of prior censorship on cultural works and transfer the licensing authority from the General Security to a specialized committee within the Ministry of Culture.
- 18.5. Reform the National Media Council through transparent elections and appointments of qualified independent members.
- 18.6. Strengthen judicial independence as a fundamental guarantee for the protection of public freedoms.
- 18.7. Abolish provisions criminalizing attacks on the prestige of public institutions and affirm the right of citizens and journalists to critique state performance.
- 18.8. Modernize Lebanon's media legislation by replacing the outdated 1962 Press Law and 1994 Audiovisual Law with comprehensive, rights-based laws that guarantee press freedom and align with international human rights standards and the digital era.
- 18.9. Establish an independent media regulatory body, free from political and sectarian influence, to oversee broadcast and online media, ensure diversity, guarantee fair licensing, and monitor violations.
- 18.10. Ensure transparency and accountability in content regulation by defining clear criteria, guaranteeing the right to appeal censorship or bans of cultural, media, and artistic content, and involving civil society and cultural actors in the process.
- 18.11. Combat hate speech and online harassment by adopting legal measures that clearly distinguish between protected expression and incitement to violence.
- 18.12. Provide emergency protections for journalists operating in conflict zones by offering safety training, supplying protective equipment, and coordinating with international bodies to ensure accountability for attacks against media workers, including recent killings in southern Lebanon.

- 18.13. Endorse international human rights instruments, such as the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, and fully implement Human Rights Council recommendations related to freedom of expression.
- 18.14. Formally recognize and implement protection protocols for journalists, aligned with international standards such as those developed by UNESCO and the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.
- 18.15. Establish a national independent investigative body to document and pursue accountability for attacks against media personnel.
- 18.16. Cooperate with international human rights mechanisms, including Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Expression and Extrajudicial Killings, and call for independent fact-finding missions.
- 18.17. International condemnation including by The Human Rights Council and seek international accountability for Israel's violations of international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to attacks on journalists.
- 18.18. Ensure the protection of journalists from arbitrary dismissal, particularly in relation to their freedom of expression or union activities, and take immediate measures to restore the effective functioning of labor courts by appointing all necessary judicial and governmental representatives, thereby guaranteeing timely and fair access to legal remedies for labor rights violations.

d. Freedom of Association

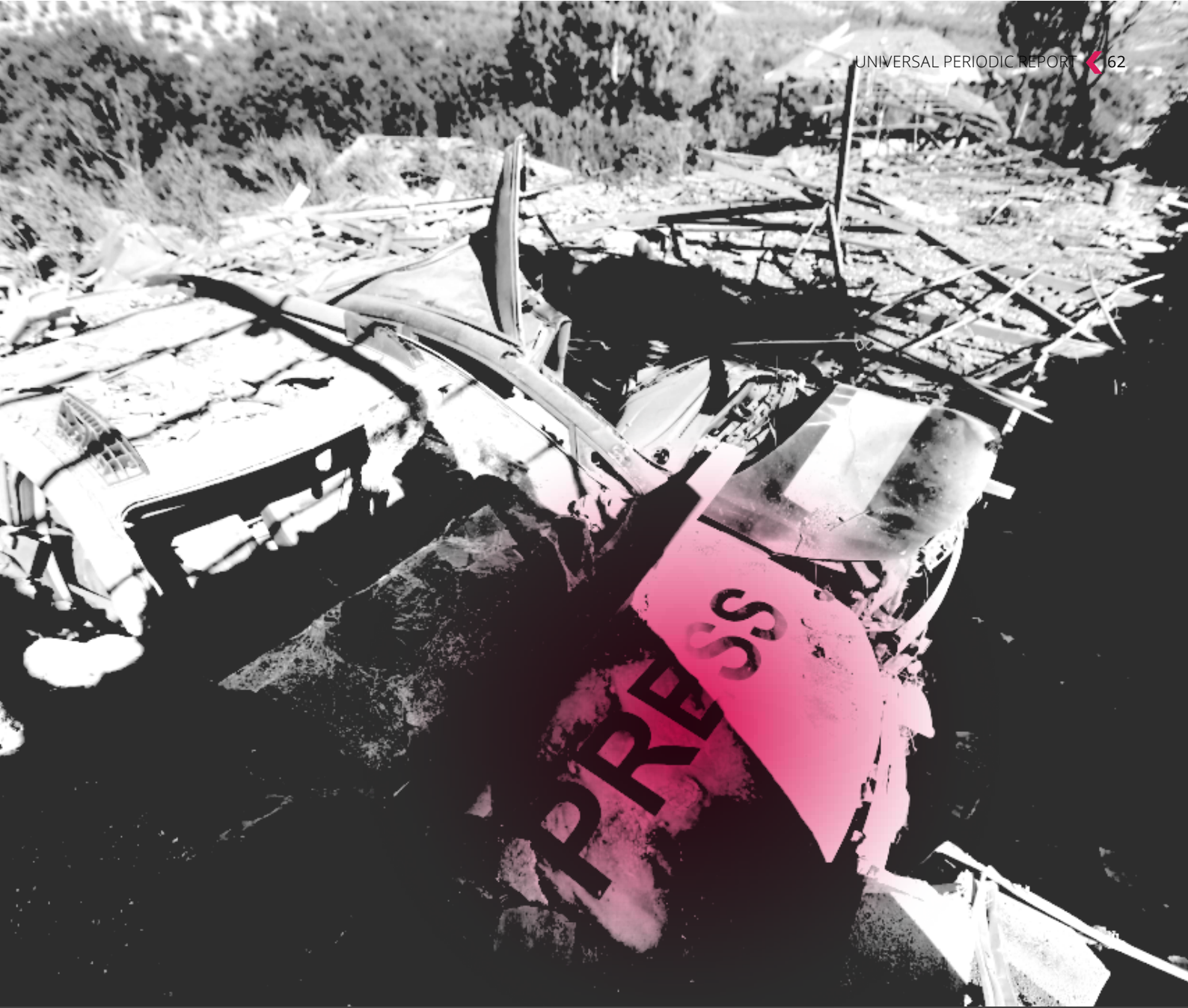
1. While Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution guarantees the freedom of association, Lebanese law bans undeclared associations and gives power to the government to reject new associations and dissolve former ones. In addition to that, Lebanese legislation includes repressive requirements for various kinds of associations formed, such as syndicates of employees and employers.
2. 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 Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (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.
3. Over the last 5 years, civic space for civil society continued to shrink, as authorities and security agencies cracked down against NGOs, especially those among them providing services to Syrian refugees. NGOs were repeatedly asked to submit lists with personnel details to be allowed into refugee camps. Authorities have also issued ad-hoc decisions demanding NGOs send their internal data, including personal information of beneficiaries, etc.
4. In relation to freedom of 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.”
5. Law enforcement officials, and even non-state actors, have used unauthorized and disproportionate force against protesters during demonstrations in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2025. In 2022 and 2023, crackdown on LGBTQIA+ assemblies significantly increased, with the MoIM issuing a ban on related events and assemblies, and non-state actors assaulting LGBTQIA+ marches and events.
6. 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 Ministry of Labor (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.
7. The latest media draft law, formulated by the Lebanese Parliament’s Administration and Justice Committee, mandates the existence of only one media syndicate, constraining the rights of journalists and media workers to freely join and establish associations.

8. In 2025, the right to unionize was put under significant strain when a journalist was dismissed from a major media outlet following their involvement in union activities. The dismissal came after the union publicly criticized the outlet's legal actions against members of the press. The journalist's refusal to withdraw from the union reportedly led to their termination.
9. Public sector employees are restricted from forming unions as per the 1959 Public Sector Staff Regulation (PSSR) and are excluded from provisions of the general labor law. Article 15 of the PSSR states that government employees can neither go on strike nor organize, join, or form unions or professional organizations. Article 65 of the decree also states that all employees taking part in a work strike must resign beforehand.
10. The MoL still does not recognize the workers' union formed by migrant workers in Lebanon, due to limitations imposed by the Lebanese Labor law and its denial of foreigners the right to elect or be elected as union representatives.

➤ 11. Recommendations

- 11.1. Repeal ad hoc directives requiring NGO s to submit personal beneficiary data or internal personnel records.
- 11.2. Prioritize enabling assemblies to proceed safely by taking preventive protection measures and deploying security to safeguard demonstrators.
- 11.3. Ensure that any restrictions on peaceful assemblies—particularly bans based on national security, morality, or public order—are duly justified, highlighting the GoL's inability to protect protesters, with evidence of a concrete threat proportionate to the risk identified, in line with international human rights standards.
- 11.4. Increase public awareness of judicial avenues and clear, accessible procedures for citizens to challenge assembly bans.
- 11.5. Establish a new legal framework for the use of force by all security agencies in the country, in compliance with international standards.
- 11.6. Immediately cease all bans and restrictions on peaceful LGBTQIA+ assemblies and investigate incidents of violence by both state and non-state actors against LGBTQIA+ persons and events—with a public report published.
- 11.7. Train all law enforcement officials (ISF and Army) on international standards related to the use of force, freedom of assembly, and expression, and establish an independent mechanism for complaints related to protest-related abuses.
- 11.8. Revise the Lebanese Labor Law to eliminate the requirement for prior Ministry of Labor approval to form trade unions and remove nationality-based restrictions to allow foreign residents to form or join unions, ensuring legal recognition of the migrant domestic workers' union.
- 11.9. Amend the 1959 Public Sector Staff Regulation to explicitly recognize public employees' rights to form unions and participate in collective action without fear of dismissal.
- 11.10. Revise the draft media law to remove the provision restricting journalists and media workers to a single syndicate and instead allow pluralistic representation through multiple independent associations.
- 11.11. Establish an independent and transparent mechanism to oversee the registration and monitoring of NGOs, limiting the unrestricted power of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, and ensuring timely and non-arbitrary processing of association notifications.
- 11.12. Guarantee the legal right for all civil society organizations to operate freely without fear of administrative harassment or politically motivated suspensions.
- 11.13. Develop and implement a comprehensive reform of the Public Assemblies Law, replacing the outdated 1911 legislation with a modern framework aligned with international standards that guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, limits grounds for banning assemblies, and ensures procedural fairness.

- 11.14. Promote protections for marginalized groups, including LGBT persons, to safely exercise their rights to assembly and association, free from discrimination, intimidation, or violence.
- 11.15. Remove all legal and administrative barriers to the formation and operation of trade unions, ensuring the full inclusion of foreign workers and migrant domestic workers in union activities.
- 11.16. Guarantee job protection and non-retaliation policies for workers and journalists engaged in union activities.
- 11.17. Ensure transparency and democratic representation within all professional syndicates and unions by promoting independent election processes.
- 11.18. Launch public awareness campaigns and capacity-building programs to educate citizens, civil society, and law enforcement officials on the rights fundamental freedoms and values.



D.

**FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION;
FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL
ASSEMBLY; INCLUDING VIOLATIONS AGAINST
JOURNALISTS BY ISRAELI FORCES.**

SUBMITTED BY:

-THE UNION OF JOURNALISTS IN LEBANON FORMERLY ALTERNATIVE PRESS SYNDICAT

I. Executive Summary

1. This submission draws urgent attention to serious and ongoing violations of the fundamental rights to freedom of opinion and expression, including the unlawful summoning and intimidation of journalists by security agencies. It further highlights violations of the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and the establishment of organizations and syndicates without prior authorization or undue interference by state authorities. Additionally, a detailed explanation is provided regarding the draft Media Law, including its positive aspects and shortcomings.
2. The submission also documents a concerning pattern of deliberate attacks by Israel against media professionals during the 2023–2024 escalation in southern Lebanon, accompanied by a pervasive climate of impunity due to inadequate investigation and accountability measures by the state.

II. Freedom of Opinion and Expression

a. Targeting and Killing of Journalists by Israel

3. On 13 October 2023, Israeli forces launched a strike on a group of clearly identifiable journalists in Alma Al Shaab, southern Lebanon, resulting in the killing of photojournalist Issam Abdallah and the injury of Carmen Joukhadar, Elie Brakhya, Christina Assi, Dylan Collins, Maher Nazih, and Thaer Al-Sudani. The group was wearing protective gear clearly marked “PRESS,” and multiple credible investigations by international human rights organizations and the media including, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Reuters, Agence France-Presse (AFP) and UNIFIL strongly suggest that the missile strikes were premeditated and may constitute a war crime.
4. On 21 November 2023, journalists Farah Omar, Rabih Maamari, and Hussein Aqil from Al Mayadeen TV were killed by an Israeli strike in Tayr Harfa, southern Lebanon.
5. On 14 September 2024, journalist Amal Khalil received direct threats from Israeli forces via SMS, warning her to cease reporting on Israeli military activities. The message included graphic threats of beheading and home destruction.
6. On 25 October 2024, three media workers — Wissam Qassem (Al-Manar TV), Ghassan Najjar, and Mohammad Reda (Al Mayadeen)—were killed in a targeted Israeli strike on a well-known journalists’ residence in Hasbaya. Vehicles at the scene were visibly marked as media-affiliated. The strike appears to have been calculated, further illustrating a pattern of intentional targeting.
7. During the hostilities that took place between October and November 2023, several incidents of targeting journalists occurred while they were performing their professional duties. These incidents took place in the towns of Marwahin, Houla, Tair, Harfa, Yaroun, and Khiam, resulting in injuries to some journalists and damage to vehicles.
8. Between September and October 2024, six journalists were killed as a result of separate Israeli military attacks.

b. State Response and Accountability Gaps

9. The Lebanese state has failed to adequately protect journalists and to fulfill its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. Although the Lebanese government initially adopted a decision to grant the International Criminal Court (ICC) jurisdiction to investigate alleged war crimes committed by Israeli forces, this measure was subsequently undermined and the required steps to formally accept the ICC's jurisdiction over crimes committed in Lebanon were not taken. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reportedly declined to formally notify the ICC of the decision, and failed to file the required declaration with the court. Within a month, the government reversed its position. This reversal has significantly weakened prospects for international accountability for war crimes committed in Lebanon and has denied victims a credible path to justice.
10. In the absence of effective state mechanisms, civil society actors—particularly the Alternative Press Syndicate/The Union of Journalists in Lebanon with other partners—have taken the lead in documenting violations and advocating for justice. However, without formal state support, these efforts remain limited in their capacity to secure reparations or prosecutions.

c. Continued Violations Against Journalists and Suppression of Freedom of Expression in Lebanon

11. Assassination of Lokman Slim.

11.1. On 4 February 2021, journalist and political activist Lokman Slim was assassinated in the town of Addousiyeh, Southern Lebanon. To date, no individuals have been arrested or held accountable for his killing.

12. Systematic Summoning and Coercion of Journalists

12.1. There has been a consistent pattern of violations against journalists in Lebanon, manifested through systematic and arbitrary summons by security agencies, which constitute a serious infringement on the right to freedom of expression.

12.2. Public prosecutors have increasingly bypassed the procedural protections afforded to journalists under the Lebanese Press Law by referring complaints to the Cybercrime Bureau and other security agencies, including the General Directorate of State Security.

12.3. These referrals have resulted in interrogations, illegal detentions, and coercive practices such as pressuring journalists and activists to delete content and sign pledges not to publish similar materials. Such practices constitute an unlawful restriction on press freedom and violate the prohibition on arbitrary detention under international law.

12.4. Notably, the Press Law guarantees journalists immunity from pretrial detention—a safeguard that is being routinely undermined. The widespread nature of these violations has affected a large number of journalists and activists.

12.5. This includes unlawful summons, such as Judge Ghassan Oweidat's accusation against journalist Jean Kassir and referral of his case to the State Security apparatus for investigation—contrary to the law—aimed at intimidation, given this agency's notorious record of human rights abuses. Similarly, journalist Lara Bitar was summoned by the Cybercrime and Intellectual Property Protection Office following a complaint over an article published by Masdar General website.

13. Assaults on Journalists During the 2023–2024 Conflict

13.1. During the most recent Israeli aggression against Lebanon, several journalists were subjected to physical and verbal attacks due to their reporting on the conflict. Journalist Daoud Rammal was assaulted, reportedly by partisan actors, because of their public stances on the war. Journalist Badia Fahs was the target of a defamatory campaign, accused of treason and labeled a "collaborator" in retaliation for her critical opinions regarding the war. To date, no individuals have been held accountable, reflecting a climate of impunity.

14. Arbitrary Confiscation and Interrogation

14.1. On October 19, 2024, journalist Alya Mansour was subjected to a warrantless confiscation of her personal phone and computer and was forcibly taken to the State Security's Monitoring Office. She was interrogated for several hours under false accusations of collaboration with Israel, based on tweets disseminated from a forged account on platform X, which falsely attributed statements to her.

14.2. On May 30, 2025, journalist Wissam Saade faced similar treatment. His phone and computer were seized, and he was interrogated in the General Security Agency under allegations of unlawful communication with Israel. He was released later the same day without charge.

14.3. Numerous journalists have been subjected to interrogation during the conflict solely for carrying out their professional duties, including investigative reporting related to exposing corruption, and the violation of the right to privacy and protection of personal information, raising serious concerns about restrictions on freedom of expression and press freedom. Notable cases include Firas Hatoum, Nancy Sabeh, and Mounir Younis.

14.4. These acts violate not only domestic legal standards concerning search and seizure but also contravene international norms regarding due process and the protection of journalistic sources.

15. Targeting of Critical Media and Retaliation Against Investigative Journalism

15.1. During this same period, a Lebanese television station launched a targeted smear campaign against independent media outlets, including Daraj, Megaphone, and the Alternative Press Syndicate. These campaigns were aimed at discrediting journalists and media organizations that had exposed corruption, particularly within the Lebanese banking sector. The nature of these attacks suggests a coordinated effort to undermine investigative journalism and silence dissenting voices, in violation of both Lebanon's constitutional guarantees and its international obligations.

16. Unfair dismissal of journalist

16.1. Since 2020, numerous journalists in Lebanon have been subjected to arbitrary and retaliatory dismissals by media institutions, often without the provision of legally mandated compensation. These dismissals have been justified on economic grounds or as responses to journalists' political opinions and union activities. For example, the Lebanese TV station MTV terminated the employment of Elsy Moufarrej, the Alternative Press Syndicate, allegedly due to her labor organizing efforts. Similarly, the BBC reportedly dismissed journalist Nada Abdel Samad following her public stance on the war in Gaza and her expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

16.2. This situation is exacerbated by systemic dysfunction within Lebanon's labor

judiciary. Many journalists have refrained from filing complaints before the labor courts due to the courts' prolonged ineffectiveness since 2023. Others who have pursued legal recourse have seen no resolution, primarily because the government has failed to appoint its representatives to the tripartite labor courts, rendering these bodies inoperative and denying complainants access to justice.

16.3. These actions constitute undue restrictions on journalists and contribute to a climate of fear and self-censorship, as media professionals are made to feel constantly surveilled and intimidated by their employers.

d. Restriction of Freedom of Expression Among Judges

17. In the context of increasing restrictions on freedom of expression, a circular was issued in May 2023, by the Minister of Justice, Henry Khoury, prohibiting judges from making public appearances or expressing any opinions on media platforms—whether traditional, electronic, or otherwise—without prior authorization from the competent authority.

18. Additionally, a separate circular forbids judges from traveling, communicating with any association, or participating in conferences either inside or outside Lebanon without prior approval.

19. These measures constitute an undue limitation on the independence and freedom of expression of members of the judiciary. They reflect attempts to impose excessive restraint and to undermine the gains previously achieved by the Judges' Association in defending judicial autonomy and free speech rights.

e. Restrictions on Freedom of Expression for Lawyers

20. In 2023, the Beirut Bar Association adopted amendments to its Code of Legal Ethics that amount to a violation of international human rights standards—particularly with respect to freedom of expression. These amendments significantly restrict lawyers' ability to express themselves, including on social media platforms, thereby undermining the role of legal professionals who engage in anti-corruption efforts and human rights advocacy.

f. Legislative Reform on Media Freedom

21. The initial draft of a new media law was introduced in Lebanon in 2010. Since then, the draft has undergone prolonged deliberations within the Lebanese Parliament. The original text was amended by the Parliamentary Committee on Telecommunications and subsequently by the Committee on Administration and Justice, which reinstated provisions that criminalize freedom of opinion and expression.

22. Following persistent objections from civil society organizations and an intervention by UNESCO, the Ministry of Information, through an expert appointed by UNESCO, prepared a revised draft. Nonetheless, while this version represents some improvement, it does not fully meet our expectations. Consequently, the Committee on Administration and Justice established a subcommittee to thoroughly review and revise the draft law.

23. A notable positive development in this legislative process has been the inclusion of civil

society actors, including the Alternative Press Syndicate, which actively participated in the subcommittee's meetings.

24. On 27 May 2025, the subcommittee finalized its revised draft and submitted it to the Committee on Administration and Justice. This latest draft reflects significant improvements compared to prior versions. It removes provisions that criminalize freedom of expression—such as those relating to defamation, libel, and insult—and abolishes the Print Publications Court, which functioned as a criminal tribunal, replacing it with civil courts. Additionally, it criminalizes hate speech in line with the Rabat Plan of Action and introduces protections for journalists and their sources.

25. The law facilitates the establishment of media outlets, particularly electronic platforms, by requiring notification and declaration rather than prior licensing. Such notifications are submitted to a national media authority, which is independently appointed through a collaborative process involving multiple bodies and organizations in partnership with the government.

26. Despite these positive reforms, the draft law maintains the Lebanese Press Union, an entity which grants disproportionate control to media owners over journalists. This control is exerted through compulsory syndicate membership, the disciplinary council, and restrictions on the right to establish independent journalist unions.

III. Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly

27. The right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly continues to face persistent and systemic violations in Lebanon. Journalists, in particular, are frequently subjected to violence and intimidation while covering public events and demonstrations. These violations manifest in various forms, including the confiscation and destruction of equipment, the use of physical and verbal abuse, and the obstruction of their ability to document public gatherings. Such acts are in clear contravention of international human rights standards that protect freedom of expression, access to information, and the right to peaceful assembly.

28. These violations are often perpetrated by non-state actors or de facto authorities exercising control over specific areas. In some cases, however, abuses are committed by official security forces. Numerous reports submitted to the Human Rights Council have documented these incidents. Of particular concern is the attack against human rights defenders—most of whom were women—during the "March for Freedoms" held in central Beirut on 30 September 2023. Participants were subjected to violence and intimidation in the presence of state security forces, who failed to intervene or offer protection for several hours.

29. Furthermore, the legal framework governing the establishment of associations and trade unions imposes undue restrictions that undermine the right to freedom of association. While the 1909 Law on Associations formally requires only a notification procedure (declaration), in practice, this has been transformed into a de facto licensing system controlled by the Ministry of Interior. Founding an association often entails long delays and is subject to arbitrary administrative discretion. Similarly, the formation of trade unions requires prior approval from the Minister of Labor, a process that is likewise lengthy, burdensome, and vulnerable to political interference.

➤ IV. Recommendations

30. Reinstate and expand Lebanon's referral to the ICC to include full jurisdiction over Rome status crimes committed on its territory.
31. Formally recognize and implement protection protocols for journalists, aligned with international standards such as those developed by UNESCO and the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.
32. Establish a national independent investigative body to document and pursue accountability for attacks against media personnel.
33. Cooperate with international human rights mechanisms, including Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Expression and Extrajudicial Killings, and call for independent fact-finding missions.
34. International condemnation including by The Human Rights Council and seek international accountability for Israel's violations of international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to attacks on journalists.
35. Immediate Cessation of Arbitrary Summons and Interrogations: Authorities must cease the unlawful referral of journalists to security agencies outside the framework of the Press Law.
36. Enforcement of Legal Protections for Journalists: The Press Law's prohibition on pretrial detention must be upheld without exception.
37. Labor Courts: Ensure the protection of journalists from arbitrary dismissal, particularly in relation to their freedom of expression or union activities, and take immediate measures to restore the effective functioning of labor courts by appointing all necessary judicial and governmental representatives, thereby guaranteeing timely and fair access to legal remedies for labor rights violations.
38. Accountability for Attacks on Journalists: Investigations must be initiated into all assaults and threats made against journalists, with perpetrators held accountable.
39. Protection Against Retaliation: The state must ensure that media organizations can operate freely without retaliation, intimidation, or defamatory campaigns, in line with Lebanon's obligations under international human rights law.
40. Media Law: The Lebanese authorities must ensure that the Parliament adopts the new law with necessary amendments to abolish the Lebanese Press Union and guarantee the unfettered right to form independent journalist syndicates and associations, thereby fully aligning with international human rights standards on freedom of expression and association.
41. Guarantee the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly by amending the labor law and removing administrative barriers and arbitrary delays from the establishment of associations and trade unions.



E.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE & RELIGION

LIST OF MEMBERS:

- ACTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATES
- DYAN FOUNDATION
- ALEF - ACT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
- DANMISSION
- DIALOGUE FOR LIFE & RECONCILIATION ORGANISATION (DLR)
- FORUM FOR DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE & DIALOGUE (FDCD)
- INTERNEWS
- KULLUNA IRADA
- LEBANESE FOUNDATION FOR PERMANENT CIVIL PEACE (LFPCP)
- PEACE OF ART
- PERMANENT PEACE MOVEMENT (PPM)
- SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION (SKF)
- SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND (SEARCH)
- DR. CLAUDE SAMAHA
- DR. ELIE EL HINDY
- DR. MARIE KORTAM
- ME. FADI HACHEM
- MS. NOUR SAFIEDDINE

a. Executive Summary

1. Lebanon is home to a diversity of religious communities, enshrined in its political and legal systems through the formal recognition of 18 religious groups. Article 9 of its Constitution guarantees and protects freedom of religion and belief. However, religious freedom remains challenged by Lebanon's complex sectarian structure, lack of recognition for certain religious groups, and inconsistent protection of rights for all individuals. Indeed, the government continues to prioritize recognized religious groups and limits rights for those belonging to unrecognized religious groups, the non-religious, and those seeking to convert or renounce religion. Women, refugees, migrants, and children suffer disproportionately under a fragmented and sectarian legal system.
2. This submission, developed by the National Working Group on Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB), provides a comprehensive overview of key challenges in Lebanon and proposes forward-looking recommendations aligned with Lebanon's obligations under international human rights law.⁹¹

b. Legal Framework

1. Article 9 of the Lebanese Constitution states that "[t]here shall be absolute freedom of conscience. The state, in rendering homage to God Almighty, shall respect all religions and creeds and shall guarantee under its protection the free exercise of all religious rites provided that public order is not disturbed."⁹²
2. Lebanon recognizes 18 religious groups (5 Muslim, 12 Christian, and Jewish communities), each empowered to administer personal status laws concerning marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance⁹³, in accordance with Legislative Decree No. 60 L.R./1936. This decree formally regulates the legal status of recognized sects, granting them the right to establish their own religious courts and manage internal affairs. However, it excludes unrecognized groups from similar legal standing, contributing to a fragmented and unequal legal framework for religious freedom.
3. The state has failed to formally recognize religious groups such as Baha'is, Jehovah's Witnesses, Ahmadis, Hindus, Buddhists, Mormons, and others. These unrecognized groups face legal discrimination and lack the right to establish religious courts or administer their personal status laws, creating barriers to marriage, inheritance, and political participation. They face systematic discrimination in accessing civil status documentation, which does not accommodate their identity, excluding them from services, employment in government institutions, and political participation. Their members often must marry abroad or use the courts of recognized groups, resulting in violations of their right to manifest their religion. However, in some cases, members of these groups may also consciously opt out of certain state procedures that conflict with their religious convictions—for example, Jehovah's Witnesses may decline military service or civic obligations tied to national symbols.
4. Additionally, the process of obtaining official recognition remains opaque and influenced by demographic and political considerations. Since Lebanon's independence, only the Coptic Orthodox Church has successfully joined the list of recognized denominations in 1995⁹⁴. Other groups, such as the Lebanese Association for Ahmadi Muslims, have been denied.⁹⁵

5. Lebanon maintains 15 separate personal status laws, each aligned with one of the 18 recognized groups. Personal status laws are administered by religious courts and differ across sects. These laws differ vastly in their treatment of marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody, and guardianship. The absence of a unified civil code perpetuates legal inequality.⁹⁶
6. Although civil unions registered in foreign countries are recognized in Lebanon, civil marriage is not possible within Lebanon, forcing couples seeking non-sectarian unions to marry abroad.

Attempts to introduce a civil personal status law have been repeatedly blocked by political and religious leaders, who claim it would undermine sectarian coexistence. However, the continued existence of unequal laws violates Lebanon's obligations under the ICCPR and CEDAW.⁹⁷

7. Blasphemy laws and legal provisions that penalize defamation and criminalize religious offenses also limit freedom of expression, particularly in artistic, cultural, journalistic, and digital spaces. While the protection of public order is cited, this rationale is often selectively applied, resulting in censorship and judicial harassment. Multiple reports have documented bans on concerts, books, or theater productions deemed offensive by religious authorities.⁹⁸ For instance, in 2025, a planned stand-up show in Tripoli was abruptly cancelled due to protests by locals who voiced concerns over perceived offensive or "indecent" content, especially involving religious jokes.⁹⁹
8. The Directorate General of General Security (DGGS), in consultation with religious institutions, frequently censors films and publications.¹⁰⁰ This gives sectarian institutions disproportionate influence over cultural life and silences dissenting or reformist voices within communities. Notably, works addressing gender rights or religious critique are often banned on the grounds of religion.¹⁰¹ Religious content in books, plays, films, and music is often subject to prior review, followed by arbitrary censorship. For example, Dar al-Fatwa successfully lobbied to ban the book *Mehnat al Aaqel fi al Islam* by Mustafa Jeha, following the author's refusal to withdraw it. Even critical thinking that explores religion from a human rights lens is increasingly targeted. Adyan's president, Nayla Tabbara, faced threats in Tripoli over her book *L'Islam pensé par une femme*, which was deemed controversial despite its theological grounding. Similarly, projects led by CSOs, aiming to promote inclusive religious interpretations and protect vulnerable groups, have been socially attacked as attempts to "change perceptions around the family." These examples demonstrate how religious institutions act as gatekeepers, often limiting pluralistic dialogue in the name of public order and preventing sectarian strife.
9. While Judaism is formally recognized as one of Lebanon's 18 religious sects, the community continues to be officially referred to as the "Israelites" - a designation imposed during the French Mandate period. This outdated nomenclature no longer reflects the identity or self-perception of the community and contributes to widespread misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and, in some cases, discrimination and bullying. The term "Israelites" carries historical and political connotations that can obscure the religious and cultural identity of Lebanese Jews, especially in a region where terminology is often politically charged.

c. Education and Healthcare Services

1. Religious education is deeply embedded in many of Lebanon's public and private schools, often prioritizing confessional loyalty over pluralism. Many schools are often managed by religious institutions with confessional curricula lacking inclusivity and critical engagement on religious diversity, reinforcing sectarian identities. The lack of secular, inclusive curricula thus fosters societal division from a young age. Inter-religious dialogue is also not systematically incorporated, and criticism of religion is discouraged.¹⁰²
2. Informal religious education in communities lacks oversight and fosters sectarian and exclusionary narratives. For instance, in Sharia programs and religious seminaries, curricula often reflect conservative dogmatic views.¹⁰³

d. Control of Religious Institutions and Political Influence

1. Religious institutions in Lebanon exert significant influence over public life, with religious affiliation affecting access to public resources, employment opportunities, and political representation. This political-religious entanglement in Lebanese politics undermines religious autonomy and exacerbates sectarian polarization.
2. At the political level, religious institutions in Lebanon are not only intertwined with sectarian identity but also heavily influenced, if not directly controlled, by political parties. Political actors often appoint or support religious leaders who are aligned with their agendas, blurring the lines between spiritual authority and partisan loyalty. This dynamic reinforces clientelism and sectarian patronage networks.
3. The state's formal power-sharing structure, rooted in the 1989 Taef Agreement, allocates political representation based on sectarian affiliation. The Lebanese electoral law reinforces this system by reserving parliamentary seats according to religious sect, making political competition a sectarian contest rather than a civic one. This institutional design further confuses the distinction between religious and political legitimacy. As a result, religious institutions frequently serve as platforms for political messaging, and sectarian leaders use religious discourse to mobilize support, entrench divisions, and suppress dissent. Access to public service and senior state positions, including judiciary, security, and administrative posts, is also conditioned by confessional identity, effectively excluding those from unrecognized or less influential sects and reinforcing systemic inequality.
4. Despite their wide-ranging influence over education, personal status, and charitable services, religious institutions in Lebanon operate with minimal transparency and virtually no public accountability.

e. Religious Minorities, Unrecognized Groups, and Inequality before the Law

1. Religious minorities, even those recognized among them, such as Jews and Assyrians, often face social stigma and exclusion in Lebanon.¹⁰⁴
2. However, the lack of legal status for unrecognized religious groups remains a significant barrier to the full enjoyment of freedom of religion and belief, depriving them of their fundamental rights. Religious identity on official documents, such as identification cards

and civil status records, is only available for recognized religious groups. Official documents thus omit the religious affiliation of unrecognized groups.

Members of these groups may even be forced to register under a different religious group, just as those who do not identify with any religions are, or be denied registration altogether. As a result, they face exclusion from access to education, voting, civil service, and political candidacy. These communities also cannot register places of worship, do not receive tax exemptions, and face limitations in marriage registration, inheritance rights, and child registration.¹⁰⁵ Some of them do not even have access to burial spaces.

3. Security services have reportedly harassed members of unrecognized groups, notably Jehovah's Witnesses¹⁰⁶. Without legal protection, these communities are vulnerable to arbitrary state action. Despite tolerance of private practice, the state systematically excludes these groups from legal protections and public representation.¹⁰⁷ For instance, in 2023, local citizens assaulted the Baha'i cemetery in Machghara¹⁰⁸, a community that already faces severe online criticism by some religious leaders in the area.
4. In addition to institutional exclusion, some religious groups, such as the Bahá'ís, face explicit threats from recognized religious groups. For instance, Bahá'ís have been publicly targeted with accusations of apostasy, creating an atmosphere of fear that forces individuals to conceal their religious identity. This lack of state protection from sectarian intimidation severely limits the freedom of unrecognized groups to manifest their religion publicly or seek redress.
5. Discrimination is compounded for migrant workers and refugees from religious backgrounds not recognized by the Lebanese state.¹⁰⁹

f. Freedom to Change Religion

1. Although Lebanese law permits conversion, changing religion remains socially discouraged or prohibited in practice and regulated by each religious group. Certain groups prohibit conversion altogether, such as the Druze community, which does not allow outsiders to convert. To change one's religion, a convert must present a certification from a religious authority of the new religious group and register with the Ministry of Interior.¹¹⁰
2. Conversions are rare, often carried out in secrecy,¹¹¹ as converts face social ostracization, threats, violence, and administrative delays.¹¹²
3. Apostasy and atheism remain taboo, and public declarations of renouncing religion can result in loss of family ties, inheritance, and child custody; employment discrimination; and surveillance by religious authorities. Individuals may request to remove their religion from official documents, but this process is not widely known or easily accessible. The absence of state protection mechanisms further discourages individuals from exercising this right and leaves converts and non-believers vulnerable to abuse.¹¹³
4. The case of Nacha'at Monzer, a self-proclaimed prophet who publicly renounced established religious doctrines and promoted his own belief system, highlights the risks individuals face when they diverge from dominant religious narratives in Lebanon. Monzer faced legal prosecution and public vilification, with authorities invoking laws related to contempt of religion and disturbing sectarian harmony. His case illustrates how

state and religious institutions collaborate to suppress unconventional belief systems, equating non-conformity with criminality or mental instability. This environment fosters fear among individuals considering conversion, renunciation, or alternative forms of religious expression.

g. Gender and FoRB

1. The current system under all religious personal status laws perpetuates systemic discrimination against women and reinforces gender inequality. Women face unequal rights and treatment in marriage, divorce, child custody, guardianship, and inheritance.¹¹⁴
2. For example, men generally retain custody and guardianship rights over children after divorce, while women must meet burdensome legal requirements to retain custody. Inheritance laws under some groups give men double the share of women.¹¹⁵ These legal inequalities are compounded by the lack of economic protections for women, particularly those facing domestic violence. In many cases, women are pressured to concede their custody or financial rights in order to obtain a divorce or escape abusive marriages.
3. Moreover, child marriage continues to be practiced in some remote areas, particularly under the jurisdiction of certain religious courts. The absence of a unified civil law establishing a minimum age for marriage leaves children, especially girls, vulnerable to forced or early unions, which severely undermines their rights to education, bodily autonomy, and religious self-determination.
4. In addition to legal inequalities under personal status laws, women who wear the hijab also face discrimination by state and private institutions. Hijabi women have reported being excluded from certain public and private sector jobs, particularly in the judiciary and the media, despite having the necessary qualifications. In some cases, state-affiliated institutions have implicitly or explicitly discouraged hiring women who wear religious attire, reflecting a form of institutionalized secular bias that contradicts the principles of freedom of religion and belief and gender equality. For instance, in 2022, a woman wearing a hijab who was working at a pop-up stand in a mall was asked by the mall's management to be dismissed because she wore a hijab on duty. Rather than comply, the stand's owner chose to shut down.¹¹⁶ In 2025, a TV anchor resigned from national news channel TeleLiban for facing discrimination for wearing a hijab.¹¹⁷ This discrimination not only undermines the right of women to express their religious identity but also limits their full participation in public life.

h. Social Tensions and Hate Speech, State Selectivity, and Regional Influence

1. Religious identities remain central to Lebanon's political and social dynamics. Over the past 5 years, incidents of religious violence and social media hate speech have sustained, including the targeting of religious minorities on social media and in partisan media outlets. During electoral periods or regional conflicts, inciting rhetoric often surges and is used to justify exclusion or violence. Religious leaders have even made statements denigrating other religious or vulnerable groups, including refugees, women, and LGBTQ+ persons. The absence of a national strategy to combat hate speech exacerbates this issue.

2. Political considerations often dictate the government's response to religious expression. For example, expressions of cross-border religious solidarity with religious groups, such as Druze support for Syrian Druze or Alawite communities, are subject to state suspicion and surveillance due to their political sensitivity.
3. Religious tensions between the Lebanese themselves have also been fueled by regional dynamics and conflicts, especially the Syrian war, politicizing religious identities and attempting to silence dissent.

i. Civic Space

1. Some religious education institutions in Lebanon are subject to licensing processes that reflect unequal treatment. For instance, while multiple Islamic seminaries have been licensed and operate freely, Protestant theological institutions face bureaucratic hurdles, and none have been licensed, demonstrating unequal access to civic religious expression.
2. Civil society organizations working on FoRB and human rights face significant barriers. The government delays the registration or renewal of NGOs that address religious freedom or political reform. Activists also report surveillance, bureaucratic harassment, and public vilification.¹¹⁸

j. Refugees, Migrants, Prisons, and Religious Discrimination

1. Lebanon hosts large populations of refugees from Syria, Palestine, and other nationalities, among whom religious identity influences access to services. Indeed, many report that religious discrimination often leads to social exclusion and reduced access to aid and education, especially in informal camps where service delivery is sometimes faith-based or mediated by religious networks or NGOs, thus prioritizing their constituencies¹¹⁹ and excluding religions that do not belong to the latter.
2. Reports indicate that refugees from minority groups (e.g., Christians or Alawites among Syrian refugees) face harassment or exclusion within refugee communities dominated by other religious groups.
3. Migrant workers, especially from African and Southeast Asian countries, often belong to religions not recognized by the state. As a result, they are unable to register religious marriages or worship publicly. Some embassies have intervened to offer protection, but many migrants remain isolated and vulnerable.¹²⁰
4. In theory, prisoners in Lebanon should have the right to access religion. However, the situation of prisons in the country is perilous. The absence of institutional mechanisms to ensure freedom of worship disproportionately affects detainees from minority or unrecognized religious groups, as well as those who do not adhere to the dominant sectarian identities of prison staff. Detainees of minority religious groups may thus face barriers to exercising their religion because of discrimination and/or a lack of awareness.¹²¹ Religious materials are also not systematically made available.
5. Young people in marginalized areas like Northern Bekaa face compounded exclusion based on geography, socioeconomic status, and perceived sectarian identity. Limited infrastructure, media stigmatization, and systemic neglect exacerbate their alienation from civic and political life. The erasure of their voices from local governance and national youth policies contributes to cycles of instability and mistrust.

➤ k. Recommendations

1. Initiate a multi-stakeholder national dialogue on introducing an optional unified civil personal status law, publishing a roadmap, and consultation outcomes.
2. Submit a legal reform proposal to Parliament amending blasphemy and religious defamation provisions in the Penal Code to comply with ICCPR Article 19, ensuring protection of expression while safeguarding against incitement to violence and hate.
3. Establish clear legal definitions and judicial standards regarding blasphemy, contempt for religion, and incitement to sectarianism to prevent arbitrary restrictions on artistic, journalistic, or cultural expression. This includes aligning local practices with international standards on proportionality and necessity in restricting freedoms.
4. Draft and establish clear content review guidelines restricting the censorship powers of the DGGS and subject decisions to judicial oversight.
5. Pilot programs that integrate inter-religious education and religious pluralism into official national school curricula in both public and private education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), the Ministry of Culture, and religious institutions.
6. Establish permanent inter-religious dialogue platforms under an inter-ministerial committee, including representation from recognized and unrecognized groups, with a mandate to promote pluralism, social cohesion, and civic education.
7. Ensure judicial oversight over religious courts to monitor compliance with international human rights standards, including transparent appointment processes, regular review of decisions, and training of religious judges, under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice and in collaboration with civil society.
8. Introduce legislation requiring religious institutions that receive public funds or manage religious endowments to undergo independent financial audits, with mandatory public disclosure.
9. Ensure the implementation of Legislative Decree No. 60 L.R./1936 is carried out in a transparent, impartial, and non-discriminatory manner by depoliticizing the process of recognizing religious groups and removing the discretionary influence of dominant sectarian groups. Establish independent oversight and civil society participation in reviewing applications for recognition to ensure compliance with international human rights standards.
10. Amend administrative procedures to allow individuals from unrecognized religious groups to obtain civil status documentation without being required to declare affiliation with a recognized religious group.

11. Establish and implement a confidential and standardized administrative procedure for individuals who wish to convert or remove their religious affiliation from civil records, with safeguards against retaliation.
12. Activate article 95 of the Constitution by establishing the National Commission for the Abolition of Political Sectarianism and mandate it to address discrimination based on change of religion or lack of belief, including in employment, education, and service provision. Ensure that the commission's work incorporates civil society monitoring and aligns with international anti-discrimination standards.
13. Initiate a legal review of personal status laws across all recognized groups to identify and address discriminatory provisions against women in marriage, divorce, custody, guardianship, and inheritance. Ensure that any future civil personal status legislative amendments guarantee full gender equality. In parallel, remove Lebanon's reservations to Article 16 of CEDAW, thereby fully aligning domestic law with international human rights obligations.
14. Amend public sector recruitment policies to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on religious appearance (e.g., hijab) and ensure oversight mechanisms are in place through the Civil Service Board. This should include a complaint mechanism for affected individuals and disaggregated public reporting on complaints.
15. Develop and implement a national strategy to combat hate speech and incitement to religious violence, including training for religious leaders, media, and law enforcement.
16. Review security policies to ensure that any state surveillance of cross-border religious solidarity does not infringe on the freedom of religion and association, and is conducted in accordance with international human rights standards.
17. Revise the regulatory framework governing religious education institutions to ensure equal treatment for all sects, including Protestant theological institutions, by adopting transparent, depoliticized licensing criteria and clear processing timelines.
18. Establish a legal appeals process for civil society organizations and religious institutions denied registration or operation.
19. Issue a joint directive by MoSA and MoIM that guarantees equal access to services for refugees and migrants, regardless of religious affiliation, including protection from discrimination in humanitarian aid, monitored in coordination with UN agencies.
20. Update MoIM circulars and issue a policy clarification that ensures the right of migrant workers to practice their religion freely, including the ability to register marriages and worship in community settings.

21. Update the National Youth Inclusion Strategy with specific provisions to integrate youth from marginalized areas, such as Northern Bekaa, into municipal councils and national consultations on FoRB-related issues and religious peacebuilding initiatives.
22. Enact and enforce legislation to protect holy sites and religious buildings, including those belonging to minority communities, from damage, desecration, or occupation, particularly in conflict or post-conflict contexts. Ensure a national registry of such sites is developed and monitored by the Ministry of Culture in coordination with relevant religious and civil society bodies.
23. Reform the civil service recruitment framework to prohibit discrimination based on sectarian affiliation and ensure equitable access for individuals from underrepresented or unrecognized religious groups to public office.
24. Review the electoral law to reduce structural sectarian barriers and facilitate the participation of individuals from marginalized or unrecognized religious communities as candidates in municipal and national elections, with proposed reforms to be implemented before the next parliamentary cycle.
25. Adopt a unified civil law setting the minimum legal age of marriage at 18, applicable across all sects and enforced through religious and civil courts. Launch a national awareness campaign on the harms of child marriage and establish reporting and monitoring mechanisms with civil society.
26. Amend official government records and registries to replace the term "Israelites" with "Jews" in reference to the Lebanese Jewish community.
27. Guarantee legal and operational support for NGOs working on FoRB, minority rights, and religious documentation, including expedited registration, tax exemptions, and protection from harassment or interference.



F.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN LEBANESE PRISONS

SUBMITTED BY:

- MOUVEMENT SOCIAL
- DAR AL AMAL
- NUSROTO ASSOCIATION
- CEDAR CENTER FOR LEGAL STUDIES
- PROUD

- MIDDLE EAST HARM REDUCTION ASSOCIATION (MENAHR)
- MIGRATION SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT (MSD)
- SIDC LEBANON
- UN PONTE PER
- NIDAL FOR HUMANITY ASSOCIATION
- FATHER AFIF OSSEIRAN FOUNDATION (FAOF).

INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted by a group of Lebanese civil society organizations concerned with human rights, within the framework of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, to highlight the violations and structural challenges facing prisons in Lebanon. The Penal Code has not undergone any fundamental reform since 1943. With the absence of a clear policy defining criminal justice priorities, and the continued use of military courts and pre-trial detention, sometimes as a means of punishment, prisons and detention centers are severely overcrowded, often exceeding 300 percent of their capacity. Problems related to pre-trial detention in Lebanon are exacerbated by gaps in trial procedures that do not guarantee the accused rights, such as the right to adequate legal support and defense.

- The prison system also suffers from severe overcrowding, poor health and nutritional conditions, and a lack of medical care and psychological support, as well as the absence of effective mechanisms for accountability and independent monitoring.

This report aims to provide practical recommendations to the Lebanese government to improve the status of prisons and ensure respect for the rights of all individuals deprived of their liberty, in accordance with the Lebanese international obligations.

We note that the previous round has witnessed a number of recommendations concerning prisons conditions and detention facilities:

- Continue to improve the living conditions of prisoners and meet their basic demands and needs.
- Continue to take steps aimed at improving the performance of the prison system.
- Continue the process of improving the living conditions of persons deprived of their liberty, focusing on rehabilitation and social integration programs.

a. Lebanese Prisons in the Last Five Years

1. Inside prisons, new arrivals lack full medical examinations upon arrival, and all necessary and regular health services are not available during detention. When combined with limited legal assistance, especially for adults, and language barriers for foreign prisoners, the safety of all detainees is endangered. The current economic crisis, and its financial burden on prisoners' families, exacerbates the shortcomings in healthcare provided within the detention facilities. Moreover, outdated penal laws do not include comprehensive measures that consider female prisoners' circumstances, leaving pregnant women facing additional health and financial difficulties.

1.1. The deteriorating prison conditions show that there are insufficient rehabilitation programs for all prisoners. Overcrowding further delays judicial procedures, exacerbating the aforementioned problems. These conditions indicate a failure to comply with the Mandela Rules and other international standards on detention and legal procedures. These conditions lead to negative effects on mental health of prisoners and their families, and this has been proven to be linked to high rates of recidivism and the spread of domestic violence after release from prison.

1.2. In the last five years, prisons in Lebanon have suffered from severe overcrowding and an increasing deterioration in living conditions as a result of the acute economic crisis that began in 2019. This crisis has led to a severe shortage of resources, which has directly affected basic services within prisons, particularly health, nutrition, and rehabilitation. The lack of medicines and medical resources, and incomplete necessary treatment have significantly hindered healthcare access.

1.3. During the Coronavirus crisis, a special court was activated inside Roumieh prison to look into the detainees' cases, aimed at expediting trials and reducing overcrowding, which significantly endangered prisoners and prison staff health. This court aimed at reducing the pre-trial detention periods, one of the most prominent problems in Lebanese prisons, where a large number of prisoners spend long periods of time awaiting trial due to slow judicial procedures and the difficulty of transferring detainees to hearings. The court led to tangible results, including faster trials, and a decrease in the number of detainees awaiting their case processing, alleviating overcrowding, limiting the spread of the Coronavirus, and enhancing judicial efficiency by addressing accumulated files. The Special Tribunal ceased all operations at the end of the health crisis, despite the success and despite all the efforts made by the prison advocacy associations, which have coordinated with the Supreme Judicial Council to ensure the continuity of the trial's accelerating mechanism. The Bar Association has been actively involved in efforts to reactivate the tribunal, aiming to provide legal support to prisoners and strengthen their right to a fair trial, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Directorate of Prisons, to secure means of transportation for lawyers and ensure their privacy during visits.

1.4. After the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, the prisons' budget has significantly declined, therefore, the provision of basic needs became extremely difficult. Consequently, the prisoners' suffering has worsened, especially with the increasing number of detainees still awaiting trial. Estimates indicate that almost 70% of prisoners in Lebanon are held in pre-trial detention, where some of them spend years in prison awaiting trial due to chronic judicial delays. This problem has been exacerbated by strikes carried out by judges, lawyers, and court clerks in the last few years due to the economic conditions, leading to trial disruption and to the accumulation of judicial files. The prisoners' transfer crisis has also contributed to increasing overcrowding and worsened the suffering of detainees who remain in pre-trial detention without judicial rulings. The United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture has expressed, during its visit to Lebanon in 2022, its "serious concern about the administration of justice, and the prolonged pre-trial detention, amid persisting problems in places where liberty is deprived, from overcrowding and tragic living conditions."

1.5. In 2024, we have witnessed significant challenges and rapid developments at the regional and international levels, where armed conflicts were ongoing in more than one country in the Arab region, particularly the Israeli war on Lebanon and Palestine, which revealed the fragility within the Lebanese system and its inability to adequately protect civilians. This situation had a direct impact on prisons in the areas of attack, where the process of prisoner transfer has faced significant challenges that affected their safety and detention conditions. The most prominent problems in transfer operations include:

- *Security risk during transportation: Many main roads and bridges were subjected to Israeli bombardment, making movement between areas fraught with dangers.*
- *Risk of convoys targeting: The prisoner's movements have become a real threat, especially with the targeting of mobile vehicles.*

- *Disruption of judicial procedures: The war led to the disruption of most courts work, causing the postponement of investigation and trial sessions, delaying prisoners transfer, and increasing overcrowding in some prisons.*

Despite these circumstances, the Ministry of Justice have established a court registry for both Nabatieh in the Beirut Justice Palace, and for Baalbek in Zahle Justice Palace, to address urgent files.

1.6. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, the Juvenile Welfare Authority, and the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces is implementing a plan to transfer juveniles from Roumieh prison to the Al Warwar center, aiming to improve the conditions of these detained juveniles and rehabilitating them in a more suitable environment. This initiative falls within a humanitarian approach aimed at providing an environment that meets the needs of juveniles, away from the challenges and security tensions in Roumieh prison, suffering from continuous overcrowding.

1.7. The designated building in Al Warwar center has been renovated and equipped, as part of the plan, to serve and receive juveniles, providing safe facilities, appropriate spaces for rehabilitation activities, and medical and social services. This work was carried out in collaboration with juvenile – focused associations, which will play a vital role in providing them with psychological, social, and legal support, including legal awareness and representation, aligning with the principle of mandatory presence of attorney in juvenile trials. Educational and vocational programs will also be implemented aimed at rehabilitating and reintegrating them into society, in accordance with international standards for children's rights and restorative justice. The transfer of juveniles to Al Warwar center is expected to take place in the near future, after the completion of the final preparations. Efforts will be intensified to provide sustainable psychological and social support programs, in collaboration with the official bodies and non-governmental organizations.

1.8. During the successive crises that the country has experienced over the past years, a working group has been formed comprising representatives of associations working in prisons, through a serious initiative by the "Social Movement" Association and the "Adl wa Rahma" (Justice and Mercy) association, with the support of the "Arcs" association and with the participation of many local and regional associations, with the aim of improving the conditions of prisoners and promoting their rights. This group regularly convenes on a monthly basis to discuss prison-related issues. This group includes representatives from civil society and official bodies, especially the Ministry of Justice - Directorate of Prisons, and the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities - Internal Security Forces pertaining to prisons

b. The Law on Substituting Imprisonment with Free Community Service: Between Theory and Practice

2. Law No. 138/2019 was issued on July 9th, 2019, stipulating the substitution of imprisonment not exceeding one year with free community service, to be carried out for the benefit of a public entity, institution, or non-profit association. This law aims to alleviate overcrowding in prisons and to promote the concept of alternative sanctions that contribute to the rehabilitation of convicts, instead of thrusting them into a prison environment that may negatively affect their behavior and future.

2.1. Despite the importance of this law in principle, its implementation has not yet been occurred due to several factors, most notably:

Lack of Specialized Personnel for Follow-up: No work teams or specialized bodies have been designated to monitor the implementation of free community service, which has led to the disruption of the law's enforcement.

Legal gaps Impeding Implementation: The Directorate of Prisons at the Ministry of Justice studied the law and concluded that there are a number of gaps that may hinder its implementation or significantly limit its effectiveness. The most prominent of these gaps include: the failure to define the meaning of a free community service, and the absence of a clear definition of the purpose of this measure. Is it to reform and rehabilitate convicts? Or to provide a public service to the community? Or to achieve general deterrence? The law stipulates in the text of its second article that the duration of community service as an alternative to imprisonment is calculated at eight hours for each day of imprisonment. Recalling what we have mentioned earlier, the purpose of the alternative measure to imprisonment is to avoid the negative effects and damages resulting from it, most importantly the deprivation of liberty and the separation of the convicted person from their family, community, work, or studies. The concept of work for the public benefit cannot lead to or aim to force the convicted person to work full-time and without compensation, but rather to encourage them to work for the benefit of society, alongside their usual activities.

This text, in its current content and formulation, may practically lead to the exact opposite result. Replacing each day of imprisonment with eight hours of work, practically translates into an example: if a sentence of ten months imprisonment, is issued and replaced with a free community service measure, the convicted person would have to perform 2400 hours of work, without specifying the maximum time period during which the work hours must be completed. We shall note, for example, that the maximum number of hours of community service that the judiciary can impose in France is 400 hours, and in Canada 240 hours, to be completed within 18 months. Hence, specifying eight hours of work as an alternative to each day of imprisonment is a period that is, to say the least, exaggerated and illogical or ineffective. It may lead to negative results and damages comparable to those inflicted on the convicted person by imprisonment, and will produce similar results, including the loss of their job and thus their material income if they are a worker, or their deprivation of the possibility of continuing their studies if they are a student, which will hinder the process of their reintegration.

2.2. In addition to excluding repeat offenders from alternative sentencing: The law stipulates that community service cannot be used as an alternative to punishment where the person is a repeat offender. However, it would have been more effective to impose strict conditions to regulate the application of the penalty instead of excluding an entire category of offenders.

2.3. As well as the possibility of replacing a financial fine with community service: This point lacks clear defined mechanisms, raising questions about the feasibility of implementation where the convicted person is unable to pay the fine. Would community service be an automatic alternative, or would it be subject to specific conditions?

c. Women's Prisons in Lebanon: The State's Neglect of Integrating Gender-Responsive Services

3. Lebanese legislation aims to regulate prisons through Decree No. 14310 issued in 1949. Although this decree includes some basic rights and principles, it lacks the necessary and effective updates to address fundamental issues. The decree does not effectively address the specific needs of prisoners, especially women, as it neglects important issues such as reproductive health, pregnancy and breastfeeding, and children needs, in addition to providing education and work that contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of female prisoners into society. Furthermore, the legal texts do not address the situation of foreign or stateless female prisoners, which reinforces the continued violation of their rights and the failure to provide them with human conditions.

3.1. Perhaps one of the most prominent shortcomings lies in the State's neglect to effectively integrate gender-responsive services into these prisons.

3.2. The integration of gender-responsive services, which aims to meet the specific needs of female prisoners and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect, remains elusive. This neglect of integrating gender-responsive services not only constitutes a violation of the fundamental human rights of female prisoners, but also hinders rehabilitation efforts and reduces their chances of becoming active members of society after their release.

➤ d. Recommendations

- Complete the transfer of prison administration authority from the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities to the Ministry of Justice, as stipulated in Article 1.
- Transfer the prisons administration from the Ministry of Interior, which is temporarily entrusted with this administration, to the Ministry of Justice.
- Amend the prison system to align with the evolving concept of correctional institutions, as the current law was enacted in 1949. This should lead to a dramatic change in the law.
- Enact a well-considered general amnesty law based on clear criteria and in the public interest.
- Reform the judicial system and expedite trials: Accelerate trial procedures and reduce periods of pre-trial detention by activating the provisions of Article 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and ensure that they are not exceeded without legal justification.
- Reactivate the special court at Roumieh prison on a permanent basis, and not just as an emergency measure in times of crisis, to reduce pressure on prisons and expedite the consideration of detainees' cases.
- Avoid unnecessary detention and arrest, and take into consideration modern theories of detention that rely on indictment when reliable evidence is available.
- Apply alternative sanctions more broadly to reduce the burden on prisons and achieve positive results on all levels.
- Expand the scope of applying alternative measures to punishment: Adopt alternative penalties such as community service and financial fines for non-violent crimes.
- Define the nature of permissible social work so that benefits the community without exploiting convicts.
- Clarify the criteria by which imprisonment is replaced by social work, ensuring that the reformatory objective of the punishment is achieved.
- Reconsider the exclusion of recidivism cases, by establishing strict conditions to ensure the proper execution of the penalty instead of excluding it completely.
- Provide a specialized staff to monitor the implementation, whether by appointing government employees or delegating some associations focused on prisoners' rights to follow up on sentences execution.
- Renew and maintain the dilapidated infrastructure of prisons on a regular basis.
- Radically reduce overcrowding.
- Improve living conditions within prisons: Developing facilities to accommodate the number of prisoners in a human manner.
- Improve the food quality and healthcare: Providing a sufficient budget to ensure balanced nutritional meals and improve medical services and personal hygiene.

- Secure medicines and medical supplies through cooperation with international and local organizations.
- Allocate a stable budget for prison administration to ensure sufficient and sustainable funding which enables the improvement of infrastructure and services.
- Strengthen the state's supervisory role within prisons and foster the collaboration with associations to expand their services.
- Enhance supervision and transparency: Activate the role of human rights organizations by allowing regular prison visits and submitting transparent reports.
- Strengthen complaint mechanisms: Establish mechanisms that allow prisoners to submit complaints about mistreatment or neglect in a safe manner without fear of punishment or retaliation.
- Rehabilitate prisoners, in particular juveniles, and reintegrate them into society by supporting psychological and social rehabilitation programs and developing educational and training programs within prisons.
- Increase workshops and ensure financial returns for female prisoners to professionally rehabilitate them and integrate them into society.
- Obligate female prisoners to participate in rehabilitation programs and link it to incentives such as sentence reductions.
- Provide dedicated spaces for communication with the outside world (such as equipped visiting rooms and prepaid card phones).
- Integrate a gender perspective into women prisons management and ensure relevant requirements.
- Integrate gender-sensitive services in women prisons helps reduce structural disparities, promote effective rehabilitation, and empower women after their release.
- Ensure strict separation between detainees and convicts to achieve a more organized and just environment.
- Grant the prison director broader powers in managing female prisoners affairs within the correctional institution.
- Organizing awareness courses for prison staff, especially the prison director and female guards, to educate them about female prisoner's rights and the boundaries in their interactions with them.
- Activate the sessions and accelerate the progress of lawsuits to enable female prisoners to know their fate instead of prolonged detention.
- Cooperate with the Beirut and North bar associations to activate judicial aid.
- Take initiatives to facilitate bail procedures and exempt them from any fees.



G.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

SUBMITTED BY:

- RDFL
- DAR AL AMAL
- ABAAD
- KAFA
- NABAA
- NAJDEH
- LECORVAW
- CRTDA
- FIFTY-FIFTY

INTRODUCTION

Since the start of popular movements in 2019, Lebanon has been experiencing multiple, complex, and successive crises of a political, security, and economic nature, culminating in the latest war on Lebanon, and punctuated by a suffocating economic crisis. Various segments of Lebanese society have paid the price for these crises, but their impact has not been gender-neutral, as women and girls have borne the brunt of the suffering due to their vulnerable social and economic circumstances.

In the last few years, the judicial sector in Lebanon has suffered acute crises, including judge's strikes disrupting the courts work for long periods of time. This situation has led to a significant delay in cases adjudication and has hindered the effective follow-up of reports and complaints. Police stations and outposts who are supposed to strengthen the response to domestic violence, have also suffered from a shortage in human resources and logistical means, which have negatively impacted the effectiveness of emergency response.

In the last few years, violent reactions against the principle of gender equality in Lebanon have intensified, by actors in the state and society, including some non-governmental actors and segments of public opinion. Government officials and official representatives have made unprecedented statements that openly diminished the importance of women and girls rights, without regard to the international obligations undertaken by the Lebanese state in accordance with international human rights declarations and treaties. In March 2023, a minister has questioned whether improving women's political participation or addressing child marriage should be priorities, considering that they "would not solve the crisis," in a clear indication of minimizing women's issues. Civil society organizations working with marginalized groups have also faced various forms of criticism, to varying degrees.

The legislative policy of the Lebanese state embodies this fragmented position of women's rights by refusing to provide a comprehensive protection, continuing to adopt discriminatory legislation, and refraining from enacting laws that prohibit certain harmful practices, despite accepting a number of recommendations issued during the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review.

This joint report is submitted by a group of feminist and human rights organizations working on women's issues in Lebanon, aimed at highlighting the reality and identifying the most important priorities. This collective effort reflects a firm commitment to women's rights and a pursuit to enhance their achievements.

a. International Framework and Obligations

1. Despite Lebanon's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 under Law No. 592 of 1996, it still expresses reservations on Article 9 (paragraph 2) regarding women's rights to grant their nationality to their husbands and children, Article 16 (paragraph 1 c, d, f, and g) on equality in marriage and family relations, and Article 29 (paragraph 1) concerning arbitration in disputes.

1.1. Lebanon has not acceded to the Optional Protocol attached to the Convention, which weakens the ability to use international redress mechanisms.

1.2. Despite Lebanon's participation in a number of international conferences and mechanisms, progressing in the implementation of international recommendations remains slow. The Lebanese state hasn't established a national mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Convention or to prepare periodic reports in cooperation with civil society, which weakens transparency and accountability.

b. Personal Status Laws

2. The Lebanese state has never approved the civil personal status law, leaving the task of managing personal affairs, including marriage, divorce, alimony, custody, and inheritance, to the religious courts of officially recognized sects. Thus, Lebanese citizens are subject to the 15 different religious courts laws. Under this system, women do not enjoy the same rights as men from the same sect, and there is a disparity in women's rights between different sects. Discrimination between sects is stipulated in Article 9 of the Lebanese Constitution, which "guarantees respect for the personal status and religious interests of the population, regardless of their religious affiliation." However, legal systems and their decisions discriminate against women of all sects in accessing divorce and custody of their children.

2.1. In addition to legal obstacles, women are facing challenges related to judicial procedures, particularly the financial cost of litigation and the lack of adequate support. This discriminatory reality has reinforced Lebanon's reservations on Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which recommends equality of rights between women and men in all family matters. Despite repeated recommendations from women's rights activists, groups, and international organizations over the past decades, Lebanese authorities have failed to take serious action to adopt a unified civil personal status law. Furthermore, there is no Lebanese law regulating the affairs of citizens who do not belong to one of the 18 recognized sects.

2.2. Authorizing religious communities to develop their own policies has led to significant leniency in determining the age of marriage, hindering national efforts to combat this phenomenon. This fragmented legal system, along with poverty and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, has contributed to the continued practice of child marriage, where girls are seen as a mean to ensure financial stability in some families, under traditional roles that restrict their personal and educational development.

2.3. The age of marriage remains one of the most prominent problems in this context due to the legalization of underage marriage. Marriage ages vary according to different religious communities' laws, contravening the Convention on the Rights of the Child that sets the majority age at 18, and its protocols that obligate the states to protect children from sexual violence. Furthermore, CEDAW does not recognize child betrothal, as early marriage carries severe consequences for the minor, the family, and social stability, and provides easy access to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Civil society organizations have submitted several proposals to Parliament regarding the protection of children from early marriage, but they have not been presented yet before the General Committee.

2.4. A national study in 2023 showed that the rate of child marriage has reached 20%, an increase from UNICEF's 2016 report, reflecting the limited impact of current interventions. Although the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee has approved a draft law proposing to set the marriage age at 18, the law is still awaiting presentation to the joint committees before its potential approval.¹²²

2.5. A national plan to protect children from child marriage has been adopted, but there are no implementation initiatives, nor have any allocated financial resources.

c. Discrimination in the Penal Code

3. Lebanese laws do not define sexual violence, and the only direct reference to it appears in the Law on the Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence. However, this definition remains limited, as its scope is confined to the family and to the crimes stipulated therein. The same applies to the Penal Code, which does not define sexual violence crimes, although it addresses a number of crimes that fall within this context.

3.1. The law does not criminalize marital rape, and the definition of rape explicitly excludes forced intercourse within marriage in Articles 503 and 504 of the Penal Code of 1943.

3.2. Article 522 of the Penal Code used to drop the prosecution against the perpetrator of kidnapping and adultery crimes if he married the victim, but its effects were abolished in 2017. However, despite this amendment, anyone who commits certain other crimes whose circumstances fall within the framework of Articles 505 or 518 of the aforementioned law is still exempt from punishment if he marries his victim.

3.3. Articles 487, 488, and 489 of the Penal Code prohibit adultery, punishable by imprisonment for a minimum of three months and a maximum of two years. These articles have been amended under Article 3(6) of Law no. 293, to eliminate previous discriminatory practices between women and men regarding punishment, investigation conditions, and evidence requirements.

3.4. Lebanon lacks a law that regulates cybercrimes or prohibits violence and sexual harassment within cyberspace. However, these crimes are investigated and their perpetrators are prosecuted based on other laws, such as the Penal Code and Law No. 81 pertaining to electronic transactions and personal data, in addition to the law on sexual harassment, which indicates that sexual harassment may occur through words, actions, and electronic means.

3.5. Lebanon has no policy, law, or regulation regarding safe abortion. Articles 539 to 546 of the Lebanese Penal Code criminalize abortion and deprive women of their right to control their bodies.

d. Protection from Sexual Harassment

4. Law No. 205, was enacted on December 31st, 2020 marking a crucial step toward criminalizing sexual harassment and breaking the silence surrounding it, and it helped raising societal awareness about this crime.

4.1. Despite this, implementation challenges remain, most notably the inadequate protection of victims and the potential for perpetrators to avoid punishment due to legal and administrative gaps.

e. Protection from Domestic Violence

5. Although Law No. 293/2014 was enacted under the title of "Protection of Women and Other Family Members," women and girls continue to experience domestic violence, especially amid economic and political crises that have reinforced chaos and impunity, and weakened victims' ability to report and access justice, leading many women to relinquish their rights.

5.1. An amendment was introduced to the law in 2021 to address some gaps and stipulated the establishment of a fund to support victims. However, this fund remains inactive, which has reduced its practical impact.

5.2. Legislative policy in Lebanon reflects the continued resistance to recognizing the specificity of violence against women and the refusal to enact laws dedicated to their protection, under the pretext of encompassing the protection of all family members. This patriarchal perspective was translated into the deletion of essential clauses from the proposed 2014 law, and into the enactment of a law that does not exclusively protect women, despite the demands of feminist organizations.

5.3. On December 30th, 2020, Law No. 204/2020 was enacted, including amendments that would improve protection. However, the lack of legislative will to dedicate protection for women limits its effectiveness, especially under the dominance of personal status laws that grant men almost absolute authority within the family.

5.4. The amendments stipulated the enhancement and expansion of victims' protection, and included:

- *Expanding the family concept to include the former spouse, by adding the phrase "occurred during or because of the marriage."*
- *Implementing protection orders through the Public Prosecution.*
- *Increasing the penalty for violating a protection order with imprisonment for up to one year, or a fine of up to twice the minimum wage, or both.*
- *Adopting judicial specialization in domestic violence cases, by including a single judge and an investigating judge for family affairs, in addition to the competent Public Prosecutor.*
- *Allowing minors to submit a protection request without needing their guardian's consent.*
- *Criminalizing moral and economic violence and setting penalties for it.*
- *Amending child protection conditions, so that children under the age of thirteen are automatically included in the protection order, instead of being limited to those who have reached custody age according to personal status laws.*

5.5. Recurring crises, particularly economic ones, hinder the implementation of Law No. 293 pertaining to the protection of women from domestic violence. This was reflected in arrest warrants reduction, weakened fines effectiveness, consideration of the perpetrator's financial situation, and increased litigation fees, which have weakened victims' judicial protection. The comprehensive judicial strike that began on August 17, 2022, and continued until the end of the year, led to complete paralysis in law implementation, as

protection orders were halted, and even previous judgments such as custody and visitation were not executed. This resulted in serious harm to women, contributing to a reinforced sense of impunity and undermining women's trust in justice.

5.6. Until this date, the Lebanese state has not recognized the legal specificity of violence against women, but rather integrates their cases within a general framework of family protection, ignoring the reality of discrimination and the increasing harm that women are facing. Given the inadequacy of the current laws, a comprehensive draft law has been prepared that addresses various aspects of violence against women and represents a qualitative step towards recognizing their rights. The draft has been completed and is being presented to political parties for adoption in preparation for its presentation to Parliament, in a serious endeavor to redress women and amend the laws that are unjust to them.

f. Women's Right to Work in Lebanon

6. The economic crisis has led to an increase in the female unemployment rate from 14.3 percent before the crisis to 26 percent as of September 2020. This reflects an increase of 63 percent - from 81,200 to 132,500 - in the number of unemployed women, or the equivalent of 51,300 additional women joining the ranks of the unemployed in June 2020 compared to the 2018/2019 period.

6.1. The first clause of Article 7 of the Lebanese Labor Law excludes domestic workers from legal protection, leaving them at the mercy of the exploitative Kafala (sponsorship) system, in an environment that violates the most basic principles of human rights and international standards.

6.2. Violations begin from the moment of recruitment, where fraud and forgery prevail, workers' papers are confiscated upon arrival, they are prevented from communicating, their freedoms are restricted, they are deprived of wages, and they are subjected to violence in various forms. These violations are exacerbated by the absence of effective mechanisms for terminating contracts, the lack of monitoring, and the difficulty of accessing justice, which opens the door to exploitation, forced labor, and human trafficking. Despite continuous demands, the Lebanese state's procedures remain limited and insufficient to end this system of modern slavery.

6.3. The Labor Law prohibits wage discrimination as a general rule, but the law does not address the issue of equal pay for work of equal value.

6.4. The Labor Law still prohibits the employment of women in certain jobs that are considered arduous or dangerous.

6.5. In accordance with labor law, women are entitled to ten weeks of maternity leave paid by their employer. However, this falls short of the International Labor Organization standard of fourteen weeks.

6.6. The law does not provide for paid paternity leave.

6.7. Childcare facilities, whether publicly available or subsidized, are not available in both the public and private sectors.

g. The Prostitution System in Lebanon

7. The prostitution trade in Lebanon targets the most marginalized women, under a legal system that criminalizes them instead of protecting them. Article 523 of the Penal Code punishes sex workers and exploiters with imprisonment from one to three years, while clients are exempt from any legal accountability, perpetuating discrimination and violence against women.

7.1. The Law on Combating Human Trafficking, issued in 2011, has had no real impact on prevention or protection. Practice has shown a poor identification of victims and a lack of legal or psychological support for them, even in cases where traffickers have been convicted.

7.2. The "Artists Visa" program that has been used for more than two decades, has contributed to human trafficking promotion. Thousands of women, especially from Ukraine and Russia, were brought in under the guise of entertainment work, only to be held in an exploitative environment that restricts their freedom and exposes them to trafficking and sexual slavery.

7.3. On the other hand, there is Law No. 164 on Combating Human Trafficking, issued in 2011. Despite its importance, it suffers from several gaps that limit its effectiveness, most notably the absence of clear legal mechanisms to protect victims and the lack of a system to monitor immigration or track employment activities and marriage agencies that may be involved in trafficking. The law also lacks extraterritorial jurisdiction to protect Lebanese victims abroad and conflicts with existing laws, such as the Law on Combating Prostitution and Article 523 of the Penal Code, which equates the victim with the perpetrator, hindering women's ability to report. Likewise, the law contradicts the procedures adopted towards "artists" and waitresses, who are brought from abroad and forced into contracts that lead to sexual exploitation that is difficult to report.

h. The Right to Nationality

8. Lebanese women are deprived of the right to grant their nationality to their husbands and children if the husband is not Lebanese, unlike Lebanese men who automatically pass their nationality to their foreign wives and children. This discrimination turns a woman's family into "strangers" in her own country.

8.1. This deprivation not only violates a woman's rights as a citizen, but also deprives her family of their human rights, such as education, health care, ownership, and employment, and threatens family unity and psychological and social stability.

8.2. Two proposals to amend the law have reached the Parliament, first one on August 6th, 2018, and the other on May 14th, 2019, stipulating full equality in granting nationality. Supporting them is an urgent necessity to achieve justice.

i. Women's Political Participation

9. Despite the progress Lebanese women have achieved in several fields, their political representation remains weak. The current parliament includes only 8 female members out of 128 (6.25%), and the government has 5 female ministers out of 24. Lebanon ranks 173rd globally and 14th in the Arab world in terms of women parliamentary representa-

tion. In the municipal and optional elections of 2025, the percentage of women who won seats on the optional councils reached 16.40%, the highest percentage compared to other positions, followed by municipal councils at 10.37%. As for mayors (Mukhtar), women recorded the lowest representation, not exceeding 2.42%.

9.1. This reality in Lebanon stems from interconnected reasons, involving a legal aspect represented by the absence of a modern and contemporary electoral law that guarantees equal representation and reduces the gaps faced by women, and the absence of temporary positive measures that would stimulate their participation. It is also linked to the political aspect, manifested in the weakness of the democratic process, the distortion of the concept of developmental work, and the lack of genuine political will from most political forces to support women's political work. Most parties and political entities did not provide effective support to female candidates, whose participation was sometimes limited to completing a formal electoral list, without actually empowering them with the tools of political competition, such as media coverage, funding, or logistical support. This poses a fundamental challenge given women's limited economic capabilities in Lebanon. Furthermore, the impact of violence against women in the private sphere cannot be overlooked, as well as the social and cultural aspects related to stereotypical roles assigned to women, all contribute to a climate of exclusion and discrimination.

9.2. Women active in the political field are subjected to political violence, represented by smear campaigns and defamation targeting female politicians with discriminatory rhetoric that focuses on their appearance or personal lives instead of their political positions. There are many examples of female members of parliament or ministers who have been subjected to public verbal attacks involving personal and gender-based humiliation. Waves of cyberbullying against female candidates and activists are also prevalent, including insults and threats to publish private information or photos. Social media is used to silence them or force them to withdraw from public life. There is no specific law defining or criminalizing political violence against women in Lebanon. Moreover, current laws do not provide effective mechanisms to address complaints resulting from this type of violence, whether in the public or digital sphere.

j. Female Prisoners' Rights

10. The decree No. 14310, issued in 1949, regulates prisons in Lebanon, but it lacks important updates that reflect the specific needs of female prisoners. The current law does not address fundamental issues such as reproductive health, pregnancy and breastfeeding, or children's needs. It also neglects to provide educational and work programs to rehabilitate female prisoners and reintegrate them into society after their release.

10.1. More importantly, mechanisms for integrating gender-sensitive services that consider women specific needs within prisons are absent. This leads to continued violations and reduced opportunities for rehabilitation and social reintegration. Prisons need a comprehensive approach that recognizes gender differences and ensures a safe and dignified environment for female prisoners, in accordance with international human rights standards.

10.2. Integrating gender-sensitive services in women's prisons is not an option but an urgent necessity to promote their rights and enable them to effectively rebuild their lives after serving their sentences.

k. Girls Education in Lebanon

11. Teenage girls in Lebanon, particularly refugees, are facing multiple challenges that affect their basic rights to education and protection from violence and exploitation. The escalating economic and social crises exacerbate their suffering, amidst the absence of effective policies that provide protection and a secure future.

11.1 According to a UNICEF report (2024), poverty is the main reason depriving girls of education, where 54% of them were forced to drop out of school due to financial constraints and 51% due to the lack of transportation. In addition, more than half of the girls suffer from period poverty, which affects their participation in education and daily activities.¹²³

11.2. Girls report experiencing harassment, bullying, and gender-based violence within schools and communities, and these violations often remain unreported due to social stigma. Child marriage rates and the employment of underage girls are also in rise, in particular among Palestinian and Syrian refugees, who are facing additional discrimination in education quality and difficulties accessing healthcare.¹²³

11.3. Data from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR (2025) indicates that 27% of children and youth in Lebanon are out of the education system, with high dropout rates among refugees. 7% of Syrian girls have stopped their education due to early marriage, amid additional difficulties in registering refugee children in public schools, which increases the risks of exploitation and marginalization.¹²⁴

11.4. In conflict-affected areas hosting large numbers of displaced persons, girls are facing compounded difficulties in accessing education and healthcare, with the absence of effective social protection systems and increasing incidents of domestic violence, harassment, and sexual exploitation.¹²⁵

l. Rights of Palestinian Refugee Women

12. Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon are facing significant obstacles, most notably the denial of their right to return to their original homes, despite the provisions of International Resolution 194, which affirms this right. Israel and its allies refuse to recognize the right of return, deepening the suffering of refugee women.

12.1. During the recent aggression against Lebanon, thousands of Palestinian families were displaced, particularly from camps in the South, Beirut, and Baalbek, affected by the collapse of humanitarian, psychological, and economic conditions. Gender-based violence increased significantly, with support centers witnessing a rise exceeding 130% in the number of cases compared to normal periods.

12.2. UNRWA services were significantly affected by the financial blockade and political targeting, leading to reduced education, health, and protection services, with shelters and schools in the camps closed for long periods of time. This resulted in a high dropout rate among students, especially due to transportation difficulties and the increased risk of harassment at camp entrances.

12.3. Administrative procedures, including digital verification, have affected refugees' access to social protection services, leading to increased discrimination, especially against poor and female-headed households, and increased domestic violence and the burdens on women and girls.

12.4. Economically, refugee women are facing legal and legislative restrictions that hinder their right to work freely, with discrimination in working conditions and wages, widening the economic gap and deepening unemployment rates among them.

➤ m. Recommendations

- Lift reservations on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Reform existing laws and policies to align them with international agreements and conventions, and eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination.
- Enact a unified civil law that sets the marriage age at 18 and criminalizes child marriage throughout Lebanese territory.
- Approve the unified civil law for personal status that was submitted to the Parliament on December 14th, 2022, under number 1272/2022.
- Criminalize marital rape and abolish the exemption enjoyed by spouses from rape crimes by amending Articles 503 and 504 of the Lebanese Penal Code.
- Amend Articles 505 and 518 of the Lebanese Penal Code to abolish the provision that exempts the perpetrator from punishment if he marries his victim.
- Abolish all articles that criminalize a woman's right to abortion, in particular Article 541 of the Lebanese Penal Code.
- Abolish the criminalization of adultery by repealing Articles 487, 488, and 489 of the Lebanese Penal Code.
- Amend the law criminalizing sexual harassment to address the gaps and challenges that were identified based on practical experience, in terms of precise definitions of acts considered as harassment, fair distribution of the burden of proof, effective protection mechanisms, and rehabilitation procedures for survivors.
- Strengthen penalties for sexual crimes to be deterrent, with clear provisions to protect victims from retaliation or harassment after reporting, especially in the workplace, while providing them with psychological and social support.
- Prioritize the safety and security of women and girls, especially in crises and wars, and ensure full compliance with Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
- Activate the establishment of a fund to assist victims of domestic violence, with clear mechanisms for distributing resources and providing material and psychological support to survivors.
- Enact a law aimed at abolishing the first clause of Article 7 of the Lebanese Labor Law, and add a seventh chapter to the first part of the Labor Law regulating domestic work for wages, ensuring decent working conditions for Lebanese and migrant domestic workers, setting effective and accessible mechanisms for filing complaints, monitoring and controlling working conditions, and holding violators accountable.
- Abolish all laws that criminalize persons engaged in prostitution, particularly Article 523, recognize them as victims, and remove related charges from their records.

- Criminalize all forms of pimping, recruitment, and facilitation of prostitution, regardless of presumed consent, and align penalties with existing anti-human trafficking laws.
- Abolish the exploitative artist visa system managed by immigration authorities.
- Criminalize sex purchase as an abuse of power and a form of violence.
- Provide sustainable support and comprehensive programs to assist persons engaged in prostitution.
- Amend the Lebanese Labor Law to explicitly state the principle of "equal pay for work of equal value," in accordance with Article 2 of the International Labor Organization ILO Convention No. 100, to ensure effective wage equality between women and men.
- Review and repeal legal provisions that prohibit women from working in certain sectors under the pretext that they are strenuous or dangerous, and replace them with measures that protect all workers from occupational hazards, regardless of their gender, while ensuring equal employment opportunities for all.
- Amend the Labor Law to increase the duration of paid maternity leave to at least 14 weeks, in accordance with the International Labor Organization ILO standards, while ensuring that women are not terminated or their job rights prejudiced during or after the leave.
- Amend the Labor Law to establish paid paternity leave.
- Develop national policies that ensure the provision of accessible, affordable, and state-supported childcare facilities in public and private workplaces, to support the empowerment of working women and promote their sustainable economic participation.
- Amend the Lebanese Nationality Law to ensure complete equality between women and men, and enshrine the right of Lebanese women to grant their nationality to their family, including their children and spouse.
- Amend municipal, optional, and parliamentary election laws to make them more modern and ensure fair representation for women.
- Enact a temporary and transitional "quota" system of no less than 30%, reaching parity in election laws, and adopt it in all administrative and governmental positions and decision-making roles.
- Enact a law criminalizing political violence against women.
- Reform the prison administration structure and transfer its management from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice, to ensure the dignity of female prisoners.
- Activate national policies for child protection, and ensure the effective laws implementation pertaining to combating early marriage and forced labor.
- Remove administrative and legal barriers that prevent refugee children from enrolling in public schools.

- Ensure a safe and inclusive educational environment that considers gender differences and responds to girls' psychological and social needs.
- Strengthen monitoring and accountability systems to follow up on violations against girls, and ensure the accountability of parties that contribute to their continuation or condone them.
- Apply international resolutions related to the right to self-determination and return for Palestinian women refugees.
- Implement international financial obligations towards women refugees, especially in sustaining the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to ensure the provision of basic services, stop service cuts, abolish the digital verification system, and integrate protection and gender into all UNRWA services.
- Grant Palestinian women refugees the right to work in all professions, and the right to access protection and social security.
- Develop a comprehensive law to combat violence and discrimination against women in Lebanon, and abolish all discriminatory laws against them, which contributes to empowering women refugees to access justice.



H.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

SUBMITTED BY:

- HIMAYA ASSOCIATION
- ALEF ASSOCIATION
- KAFA (ENOUGH) VIOLENCE & EXPLOITATION
- WOMEN'S HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION
- DEVELOPMENTAL ACTION WITHOUT BORDERS - NABA'A
- ARAB NETWORK FOR CHILD RIGHTS - AL-MANARA
- PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION
- ADYAN FOUNDATION
- I'MPOSSIBLE ORGANIZATION
- AL-JALIL SOCIAL WELFARE ASSOCIATION
- COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT
- ECIL CENTER FOR EARLY INTERVENTION

INTRODUCTION

The Third Universal Periodic Review on Human Rights for Lebanon was completed on January 18th, 2021. Lebanon's human rights record was reviewed before the United Nations Human Rights Council. During this round, Lebanon received 297 recommendations from Member States, accepted 179, and took note of the remaining ones.¹²⁶

31 recommendations were directed to the Lebanese state regarding children rights, of which 22 were accepted and 9 were noted. The recommendations that Lebanon only noted revolved around enacting and amending the legislations prohibiting child marriage, raising the marriage age and the age of criminal responsibility (amending Law 422/2002) for children, and enacting the necessary legislations to allow children born in Lebanon to obtain their right to legal recognition through birth certificates, in particular children of Lebanese women.

Regarding the recommendations that the Lebanese state has merely noted, we have noticed that some are linked to the absence of a unified personal status law, whereby the marriage age remains subject to sectarian laws that mostly still recognize child marriage while others are linked to discriminatory legislations against Lebanese women, specifically regarding their inability to grant nationality to their children, as well as depriving refugee women (Syrian and Palestinian) from registering their children under their name, and all the resulting unfair and discriminatory legal effects and violations of the child's civil, economic, and social rights, which expose them to significant risks, including child labor, sexual exploitation, or legal prosecution.

The accepted recommendations urged Lebanon to take appropriate measures to address and combat the phenomenon of child labor and trafficking, as well as to improve the health and education system for them by ensuring that all children (including children with disabilities and refugee children) who have reached school age will have access to compulsory, free and unrestricted education. In addition to that, it is necessary to protect children from all forms of physical and psychological violence (and it is noteworthy that the state merely took note of the need to prohibit all forms of corporal punishment against children), and to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years. Furthermore, there was a recommendation regarding the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

This report was prepared in collaboration and coordination with the coalition of civil society organizations and associations working in the field of children rights in Lebanon, in particular: Himaya Association, Alef Association, KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation, Women's Humanitarian Organization, Developmental Action Without Borders – Naba'a, the Arab Network for Child Rights - Al-Manara, the Palestinian Human Rights Organization, Adyan Foundation, I'mPossible Organization, Al-Jalil Social Welfare Association, the Community Organization for Development and Empowerment, and ECIL Center for Early Intervention.

Not to forget, the group of children who took part in the report's recommendations discussion. International organizations have also expressed their desire to co-sign this report, affirming their support for its content and recommendations, namely Save the Children International and the World Organization against Torture (OMCT). This report provides an assessment of the approved recommendations and voluntary commitments submitted by Lebanon. This work can contribute to strengthening the role of civil society organizations in monitoring and evaluating children rights and raising levels of government accountability.

The report focuses on key issues that represent serious violations of children rights in Lebanon. The information and data collected in this report form the basis for Lebanon's fourth periodic review in the children rights field.

The Lebanese Constitution affirms that Lebanon is a founding and active member of the United Nations and is committed to its obligations to protect human rights. Lebanon was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child on May 14, 1991 (without reservations) and ratified the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children. It has also signed the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. As for the Third Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure, it has neither signed nor ratified it.¹²⁷ Activating and implementing these protocols remain a significant challenge, particularly in the absence of political will and adequate resources, which led to setbacks in the protection of children rights.

The Situation of Palestinian Children in Lebanon – The UNRWA Crisis:

Lebanon witnesses the highest refugee density per capita globally, where individuals and community resilience is stretched to breaking point amid chronic poverty, social and economic exclusion, and escalating social tensions. Palestinian refugees, among the most vulnerable groups in this context, are facing entrenched structural marginalization across generations. 80% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live below the national poverty line, a figure that will exceed 90% without emergency cash assistance from UNRWA¹²⁸.

Since 2018, UNRWA has been facing a crippling funding crisis that began after the United States decision to halt its financial support, which constituted approximately one-third of the agency's budget. This crisis has continued to worsen until 2025, directly impacting the quality and continuity of the basic services it provides, particularly in Lebanon, where more than 210,000 Palestinian refugees are registered with the agency, including about 36,000 children of school age.

This crisis has led to the reduction, integration, or suspension of a number of vital programs, including education, healthcare, psychosocial support, and food and cash assistance. UNRWA has warned in its recent reports that the funding deficit could lead to a complete halt of its programs in Lebanon by mid-2025 if the estimated \$27.3 million funding gap is not filled.

The consequences of this decline are catastrophic for Palestinian children, as more than 65 UNRWA schools are threatened with closure, putting 36,000 children at risk of dropping out of school. The percentage of children engaged in the labor market has increased. The number of families sending their children (under the age of eighteen) to work in order to survive has risen to a shocking 16%, compared to 11% last April. Routine childhood vaccination rates have also decreased by 31% due to the pressure on limited health centers, while the Lebanese state provides no health or educational alternatives for Palestinian refugees. Furthermore, the reduction of psychological and social support programs has increased children's exposure to domestic violence and exploitation. Almost half of Palestinian refugee children suffer from anxiety and 30% from depression due to poor living conditions and clashes between factions in refugee camps, and the state of uncertainty about the future. All of these factors endanger the mental health of Palestinian children, in addition to the constant scenes and news that children are following on a daily basis about the battles in Gaza and the West Bank, and about loved ones who have been displaced, injured, or killed, which are greatly affecting them.¹³¹

Syrian Children in Lebanon – Between Uncertain Return and Renewed Displacement amid Lack of Protection: In 2025, Syrian children in Lebanon are facing escalating humanitarian

challenges due to the complexity of the Syrian displacement issue in Lebanon, which is witnessing rapid developments against the backdrop of security escalation on the Lebanese-Syrian borders and political and military changes within Syria. On one hand, the pace of forced and voluntary returns of Syrians from Lebanon to Syria has increased in the last few years, especially after the social and political pressures that have peaked in late 2024. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR schedule revealed that between December 8th, 2024, and January 16th, 2025, almost 195,200 Syrian refugees returned to their country, comprising 60% of children and adolescents¹³². However, this return, whether voluntary or forced, often took place in the absence of legal and humanitarian guarantees, where returnees, in particular children, are facing tragic situations including a lack of basic services, deprivation of education, and security threats such as detention or forced conscription, amid a devastated infrastructure and an ineffective protection system. 44%¹³³ of Syrian children in Lebanon do not attend school, which increases the risk of early engagement in the labor market. It is estimated that 80% of these children lack legal documentation, depriving them of access to education and healthcare and exposing them to the risk of marginalization and exclusion¹³⁴.

Syrian families are also facing difficulties in obtaining legal residencies due to the complexity and cost of the procedures, which exposes children to the risk of detention or deportation. Poverty and deprivation of education are forcing a large number of children to work in agriculture, construction, and street vending, under difficult circumstances and low wages, exposing them to exploitation and abuse. These children are also facing risks of physical and psychological violence, bullying, and discrimination, in the absence of adequate legal protection. When it comes to health, children are facing difficulties in accessing healthcare due to a lack of documentation and pressure on the health sector, especially when UNHCR has reduced its support for secondary healthcare.

On the other hand, after the escalation of military operations in the Syrian coastal regions during the first quarter of 2025, Lebanon witnessed a new wave of displacement. UNHCR revealed that more than 21,000 people, including thousands of children, had been displaced from Syria to Lebanon, according to statistics submitted by Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese Red Cross, as a result of the violence witnessed in the coastal region of western Syria during March. These children found themselves once again facing a troubled reality, lacking the minimum requirements for a decent life, including food, healthcare, and education. The sudden displacement has deprived most of them of continuing their education, and led to a lack of psychological support and increased risks of violence and exploitation¹³⁶.

Children at the Heart of the Conflict – Escalating Violations amid War and Accumulating Crises: The suffering of children in Lebanon has worsened due to the accumulation of crises. However, the Israeli war on Lebanon that began in October 2023 and continued until the end of 2024, constituted an additional catastrophic turning point that led to a dangerous escalation in children rights violations. Air raids and continuous bombardment have caused the displacement of over 200,000 people, a third of whom were children. This has led to the deprivation of thousands of children of their right to education due to school closures or their use as shelters, and the absence of appropriate educational alternatives. The total casualties of the Israeli war on Lebanon reached 4,047 deaths, including 316 children, and 16,638 injuries, including 1,250 children¹³⁷. These injuries included amputations and permanent physical deformities, while many children were left suffering from severe psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and nightmares¹³⁸. Furthermore, displacement conditions, poverty, and insecurity led to increased cases of domestic violence and child labor, especially in families that lost their breadwinner or source of income. These violations were accompanied by an almost complete collapse of

the health system, with the spread of infectious diseases such as Hepatitis A, showing a sharp increase in the number of cases, with 2,086 cases reported in early 2024 compared to only 609 cases in 2022. A similar or larger outbreak is expected in 2025, especially in the south, where Israeli attacks on health infrastructure have significantly reduced access to medical service¹³⁹. Throughout the war, children were at the forefront of the victims, without effective protection or a safe environment that preserves their fundamental rights.

b. Children Rights – Overview and General Recommendations

1. The Lebanese state has taken a number of legislative and policy steps in the field of children rights, despite economic and political challenges. On the legislative front, in January 2025, the Ministry of Labor launched a Child Labor Unit, aimed at reducing child labor in hazardous sectors through monitoring and coordination with the relevant bodies.

During 2023, the draft amendment to the Juvenile Protection Law No. 422/2002 was referred to the head of the Women and Child Committee in the Parliament to be reviewed and commented on, before referring it to the Administration and Justice Committee to be presented to a general session for voting. The draft includes proposals submitted by local associations and organizations, in addition to the Ministries of Social Affairs and Justice that was supposed to be approved during 2024. The proposed amendments included raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years, establishing a specialized judiciary and a specialized police force for juveniles, allocating appropriate investigation rooms, and removing the statute of limitations for sexual assault crimes against children, aimed at strengthening legal guarantees for their protection. On the policy level, in 2024, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has launched the "National Policy on Inclusive Education," which ensures the inclusion of children with special needs in the formal education system and provides a comprehensive learning environment. At the strategic level, the state, in partnership with international organizations, has prepared the "National Strategic Plan for Children's Rights 2022–2025," which focuses on four main pillars: education, protection, participation, and health. Despite these initiatives, the gap between the legal framework and adopted policies and the level of actual implementation persists, weakening their impact on ensuring comprehensive and effective protection for children, especially the most vulnerable groups. Furthermore, Lebanon has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, despite signing it 18 years ago.

1.1. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure.

1.2. Effectively implement international treaties, agreements, conventions, and their protocols that Lebanon has ratified through the adoption of domestic laws and reforms, and undertaking the necessary amendments to align with laws, policies, and practices accordingly.

1.3. Establish a mechanism for reporting and handling complaints of violations against children.

c. The Right to Legal Personality

2. The legal framework in Lebanon still contains significant gaps that hinder the full recognition of children's legal personality, particularly concerning the granting of nationality and birth registration. Lebanese women are still deprived of the right to grant nationality to their children, resulting in thousands of children being deprived of their fundamental

rights, including healthcare, education, and legal residency. This discrimination also extends to Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon, who cannot register their children under their names, although they are registered with UNRWA. Similarly, a Palestinian refugee woman registered with the Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees, who is married to a foreigner, is deprived from granting a "courtesy residency" to her children, unlike Lebanese citizens, which exacerbates her children's legal and living conditions. Furthermore, Syrian refugee children are facing increasing difficulties in registering their children births due to complex administrative procedures linked to the expiry of the parents' or one parent's residency, leading to newborns being deprived of basic legal documents and recognition of their legal personality, despite the fact that their status as displaced persons requires facilitation rather than complications.

2.1. Register and complete the issuance of identity documents for newborns of Palestinian refugees from Syria, in compliance with the ratified international agreements.

2.2. Amend the Lebanese nationality law to allow Lebanese women married to foreigners to grant Lebanese nationality to their children.

2.3. The Lebanese state should assess the situation of Palestinian refugees married to Lebanese citizens and cease the obstructing procedures regarding nationality acquisition.

d. The Right to Protection:

3. Protection from all Forms of Violence and Abuse: Children in Lebanon are increasingly exposed to various forms of violence, amid the absence of an effective and comprehensive protection system, and the presence of legal and structural gaps that have prevented adequate response to these violations. UNICEF reports in 2022 showed that more than 1.8 million children live in conditions that make them highly vulnerable to violence, and one in two children in Lebanon is at serious risk of physical, emotional, or sexual violence.¹⁴⁰

3.1. According to the UNICEF National Survey of 2021, 57% of Lebanese children between the ages of 1 and 14 have been subjected to some form of violent discipline by a family member, while the percentage rises to 82% among Palestinian refugees and 77% among Syrian refugees, reflecting differences in living conditions. In 2022, surveys also showed that 36% of parents have become harsher in their behavior with children as a result of economic pressures.

3.2. Despite the amendment of the Domestic Violence Law No. 293/2014 under Law 204/2020, all forms of physical, sexual, moral, and economic violence have been criminalized against individuals covered by this law, with a clear exception for the crime of marital rape from the scope of criminalization. Nevertheless, practices of physical punishment persist within homes and institutions. The safe center of the Developmental Action without Borders – Naba'a Association has received more than 45 women and girls who were victims of domestic violence during the years 2023 and 2024. KAFA organization has also recorded 1012 cases of women victims of violence and their children at the end of 2024. In addition to direct violence, neglect remains one of the most common forms of violation, although it is difficult to document.

3.3. Violence in schools remains widespread, despite the amendment of Article 186 of the Penal Code in 2014, particularly in public schools that suffer from overcrowding and a shortage of qualified staff. According to a 2022 report issued by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Save the Children, 38% of students acknowledged being subjected to verbal or physical violence within schools, including beating, insults, class expulsion, and

psychological abuse. Cases of physical assault by teachers requiring official intervention have been documented. However, disciplinary mechanisms remain ambiguous, and most schools lack child protection units or qualified social counselors.

3.4. Sexual violence is considered one of the most dangerous violations that children are facing in Lebanon, and its risk has increased due to poverty, family disintegration, and digital negligence. According to statistics from Himaya association, Lebanon has recorded an increase in cases of sexual violence against children between 2022 and 2023, from 10% to 12%, with registered cases of violence distributed between 46% for females and 54% for males¹⁴¹. The UNHCR has also documented an increase in cases of sexual exploitation, particularly in informal camps where protection and monitoring mechanisms are absent¹⁴². Lebanon has witnessed a series of shocking incidents involving the luring and sexual assault of children by organized networks, in addition to harassment cases in educational institutions and residential care facilities. These incidents reflect weak protection systems, lack of monitoring, and the urgent need to implement laws and activate prevention mechanisms and legal support for children. Furthermore, there is an escalation in online grooming through gaming and chat applications, amid a lack of parental control, despite digital awareness campaigns. These cases are complicated by the failure of victims and their families to report them, fearing social stigma.

3.5. Most victims decide to speak about the violence against them when the statute of limitations expires. Law No. 293/2014, as amended by Law No. 204/2020, grants minors the right to resort to the judge of urgent matters to obtain a protection order, without the consent or the presence of the guardian. This amendment allows the minor, especially the married minor who is subjected to domestic violence, to request protection independently and without requiring the consent of her guardian. Article 12 of Law No. 293/2014 was amended by Law No. 204/2020, so that protection now includes children up to the age of thirteen, regardless of the custody age specified in personal status laws.

3.6. Protection orders remain temporary until a final criminal judgment is issued, which limits their effectiveness. Law 422/2002 pertaining to the protection of minors at risk constitutes the basic legal framework for child protection, focusing on reform, rehabilitation, and protection. However, it still suffers from gaps related to the low age of criminal responsibility (7 years), legal procedures during detention, and criminal record. Regarding alternative care, placing children in residential care institutions remains common, despite constituting a violation of the principle of the child's best interest. These institutions have shifted from being a temporary solution in emergency situations to a permanent alternative due to the absence of effective support programs for nuclear or extended families. These institutions suffer from acute financial crises, as they rely on partial funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs, which does not cover the full operational costs, forcing them to depend on donations or reduce services. This crisis has worsened during the economic collapse, leading to a deteriorating quality of care and to children leaving or being removed from care centers or being neglected within the institutions themselves, in addition to the absence of family or community reintegration programs. Since 2018, limited steps have been taken to implement the family care project by local and international associations, which is based on keeping the child in their nuclear or extended family or with a reliable foster family when absolutely necessary, when the child is exposed to severe danger as stipulated in Law 422/2002. However, these initiatives have been weak in terms of funding and implementation.

➤ 4. Recommendations

- 4.1. Abolish Article 186 of the Penal Code concerning the types of discipline inflicted by parents and define escalating measures and procedures against parents who repeatedly violate the law.
- 4.2. Protection from sexual exploitation and support for psychological and social rehabilitation programs dedicated for children victims of abuse and sexual assault, and strict prosecution and punishment of perpetrators.
- 4.3. Amend the Penal Code regarding the statute of limitations for sexual violence crimes against children, thereby eliminating legal deadlines.
- 4.4. Amend Article 33 of the Juvenile Law No. 422/2002, particularly paragraphs two and three thereof, to ensure unified methods of appealing judicial decisions issued by ordinary courts and the juvenile court when determining the punishment. It is proposed that the judgment issued by the ordinary court be referred immediately upon its issuance, and before acquiring final status, to the juvenile court, so that the latter exclusively determines the appropriate punishment and measure for the minor. Appeals should be limited to the final decision issued by the juvenile court in accordance with the principle of individualized punishment and consideration of the juvenile's best interests.
- 4.5. Raise the age of criminal responsibility from 7 to a minimum of 13 years.
- 4.6. It is necessary to take into consideration the juvenile age, and their psychological, mental, and physical condition when adopting any measure beneficial for them and for their protection.
- 4.7. Provide specialized staff trained to deal with juveniles who come into contact with the law, whether they are children in conflict with the law, child witnesses, or child victims.
- 4.8. Maintain contact between the juvenile in conflict with the law and their family.
- 4.9. Ensure the necessary health services for the juvenile in conflict with the law.
- 4.10. Protect children in schools, and employ an adequate number of health and social counselors, psychologists, nurses, and specialists in dealing with people with disabilities in public schools in basic education, in accordance with approved international standards.
- 4.11. Protecting children from early marriage, especially the marriage of underage girls, remains a concerning phenomenon in Lebanon, and constitutes a systematic form of sexual and legal violence. According to a 2023 report issued by the United Nations Population Fund, 27% of Syrian refugee girls in Lebanon were married before reaching the age of 18, with higher rates reaching 32% recorded in areas such as Bekaa and Akkar. In the absence of a unified personal status law, the age of marriage in Lebanon remains subject to the personal status law of each sect and denomination. Despite amendments made by some sects regarding the age of marriage, most sects still recognize child marriage and conduct marriages without official documentation. Therefore, child marriage is considered legal, despite Lebanon's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women and despite having no reservations on paragraph two of the Article 16, which does not recognize child marriage and stipulates that child betrothal or marriage shall have no legal effect, and that all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory. Numerous civil society organizations have launched campaigns demanding the establishment of a minimum marriage age, and a draft law has been submitted to set eighteen as the minimum age for marriage. However, the efforts made by the Lebanese state remain insufficient in order to move forward with studying this proposal in preparation for its adoption without including any exceptions. Although Article 522 of the Penal Code that exempts perpetrators of sexual offenses from punishment if they are married to the victim, was abolished on February 15th, 2017, its effects persist in Article 505, which states the following: "If a valid marriage is concluded between the perpetrator and the victim, who is between 15 and 18 years old, the prosecution shall be suspended." Furthermore, Article 518 of the Penal Code exempts from punishment anyone who seduces a girl with a promise of marriage and deflowers her if he marries her.

4.12. Enact a unified personal status law that specifies the minimum age for marriage and prohibits child marriage, applicable to all Lebanese and residents on Lebanese territory without any exception.

4.13. Enact a law criminalizing early marriage outside religious and competent courts, punishing those responsible with deterrent penalties, and taking measures and procedures to protect minors, including refugee girls, from early marriage.

4.14. Amend Articles 505 and 518 of the Lebanese Penal Code as follows:

"Whoever has sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of fifteen shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of not less than five years. The penalty shall not be less than seven years if the minor is under the age of twelve. Whoever has sexual intercourse with a minor who has completed fifteen years of age but has not completed eighteen years of age shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of not less than three years."

4.15. Protecting children from participation in armed conflicts. In Lebanon, the practice of recruiting and using children by some Lebanese and Palestinian factions and parties has persisted, exploiting children's need for protection and their economic and social circumstances, specifically extreme poverty. This is exacerbated by the absence of human security and legal protection concepts in Lebanon. Until this present date, no law has been issued criminalizing the involvement of children in armed conflicts, leaving a large number of children in Lebanon victims of exploitation in wars and armed conflicts.

4.16. Take legal measures to prohibit and criminalize the use and recruitment of children and prevent their involvement in military tasks inside and outside Lebanon.

4.17. Provide care and rehabilitation for former child soldiers and reintegrate them into society, and protect them particularly from prosecution in military courts.

4.18. Protection of child victims of human trafficking. In July 2023, Judicial Police investigations, dating back to 2021, revealed the expansion of human trafficking

gang activities in Lebanon, exploiting the deteriorating economic and social conditions. Minor girls, particularly Syrian refugees, were lured into prostitution for sexual exploitation¹⁴³. In the same context, the Lebanese judiciary closed an association after proving its involvement in human trafficking crimes and sexual exploitation of minors. Fake pages on social media were also discovered, offering "children for sale" for amounts ranging between 500 and 1700 US dollars, sparking widespread debate about this dangerous phenomenon¹⁴⁴. The Lebanese legal framework does not distinguish between human trafficking victims of Palestinian nationality or those of other nationalities. Furthermore, non-Lebanese residents are not required to have residency permits to benefit from protection. The enactment of Law No. 164 on August 26th, 2011, constituted an advanced step towards combating human trafficking and strengthening victim protection. However, this law still contains significant gaps that prevent comprehensive and effective protection. Instead of presuming victim status, the law obliges individuals to provide evidence to prove they have been trafficked, which burdens victims and undermines the principle of protection. Furthermore, their participation in judicial procedures may require obtaining a residency permit, and they are not granted an unconditional right to compensation, which remains contingent on the confiscation of perpetrators' assets. The law also lacks clear mechanisms to protect victims' identities and does not provide specialized therapeutic guarantees for children under the age of eighteen, in addition to the absence of mandatory preventive measures for the state. The law holds all victims criminally liable unless they prove they were subjected to coercion, which contradicts international standards that presume victim status when there are serious indicators of trafficking, as stipulated in Article 586 (8) of the amended Penal Code. The increase in trafficking patterns, especially against women and children, is attributed to the lack of legal protection granted to Palestinian refugees, in addition to the "non-refoulement" policy pursued by the Lebanese state towards Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria. This has manifested in new forms of exploitation such as employing children and women for long hours without pay in exchange for providing shelter for the family, or providing financial amounts or benefits to those who have authority over refugees in exchange for allowing their exploitation in begging, prostitution, forced labor, or even practices similar to slavery.

- 4.19. The Lebanese state shall amend Law 164/2011 to protect victims of human trafficking without discrimination, in particular children and women, and drop criminal liability from them, in accordance with international standards in this regard.
- 4.20. Issue special laws and decrees to guarantee appropriate protection and support for human trafficking victims, especially children.
- 4.21. It is necessary to strengthen oversight of childcare centers to ensure that children are not exploited under the cover of charitable work.
- 4.22. Establish effective and confidential mechanisms for reporting trafficking cases, and provide legal, psychological, and social protection for victims.

e. Child Labor

5. Over the past five years, the phenomenon of child labor in Lebanon has witnessed significant deterioration due to successive crises. The number of working children is likely to increase rapidly due to the absence of protective measures, assistance, health, social, and educational services, in addition to the economic situation, the lack of free and compulsory education for all, increased school dropout rates, and the exploitation of children in hazardous work, including begging, street and informal sectors work. Furthermore, new forms of work have emerged, such as online work, exposing children to digital exploitation risks. Child labor is one of the major challenges threatening childhood in Lebanon, where the number of working children is estimated at about 100,000, according to official statistics from 2016. The percentage of Lebanese working children reached 40%. However, clarifying these percentages, reviewing sources, and comparing them with the results of the Central Administration of Statistics surveys for 2019 and 2022 was 30% last year¹⁴⁵, reflecting the lack of follow-up and planning, and weak official monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

5.1. UNICEF reports indicate an increase in the number of families sending their children (under the age of eighteen) to work to be able to cope with a shocking rate, reaching 16% in January 2023, compared to 11% in April of the same year¹⁴⁶.

5.2. Despite Lebanon's signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates in Article 32 the protection of children from economic exploitation and hazardous work that impedes their physical, psychological, mental, or social development, the implementation of these obligations remains weak. The Ministry of Labor's Inspectorate suffers from a severe shortage of human and material resources and conducts only a limited number of inspection tours, especially in remote areas.

5.3. Moreover, the National Action Plan adopted by the government for the period 2013–2016, aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labor, has not been implemented as required and has not been renewed or updated. There is also no comprehensive national registry identifying the numbers of working children and their distribution by regions and sectors. The head of the Child Labor Combat Unit at the Ministry of Labor has stated that the plan did not receive the necessary funding, which led to the closure of some centers specialized for combating child labor¹⁴⁷.

5.4 Recommendations

- 5.4.1. Update and activate the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor and provide adequate financial and human resources for its effective implementation.
- 5.4.2. Impose penalties on employers who employ children under the legal age (13 years) and criminalize parents who push their children to work without extreme necessity.
- 5.4.3. Provide social and economic support programs for the poorest families, linking this support to the condition of keeping children in school.
- 5.4.4. Amend Article 22 of the Lebanese Labor Law to criminalize the employment of children under the age of 15, considering it a form of violence, and take legal measures against violators, whether they are employers or parents.

6. The education sector in Lebanon is experiencing a rapid deterioration, making it one of the most affected children's rights over the past five years, due to accumulated economic, social, and political crises that have led to a gradual collapse of the educational system. UNICEF estimates for 2023 indicate that approximately 700,000 children, representing about 35% of school age children, are outside the formal education system or lack genuine learning opportunities¹⁴⁸. A survey conducted in January 2025 showed that 30% of families reduced their spending on education to secure basic needs¹⁴⁹. Amid this deterioration, enrollment rates in public schools have decreased to 28%, while reliance on private education has increased, according to the statistical bulletin of the Educational Center for Research and Development for the year 2022-2023, reflecting the loss of confidence in public education and many families turning to irregular alternatives or abandoning education entirely. This decline is attributed to the poor quality of public education resulting from poor infrastructure, a shortage of qualified staff, especially in rural areas, low success rates, and the absence of long-term educational planning.
7. Public spending on education has not exceeded 2% of GDP since 2020, and this decline continues. According to The Policy Initiative, The Ministry of Education's budget for 2024 represents only 14% of its budget size in 2019, indicating a significant decrease in sector funding. This lack of funding has led to a shortage of educational resources, increased classroom overcrowding, and deteriorating education quality, while the state continues to support private religious and non-religious schools, semi-free and half-free schools, contributing to deepening the educational gap between students in public and private schools.
8. The education crisis was exacerbated by the intensification of the war on Lebanon in September 2024, where hundreds of schools were closed and more than 500 were converted into shelters for displaced persons, affecting 500,000 children's regular education. In the absence of adequate infrastructure, distance learning has become unavailable to the majority of students due to power outages, weak internet access, and the absence of flexible curricula that adapt to emergency situations. Even after the ceasefire was announced in November 2024, many schools remained closed due to damage.
9. Despite Lebanon's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the existence of Law 220/2000, which is supposed to guarantee inclusive education, this law is limited to physical disabilities and exempts intellectual and psychological disabilities, creating an additional legal obstacle. Estimates show that less than 1% of children with disabilities are enrolled in public schools, whereas their number should not be less than 45,000 children, while the official figures do not exceed 8,558. In 2022/2023, only about 3,000 children with special needs were given access to inclusive education in some public schools, reflecting the weak comprehensiveness of government efforts. These children are facing additional difficulties in private schools, which often refuse to enroll them or charge them exorbitant fees.
10. Refugee children are also facing numerous challenges, most notably discrimination, racism, and bullying, pushing them to drop out or refrain from enrolling. Some public schools impose difficult administrative requirements, such as submitting valid residency documents or paying fees, which contradicts the principle of free education. Estimates indicate that more than half of Syrian refugee children are out of school, while approximately 36,000 Palestinian children are facing the risk of dropping out if UNRWA services cease.
11. Although Law 150/2011 amending Article 49 of Legislative Order 134/1959 stipulates the mandatory and free education for all children up to the age of 15, the absence of implementing decrees and inter-ministerial coordination has impeded its effective implementation, thereby weakening the state's ability to combat dropout rates and ensure inclusive and equitable education.

➤ 12. Recommendations

- 12.1 Increase the share of the general budget allocated to public education to meet the growing demand and ensure quality education.
- 12.2. Issue implementing decrees to enforce the mandatory education law (150/2011) and establish mechanisms to monitor school dropout cases.
- 12.3. Adopt an emergency plan to save the academic year, including providing incentives for teachers, transportation, stationery, and school meals for students.
- 12.4. Develop a comprehensive national strategy to educate children with disabilities, including amending Law 220/2000 to comprise all types of disabilities, providing inclusive schools, comprehensive curricula, and trained teachers.
- 12.5. Remove all administrative and financial barriers that impede the enrollment of refugee children and children with disabilities in public schools.

f. The right to health

13. The right to health is a fundamental right that has been severely affected in Lebanon amid an unprecedented economic and social crisis that has directly impacted children and families ability to access healthcare. Medical professionals and government officials have warned that Lebanese hospitals are nearing total incapacity to provide basic health services, including life-saving surgeries and emergency medical care, due to acute financial collapse. Public and private hospitals have suffered from a continuous shortage of medicines and medical supplies. Emergency and intensive care departments were closed or downsized due to medical staff migration and declining healthcare workers' wages. Treatment costs have become an unbearable burden on families, leading to increased deaths and disabilities among children due to delay or lack of treatment in emergency cases. A UNICEF survey conducted in 2023 revealed that 8 out of 10 families (81%), reduced their healthcare spending compared to six months earlier, when 75% of families were already cutting back on these expenses¹⁵⁰.
14. Reports from the Ministry of Public Health and United Nations organizations indicate that a large percentage of children have been deprived of essential preventive and curative health services due to the collapse of the primary healthcare system and the absence of comprehensive health coverage. Deaths among children have been recorded because their families could not afford hospitalization costs or lacked health insurance, particularly in peripheral areas and camps. Among the most prominent of these cases were children's deaths in public and private hospitals due to the unavailability of beds or urgent treatment, as occurred in the Tripoli Governmental Hospital.
15. Basic children vaccination rates have also witnessed a dangerous decline during this period. In 2022, a UNICEF report showed that approximately 66% of children in Lebanon dropped out of the mandatory vaccination program¹⁵¹.
16. It is noted that most dropout children are over the age of five, despite the need for important booster doses at ages 10, 14, and 18. This has led to the resurgence of diseases such as measles, cholera, and polio in some areas.
17. Children with disabilities have suffered from an almost complete absence of specialized healthcare, including physical, psychological, and rehabilitative treatments. A large number of them have also been deprived of assistive devices and surgical procedures, especially in rural areas and camps, due to lack of funding and a scarcity of specialized doctors.
18. Palestinian refugees remain deprived of government health coverage and are not included in social security services despite their contributions. Ten percent of Palestinian refugees suffer from stunting, while anemia spreads among 28% of children aged 0-5 years¹⁵². The cessation of U.S. funding and the decline in donor support for UNRWA have resulted in a sharp reduction in its services in Lebanon, which threatens a humanitarian catastrophe in case of its complete cessation, as more than 30,000 children will be deprived of basic healthcare and threatened with serious health complications due to the lack of vaccinations and medicines. Syrian refugees rely on partial and limited support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners. In 2023, UNHCR announced its inability to cover the treatment costs of 97 Syrian refugees who required life-saving surgeries, and confirmed that patients suffering from chronic diseases such as kidney failure and cancer have become unable to receive regular treatment.

➤ 19. Recommendations

- 19.1 Ensure comprehensive health coverage for all children without discrimination, including refugee children, whether Palestinian or Syrian.
- 19.2 Activate the comprehensive healthcare card approved by the Lebanese Parliament and ensure its effective implementation for marginalized groups.
- 19.3. Improve and generalize school health programs in all schools, public and private, through cooperation between the Ministries of Health and Education, aimed at ensuring periodic medical examinations, promote vaccination campaigns, health, nutritional, and psychological awareness, especially in remote and deprived areas.
- 19.4. Ensure the provision of basic vaccines for children in all health centers, and monitor compliance through periodic campaigns in cooperation with municipalities and schools.
- 19.5. Rehabilitate and equip government hospitals with the necessary medicines and technologies, especially pediatric and emergency departments.
- 19.6. Provide specialized psychological and social support programs for children affected by conflicts, violence, or natural disasters, with special attention to children with disabilities.



SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

SUBMITTED BY:

- THE ARAB INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS – LEBANON
- ABAAD – RESOURCE CENTER FOR GENDER EQUALITY
- MOUVEMENT SOCIAL
- THE LEBANESE WOMEN DEMOCRATIC GATHERING

INTRODUCTION

This report highlights the concerns of human rights and feminist organizations regarding the status of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Lebanon, in recognition of the vital role these rights play in safeguarding individuals' health, preserving their dignity, upholding their right to privacy and personal autonomy, and enhancing overall quality of life. SRHR are inextricably linked to a broader framework of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Lebanon is currently facing a range of complex challenges and rapidly evolving developments in this domain, encompassing intersecting health, social, legal, and cultural dimensions. Despite its international obligations, the Lebanese legal framework remains inadequate in protecting individuals from the violence and discrimination they encounter when attempting to exercise these rights. Furthermore, the absence of comprehensive national policies on sexual and reproductive health, coupled with persistent barriers to accessing safe, equitable, and inclusive services—particularly for individuals from the most marginalized and vulnerable groups—further exacerbates the situation.

This report seeks to present an overview of the current state of SRHR in Lebanon by analyzing the relevant legal, social, and cultural frameworks and identifying key structural and systemic factors that hinder the full realization of these rights. It further puts forward concrete, actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing Lebanon's compliance with international human rights standards and ensuring that all individuals are empowered to exercise their SRHR freely, safely, and without discrimination.

It is also noteworthy that Lebanon has received several recommendations during previous review cycles that closely align with SRHR issues, including two specific recommendations directly addressing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. These include:

- *Ensuring universal access to information and services related to sexual and reproductive health, with particular attention to persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals, as well as migrants and refugees.*
- *Integrating comprehensive sexuality education into the national curriculum, and developing the necessary resources and teacher training programs to ensure its effective implementation.*

a. Key Violations Related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

1. In recent years, a notable rise in cases of child marriage has been recorded, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the aftermath of the Beirut Port explosion. Some families resorted to marrying off their daughters at an early age as a means of alleviating economic hardship or as a perceived form of protection in the face of instability. Despite the efforts of civil society organizations through awareness campaigns, advocacy, and psychosocial support, the absence of a unified personal status law remains a major obstacle to addressing this phenomenon. Certain religious sects continue to permit marriage at a young age without sufficient oversight, in contravention of Lebanon's international obligations and in violation of children's rights.

1.1. There is a significant gap in the availability of sexual and reproductive healthcare services. According to a study by the Lebanese Association for Reproductive Health, 40% of women in rural areas do not receive regular gynecological care, due to lack of information or fear of social stigma. A 2021 study by the American University of Beirut further found that 60% of girls aged 15 to 24 avoid visiting gynecological clinics due to prevailing social norms.

1.2. Lebanon is witnessing increasing restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, particularly regarding discussions of sexual orientation and gender identity.

1.3. The State has not undertaken a comprehensive review to eliminate legal provisions that conflict with international human rights standards. Current Lebanese laws continue to contain provisions that perpetuate violations of sexual and reproductive rights.

1.4. Degrading practices such as anal examinations, virginity testing, and forced body searches continue to be carried out, particularly against individuals suspected of being homosexual. These practices constitute a grave violation of dignity and fundamental rights.

1.5. The policies adopted by ministries and official institutions lack a comprehensive rights-based approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights, limiting the scope and protection of these rights.

1.6. The Ministry of Public Health provides contraceptives and family planning services through all of its primary healthcare centers across the country. These services are accessible to all women and adolescent girls, regardless of their marital status, and without the need for third-party consent. However, there is no existing legislation or regulatory framework governing contraceptives or related services.

1.7. Lebanon's healthcare system offers maternity services through both public and private hospitals and primary healthcare centers. These centers provide essential services, such as antenatal follow-ups, testing, and education on breastfeeding and nutrition—either free of charge or at symbolic fees. Hospitals, particularly private ones, offer more specialized care but at significantly higher costs. While some maternal health indicators have improved, challenges persist. These include weak infrastructure, a fragmented health system, limited access for women in rural areas, and the impact of ongoing political and economic crises on the provision of sexual and reproductive health services.

1.8. Arbitrary arrests of gender-diverse and gender-nonconforming individuals continue to occur based on appearance, often accompanied by torture, ill-treatment, and denial of fundamental rights, including access to legal counsel and healthcare.

1.9. Despite the efforts of the National AIDS Control Program, gaps remain in the provision of comprehensive treatment, and stigma against people living with HIV continues to pose a significant barrier to access and support.

1.10. Equal access to healthcare services, namely in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, is not guaranteed to all individuals, particularly persons with disabilities, refugees, migrants, and detainees. There is a lack of specific legislation protecting the rights of refugee and migrant women workers, and a clear disparity persists in access to services between Lebanese and non-Lebanese populations, as well as between married and unmarried individuals.

1.11. Marginalized women, including unmarried women, rural women, refugees, migrant workers, and detainees, face significant challenges in accessing information and means related to reproductive health. These challenges are compounded by weak enforcement of existing laws, the absence of comprehensive policies, and insufficient allocation of resources.

1.12. Women's rights receive inadequate attention in premarital preparation, where services tend to focus primarily on maternal and child health while neglecting the rights of men and couples more broadly. Premarital medical examinations are not accompanied by appropriate awareness initiatives or educational efforts.

1.13. The Ministries of Education and Higher Education and Public Health approved Decree No. 11/6610 on 4 June 2010, which calls for the integration of education on reproductive health and gender equality into school curricula. However, this decree has yet to be fully implemented across all educational institutions.

b. International Legal Framework Related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Lebanon

2. Lebanon has participated in numerous international efforts related to human rights and development issues and is a State party to several core international human rights treaties.

2.1. However, Lebanon has not acceded to several key human rights treaties, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention against Enforced Disappearance, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

2.2. Lebanon is a party to a number of International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, but has not ratified several fundamental conventions such as Conventions No. 190, 189, and 97.

2.3. Lebanon maintains a reservation on Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to which it acceded in 1996.

➤ 3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol.
- 3.2. Accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- 3.3. Ratify key ILO conventions including, Convention No. 190 (2019) on eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work, Convention No. 189 (2011) on decent work for domestic workers, Convention No. 97 (1994) concerning migrant workers.
- 3.4. Accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- 3.5. Accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- 3.6. Ratify the optional protocols attached to international conventions, particularly those related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW), and the International Covenants on Human Rights.
- 3.7. Withdraw reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- 3.8. Issue the optional declaration provided for under Article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, recognizing the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive and consider individual communications.

c. Sexual and Reproductive Rights within Lebanese Statutory Laws

4. Existing laws do not provide protection against discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation, or health status, as in the case of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

4.1. Lebanese law does not explicitly recognize the individual's right to bodily autonomy and restricts women's freedom to control their own bodies, as abortion remains prohibited and criminalized under Articles 539 to 549 of the Penal Code.

4.2. Perpetrators of homicide, particularly in cases referred to as "honor crimes," may benefit from mitigated penalties under Article 252 of the Penal Code.

4.3. Marital rape is not criminalized under Lebanese law, despite the existence of legislation protecting women and other family members from domestic violence. While the Penal Code criminalizes rape, there is a significant legislative gap due to the absence of explicit provisions criminalizing marital rape, compounded by the continued existence of Article 503 of the Penal Code.

4.4. Lebanese law neither defines nor explicitly addresses sexual violence.

4.5. Although Article 522 of the Penal Code was repealed in 2017, perpetrators may still evade punishment for certain sexual offenses if they marry their victims, pursuant to Articles 505 and 518. Marital rape remains uncriminalized, whereas laws do criminalize sexual exploitation, facilitation of exploitation, and forced prostitution.

4.6. Lebanese law does not recognize the right of individuals to change their gender identity, despite some judicial developments in this area.

4.7. The Lebanese Penal Code contains provisions used to criminalize homosexuality, most notably Article 534, which criminalizes "intercourse against the order of nature," alongside other articles frequently invoked to detain individuals, including Articles 209, 521, 526, 531, 532, and 533. These provisions contribute to justifying arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment, including degrading forced anal examinations, thereby impeding the targeted individuals' ability to access legal protection based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

4.8. Lebanon lacks a unified civil personal status law; instead, citizens and residents are subject to sectarian laws, approximately fifteen in total, granted authority under Article 9 of the Constitution to regulate matters of marriage, divorce, alimony, custody, and the legal age of marriage. These laws conflict in several respects with Lebanon's international obligations and the Constitution itself, reinforcing the sectarian authorities' control over family affairs, which obstructs the addressing of sexual and reproductive rights and health issues, including awareness and education.

4.9. Law No. 220/2000 concerning the rights of persons with disabilities does not adopt a comprehensive inclusion-based approach and does not encompass all rights articulated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

4.10. Although Law No. 164 of 2011 on combating human trafficking was enacted, it lacks a comprehensive and clear definition of trafficking and fails to provide adequate protection for victims. The law places insufficient emphasis on victim protection and prioritizes punitive measures. It does not include provisions related to protective measures and exposes victims to prosecution, although it exempts them from punishment if they were coerced "to commit acts punishable by law or violate residency or work conditions." Consequently, Lebanese legislation limits victim protection to exemption from punishment rather than excluding criminal responsibility, which is inconsistent with international standards in this area¹⁵³.

➤ 5. Recommendations

- 5.1. Enact legislation based on human rights approaches, respecting the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and inclusivity, while aligning national laws, particularly personal status laws, with the international treaties ratified by Lebanon. This requires a comprehensive review of all laws and legislation related to sexual and reproductive rights, taking into consideration all age groups, including children and the elderly.
- 5.2. Activate the application of Article 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure, which gives precedence to international treaties over statutory laws in cases of conflict, by adopting the principle of the supremacy of international agreements.
- 5.3. Ensure the effective implementation of legal provisions guaranteeing freedom of opinion and expression, particularly on grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation, and provide tangible protection to individuals against discrimination or repression related to these freedoms.
- 5.4. Repeal Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code, which criminalizes “acts against nature,” as well as Articles 521, 526, 531, 532, and 533, which are employed to indirectly criminalize homosexuality.
- 5.5. Ensure that women and girls have access to safe abortion services, including post-abortion care, and repeal all legal provisions in the Penal Code that criminalize abortion.
- 5.6. Enact a unified civil personal status law that is consistent with Lebanon’s international obligations, guarantees equality among all citizens, defines a minimum age of marriage in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, prohibits child marriage, and applies to all Lebanese citizens and resident of Lebanon without exception.
- 5.7. Adopt a comprehensive law to combat violence against women and girls that goes beyond the limited amendments made to the 2014 Law on the Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence. This law should explicitly criminalize marital rape and provide comprehensive protection for women and children.
- 5.8. Enact legislation regulating the procedures for amending legal documents and civil status for transgender individuals, in a manner that respects gender identity and ensures individual dignity and privacy.
- 5.9. Amend Law No. 220 on the rights of persons with disabilities, or enact a new law in line with a full inclusion approach and the comprehensive rights framework outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 5.10. Codify the right of women and girls with disabilities to pregnancy and childbirth, and ensure that fetuses are not deprived of the right to life based on a presumed disability.
- 5.11. Amend all legal provisions or judicial rulings that exclude or discriminate against persons with disabilities and restrict their right to emotional and sexual autonomy, including the right to marry, choose a partner, form a family, have children, and raise them.
- 5.12. Criminalize and prohibit any forced or involuntary bodily intervention, particularly in cases of forced racial sterilization or medical decisions taken without the informed consent of the individual concerned.
- 5.13. Enact clear legislation allowing individuals to amend their legal documents and civil status based on gender transition, and ensure the availability of the necessary legal and administrative procedures.

d. National Policies Related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Lebanon

6. According to the National Assessment Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Lebanon, it was found that Lebanese ministries generally have limited information surrounding the definition of these rights and their connection to the international human rights framework. Moreover, the State has not adopted an official definition that fully aligns with international human rights standards.

6.1. Most ministries view sexual and reproductive health and rights as limited to reproductive health services, particularly those provided through primary healthcare centers operated by the Ministry of Public Health, with the exception of the National AIDS Control Program.

6.2. Marginalized groups face limited access to services due to lack of information, absence of means, or legal restrictions that limit women's autonomy over decisions related to their own bodies. This increases the risk of resorting to unsafe abortion, especially in light of its criminalization under Lebanese law.

6.3. No specific strategies are in place to address sexual and reproductive rights in prisons, particularly in women's prisons, a situation exacerbated by the broader conditions of Lebanon's prison system.

6.4. In October 2016, the Lebanese Parliament adopted the law instituting the "National Human Rights Commission and the Committee for the Prevention of Torture." However, the law establishing the Commission does not assign it any role in protecting individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

6.5. Most ministries do not integrate sexual and reproductive health and rights into their policies. This includes the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. For instance, the Ministry of Education has not incorporated these rights into the national curriculum. Sexuality education is not considered part of the formal educational system and is only addressed marginally within health awareness programs.

➤ 7. Recommendations

- 7.1. Develop a comprehensive and inclusive national strategy on sexual and reproductive health and rights that ensures availability, accessibility, and quality of services, with particular attention to rural areas.
- 7.2. Establish a clear coordination mechanism among relevant ministries and institutions to ensure effective implementation of national strategies and plans.
- 7.3. Elaborate a national protocol for counseling on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and train healthcare professionals on its application through specialized trainers. This protocol should be disseminated across relevant ministries.
- 7.4. Allocate sufficient financial resources within the national budget for the implementation of national plans, to be developed, reviewed, and monitored periodically through a transparent participatory mechanism.
- 7.5. Build the capacities of staff within ministries through training and empowerment, particularly in implementing national policies and addressing issues such as sexual violence, HIV/AIDS, and homosexuality.
- 7.6. Expand sexual and reproductive health services across all regions in proportion to population size, through government-run primary healthcare centers, clinics of the Ministry of Public Health, social development centers, and contracted civil society organizations.
- 7.7. Ensure access to safe abortion services and post-abortion care, and expand free and comprehensive access to family planning and contraception methods for all individuals, including those who are unmarried.
- 7.8. Guarantee that adolescents and youth have access to a comprehensive, decent, age-appropriate, and high-quality range of contraceptive options, including a wide variety of combined contraceptive methods.
- 7.9. Provide free contraceptive methods in primary healthcare centers and other youth-friendly facilities.
- 7.10. Make emergency contraception and necessities for abortion available to girls survivors of rape, within 120 hours (5 days) of the incident.
- 7.11. Provide preventive services and necessary care to reduce the risk of cervical cancer.
- 7.12. Ensure the provision of high-quality contraceptive services for all individuals regardless of their spending power, age, sex, marital status, level of education, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or other considerations.
- 7.13. Improve and expand the geographic reach of mobile clinic services to include the most vulnerable populations, while engaging municipalities and local communities in awareness efforts.
- 7.14. Integrate comprehensive sexuality education into school and university curricula, and work with parent committees to develop awareness programs in partnership with the local community.

- 7.15. Make awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights mandatory when applying for marriage, and raise awareness among families of the missing about their sexual and reproductive rights and ensure the necessary support.
- 7.16. Combat arbitrary and discriminatory arrests of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, particularly refugees, and end the detention of transgender women on prostitution charges without evidence.
- 7.17. Prohibit torture and inhumane treatment of LGBTQI+ individuals, especially refugees, in detention facilities and prisons; hold perpetrators accountable; and ban the use of anal examinations in line with the Ministry of Justice memorandum issued in 2012.
- 7.18. Ensure protection and access to healthcare for LGBTQI+ individuals and people living with HIV, and allow gender marker changes on official documents without requiring surgical procedures and at an affordable cost.
- 7.19. Improve conditions in prisons and detention facilities, ensuring respect for the sexual and reproductive rights of detainees, with an emphasis on access to medication and inclusion of clear provisions in the national prison code to uphold these rights.
- 7.20. Ensure that the National Human Rights Commission holds authority to receive individual complaints regarding violations of sexual and reproductive rights.
- 7.21. Expand the enjoyment of these rights to all marginalized groups, including: poor families, refugees, migrant workers from Asia and Africa, stateless children, refugee children, victims of trafficking, children with disabilities, and ensure special protection for Syrian refugees against the risks of sexual exploitation and forced labor.
- 7.22. Develop training and guidance material on SRHR, and establish dedicated training units within a national coordination mechanism to train the largest possible number of personnel in public institutions.
- 7.23. Strengthen awareness and media education on issues related to SRHR at the national level.
- 7.24. Prioritize the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, and combat all forms of stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.



J.

SYRIAN REFUGEE'S RIGHTS

SUBMITTED BY:

- WG PASC (WORKING GROUP FOR THE PERSON AFFECTED BY THE SYRIAN -CRISIS)
- ALEF - ACT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
- ABAAD
- ACHR
- ANND
- BASMEH W ZAITOUNEH
- CARITAS
- CLDH
- CREADEL
- DPNA
- HELEM
- HIMAYA
- HIMAYA DAEEM AATTAA
- HOUSE OF PEACE
- ISSAM FARES INSTITUTE

- LECORVAW
- LUPD
- MOSAIC
- MSD
- NABAA
- NAJDEH
- PHRO
- RUWWAD TANMIYA
- RDFL
- SAWA
- SHIFT
- TABITHA
- TWI
- URDA
- UTOPIA
- WOMAN ALIVE
- WOMEN NOW

a. Executive Summary

Anti-refugee rhetoric in Lebanon has significantly increased over the last 5 years, alongside restrictive policies and measures, both official and unofficial. This situation severely undermines social stability, fueling discrimination, forced evictions, and deportations. Refugees continued to face challenges due to insufficient legal documentation and the absence of refugee status determination, which has raised concerns over their safety and access to services. With political shifts in Syria and the fall of the regime, a new influx of Syrians into Lebanon began, adding further pressure to the already strained context.

b. Social Stability

1. As the context in Lebanon continued to deteriorate during these 5 years, relations between the Lebanese host community and the Syrian refugee population continued to worsen as well, adding to the already precarious safety and security of Syrian refugees.¹⁵⁴ Tensions have escalated into physical assaults and vigilante attacks among the two groups – sometimes life-threatening.¹⁵⁵
2. Racial discrimination has been a severe problem in the country as widespread and targeted campaigns have been reported against individuals from Syria. While 4% of Syrian households reported being subject to discriminatory curfews in areas where they live in 2022¹⁵⁶, this number peaked at an alarming 12% of Syrian households in 2023¹⁵⁷. Indeed, several municipalities have imposed arbitrary and discriminatory measures against Syrians residing within their jurisdiction. These measures did not just include curfews, but also raids, arbitrary detention, confiscation of documents, and wage caps.¹⁵⁸ For instance, several municipalities and governorates have imposed curfews on Syrian refugees in April 2024.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, other municipalities, such as Al-Qaa and Sin El Fil, implemented further discriminatory measures, including the restriction of Syrian children from enrolling in public schools unless they and their families had legal residency permits.¹⁶⁰
3. Several newly arrived Syrian asylum seekers were not allowed to enter informal tented settlements, while many of those already inside Lebanon defaulted on rent payments and found themselves houseless. The deteriorating safety and security of Syrian refugees in the country can be directly attributed to the increasingly hostile mood against them at both grassroot and governmental levels.¹⁶¹
4. Communications by the Government of Lebanon (GoL) have repeatedly expressed Lebanon's inability to continue managing the refugee crisis in the country. The GoL and several line ministers, Members of Parliament, municipalities, and political figures have been consistently perpetuating anti-refugee sentiments through a series of antagonistic statements. The threatening government statements and stances have serious implications on the public's perception of the refugee crisis in Lebanon. Undoubtedly, these statements contribute to the rhetoric of blaming Syrian refugees, particularly during a time when poverty rates are rising among the Lebanese population and there is intensified competition for limited resources.
5. In this strained context, members of the PASC WG have noted the rise in crime against Syrian refugees and their unwillingness to report on them due to their fragile situation¹⁶². WG PASC members have observed a heightened vigilance towards Syrians, which has, in turn, fueled feelings of unsafety, a fear of the host community, and self-imposed mobility restrictions, all often leading to depression among Syrians¹⁶³. Even refugee-led NGOs fear their staff members being stopped at checkpoints and harassed due to their legal status or nationality.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, many WG PASC members have witnessed restrictive mea-

asures against the work of NGOs supporting Syrians in different regions across the country, creating significant challenges. Indeed, the shrinking civic space, and hate speech and misinformation against organizations working on the refugee crisis, have created not just access constraints to providing assistance to those in need, but risks for staff members¹⁶⁵.

6. As the armed conflict escalated in Lebanon in September 2024, Lebanese communities were prioritized in the authorities' emergency response, leaving many displaced Syrian families without adequate emergency housing.¹⁶⁶ The latter had to face soaring rent prices, social pressure to vacate for Lebanese Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and limited access to essential services such as food, water, blankets, medicine, and cash assistance.¹⁶⁷ 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.¹⁶⁸
7. Following the ceasefire, refugees continued to face barriers 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.¹⁶⁹ At least 35 measures were recorded in southern Lebanon aimed at preventing Syrian refugees from returning to their previous residences.¹⁷⁰
8. LGBTQIA+ refugees, particularly those from Syria, encounter significant and multifaceted discrimination in Lebanon. They often do not have adequate legal safeguards or access to essential services, and are exposed to increased risks of violence and exploitation. The intersection of xenophobia and homophobia exacerbates their already precarious circumstances, limiting their access to justice or support.

c. Forced Evictions

1. The rate of evictions has significantly increased, largely due to a set of restrictive decisions that increased refugees' vulnerability in Lebanon. For example, in 2023, the MoIM banned renting properties to refugees who are not registered with the municipalities and who do not possess legal residency¹⁷¹. This led to the arbitrary eviction of many Syrian refugees from their buildings and informal settlements.
2. In 2022, at least 1871 cases of refugees' forced evictions were documented,¹⁷² nearly doubling the 955 cases documented in 2021.¹⁷³ While the number dropped to 586 in 2023, it surged nearly sevenfold in 2024, reaching at least 4132 documented cases.¹⁷⁴ The actual number is expected to be higher, as many cases are unreported.¹⁷⁵
3. Refugees are often victims of forced eviction as a mean to affect their decision to return to Syria¹⁷⁶. Evicted refugees are more vulnerable to rights violations, including the heightened risks of forced deportation, arbitrary arrest, detention, exploitation, and abuse.¹⁷⁷ The arbitrary nature of forced eviction leaves refugees without access to legal support, protection, or justice.¹⁷⁸
4. Forced evictions also take place under the pretext of clearing pollution, with the latest decision issued by the MoIM banning building or expanding Syrian refugee camps near the course of the Litani River in the Bekaa and South governorates.¹⁷⁹

5. During the 2024 conflict, many Syrian refugees fled from conflict-affected regions, seeking refuge in safer parts of the country. However, many Lebanese municipalities refused to accommodate these refugees, citing concerns over resources and security. This left many without safe housing alternatives, exacerbating their vulnerable situation. Indeed, the GoL's National Emergency Plan, announced on 31 October 2023, made limited reference to refugee communities and, of the 1,000 plus established collective shelters for IDPs, a very little number was accessible to Syrian refugees.¹⁸⁰
6. Landlords also exploited the situation by raising rental prices beyond the means of many refugee families,¹⁸¹ effectively displacing them. Due to municipal restrictions and the difficulties faced in reclaiming their former homes, almost no Syrians are reporting to reside in their pre-conflict places of residence.¹⁸²
7. In 2025, 5 Syrian refugee families were forcibly evicted from camps in Deir al-Ahmar pursuant to a decision issued by the municipality in February. Another 15 Syrian refugee families received official warnings that they must vacate their homes within a week, with the threat of coercive measures if they do not comply. Five others were informed that they had to evacuate due to non-payment of a \$20 monthly tax imposed on Syrian refugees in the town.¹⁸³

d. Deportations

1. 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, including the principle of non-refoulement.¹⁸⁴ However, the gravity of the situation on the ground is far from compliant with the legal framework. Indeed, Lebanese authorities have increasingly engaged in the deportation of Syrian refugees, often without proper due process and in violation of the principle of non-refoulement, with many being handed over to Syrian authorities.
2. The decision to deport those who entered Lebanon illegally after April 24, 2019, was issued by the Supreme Defense Council in 2019. Unfortunately, this approach poses a grave risk to the affected refugees, particularly those wanted by security agencies in Syria, draft evaders, or army deserters. The lack of consideration for the sensitivity of their situation and the potential consequence of their detention highlights a disregard for their well-being and uncertain fate.
3. Of particular concern over the past 5 years has been the increase in reported raids and resulting arbitrary arrests against numerous Syrians and their forced returns from Lebanon to Syria – a systematic practice by Lebanese security agencies which can in some instances be life-threatening. In September 2021, a deportation order was issued against six Syrian refugees who were detained by unidentified actors near the Syrian embassy. Although their deportation was later halted, the order reflects the disregard Lebanese authorities have for the principle of non-refoulement and the well-founded risks in Syria, including detention, enforced disappearances, torture, persecution, and other possible human rights violations.¹⁸⁵ In 2023, the Lebanese Armed Forces alone forcibly deported over 13,700 refugees from border areas, a nine-fold increase from 2022, including many registered with UNHCR¹⁸⁶ in possession of legal residency - some of which were individuals who had defected from the Syrian Armed Forces, as well as women and children¹⁸⁷. Following the killing of a political figure in 2024, over 50% of refugee-related discourse publicly centered on deportation.¹⁸⁸

4. In May 2024, the DGGs imposed new rules emphasizing that Lebanese citizens must not employ, house, or provide accommodation to Syrians residing illegally in the country, under threat of administrative and judicial penalties to the Lebanese and immediate deportation for the Syrians. They also suspended renewing residency permits as a basis for housing contracts.¹⁸⁹ Between January and June 2024, the Lebanese authorities deported at least 1,763 Syrians.¹⁹⁰ Deportations persist in 2025, with ongoing raids across Lebanon continuing to target Syrian refugees.¹⁹¹
5. The lack of adequate pathways towards legal residency and documentation increases the probability of deportation without due process.¹⁹² Deportees are often denied legal representation, contact with UNHCR, or the right to challenge their deportation.¹⁹³

e. Legal Residency, Registration, and Refugee Status Determination

6. Since 2015, several measures in Lebanon have substantially impacted the protection space for refugees in the country. Lebanon lacks a formal national framework for refugee status determination (RSD), relying primarily on the UNHCR for refugee recognition - although registration of Syrian refugees by the UNHCR was suspended by the government in 2015.¹⁹⁴ This gap leads to inconsistent protection for refugees, leaving many asylum-seekers in legal limbo with unclear rights or status.
7. One of the main challenges faced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon is obtaining legal residency. While some flexibility was put in place in order to expand legal and civil documentation for refugees, the reduced capacities of the public sector combined with the shortage of fiscal stamps and the devaluation of the local currency have all had a negative effect on the enjoyment of civil documentation by refugees.¹⁹⁵ The government has instituted a residency fee waiver and eligibility criteria, which should have allowed refugees who can document their legal entry before 2015 to apply for and receive residency. However, its policy effectively excluded many refugees who arrived after 2015 and those who could not show proof of coming to Lebanon before. Additionally, the Directorate General for General Security (DGGs) has reportedly rejected many applications for residency regardless of whether the applicants met the eligibility criteria, in many cases requiring refugees to acquire a sponsor even. This systematic discrimination, complicated and expensive procedures, and the inability to afford documentation fees are primarily responsible for low legal residency rates.¹⁹⁶ Fees for legal and civil documentation that Syrians need continue to increase too and in an arbitrary manner, especially those that the DGGs requires, further limiting their access to these life-saving documents amid the forced returns campaign.¹⁹⁷
8. Indeed, the percentage of refugees possessing proper documentation remains exceptionally low,¹⁹⁸ posing a greater risk of arrest, mistreatment and potentially deportation to Syria¹⁹⁹ without due process.²⁰⁰ The legal residency rates for Syrian refugees remains low, with 16% in 2021, increasing slightly to 17% in 2022²⁰¹ and reaching 20% in 2023, only 20% of Syrian refugees aged 15 and above were registered.²⁰² By 2024, 93% of Syrian families continued to have at least one member without legal residency.²⁰³ This stagnant progression reflects a deadlock in addressing the situation since 2019.

9. The lack of legal residency exposes refugees to severe protection and security issues, including the inability to secure employment, housing, and services, as well as arbitrary arrest, harassment, and deportation. In addition to the constant fear of being stopped by security forces and facing potential fines 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. 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.²⁰⁴
10. While access to legal and civil documentation is a primary form of protection, it also acts as a major form of community tension management. The lack of documentation and an overall discourse that Syrian refugees are “irregular” in the country, acts as a driving factor for increased social tension. The promotion of access to civil and legal documentation has therefore combined objectives to secure legal protection, reduce an overall perspective of irregularity among the Lebanese community, and reduce negative coping mechanisms and self-imposed restrictions by refugees.
11. Following the ceasefire declared between Lebanon and Israel in November 2024, North Lebanon experienced strict enforcement of residency restrictions at checkpoints, leading many refugees to self-restrict their movements.²⁰⁵ In the Beqaa, challenges remained, including raids, group arrests and deportations of individuals lacking documentation.²⁰⁶ In the South, which previously had the highest percentage of Syrians with residency, many faced difficulties in obtaining new documents or renewing existing ones.²⁰⁷
12. Similar trends were reported regarding civil documentation, with many unable to register their marriages and the births of their children.²⁰⁸
13. However, the percentage of marriage certificates for Syrian refugees registered with the Foreigners’ Registry witnessed progress over the past five years, increasing from 30% in 2021 to 33% in 2022²⁰⁹, to 37% in 2023, and 42% in 2024.²¹⁰
14. Similarly, birth registration rose from 31% in 2021, to 36% in 2022²¹¹, to 41% in 2023²¹², and peaked at 42% in 2024²¹³. Nevertheless, the inability to cover registration costs remains the main reason for the high number of unregistered births, followed by a lack of awareness of the necessary procedures.²¹⁴

f. Influx of Syrians to Lebanon Post-December 2024

1. The regime change in Syria in December led to a new wave of displacement, with around 124,000 new arrivals entering Lebanon between then and May²¹⁵. Moreover, sectarian violence in Syria’s coastal region has pushed for the sudden influx of at least 36,787 individuals into Lebanon’s northern province as of May 2025²¹⁶, prompting concerns among Lebanese officials who warn that the fresh influx could trigger social and political tensions.²¹⁷ Furthermore, the large influx of refugees raised concerns among the host community regarding a potential crisis in the Hermel and Northern Beqaa regions. Clashes at the Lebanese-Syrian Borders further exacerbated the situation.²¹⁸
2. Newcomers have been facing severe shortages of essential services and basic needs, including non-food items, water, electricity, WASH, and medicine, while many reside in temporary shelters.

g. Recommendations.

1. Ensure that the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), municipalities, and security forces coordinate fully together in terms of information sharing and rule of law to avoid any attempt of collective punishment – such as evictions, raids, arbitrary detention, confiscation of documents, wage caps, and curfews – and the violations that can emanate from that, especially discrimination on the basis of nationality.
2. Ensure protection of human rights defenders, political activists, journalists, military defectors, families of missing people, and LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers, who face a higher risk of imprisonment and torture upon deportation.
3. Support inter-community dialogue to diffuse conflict/disputes that have the potential to lead to safety and security risks.
4. Guarantee the protection of communities from violence perpetrated by, both, the Lebanese host and the Syrian refugee communities.
5. Investigate and hold accountable public officials, political actors, and media outlets who engage in hate speech, incitement, or discriminatory campaigns against refugees, in accordance with international human rights standards.
6. Coordinate with UNDP to co-lead localized peacebuilding plans in hotspot municipalities, scaling up joint programming between humanitarian and development actors, through community-based peacebuilding and local dialogue initiative, in order to strengthen inter-communal cohesion and conflict prevention efforts.
7. Halt the nationwide crackdown on refugees by security and municipal authorities and plan for a structured strategy instead of standalone discriminatory measures.
8. Coordinate with UN-Habitat to support community-based mediation mechanisms involving municipalities, landlords, host communities, and refugees to prevent eviction-driven tensions and promote peaceful dispute resolution.
9. Uphold the principle of non-refoulement that aligns with Article 3 of the Convention Against Torture, Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and refrain from taking any unilateral decision to deport without due process any individual, especially those with reasonable justification about the risks incurred if they are deported.
10. Uphold rule of law and respect due process by giving anyone at risk of deportation to Syria the opportunity access to legal aid, meet with UNHCR, and present their argument against deportation. Any deportation that amounts to refoulement should be prohibited.
11. Give the space to donors, civil society, and the Lebanese justice system, to monitor the conditions for safe, voluntary, and dignified returns and ensure the protection of the most vulnerable.
12. Provide a regular, public, and transparent accounting of deportations, including reasons for removal, to international organizations and civil society in order to ensure accountability and the respect of rule of law.
13. Revoke the decision made by the Higher Defense Council No. 50 of 15/4/2019 and the General Director of the General Security decision No. 48380 of 13/5/2019 ordering the expulsion or deportation of Syrian nationals who entered Lebanon through unofficial border crossings after 24 April 2019, without the application of the necessary legal procedural safeguards to prevent refoulement. The classification of Syrians who entered Lebanon after 2019 must adhere to a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) mechanism that complies with international standards to ensure their protection from forcible return.

14. Engage with UNHCR to establish a joint RSD mechanism to distinguish between refugees and foreign migrants, in compliance with international standards and in cooperation with the international community, particularly UNHCR. This mechanism should assess the claims of newly arrived Syrians, document reasons for flight, and evaluate protection needs, with a formal review process every 6 months.
15. Commit to removing obstacles for refugees in reaching UNHCR offices.
16. Ensure that revisions of policies and regulations in relation to residency permits for Syrian refugees are transparent and inclusive. These regulations should tend to expand the access to residency for those that could benefit and resolve the expansive gap in accessing legal residency.
17. Mandate the DGGS to publish and apply clear, transparent, and flexible procedures for granting legal residency, with a 30-day notice for policy changes and an appeal mechanism—under Cabinet-approved parameters.
18. Ensure that the registration of important life events (birth, marriage, divorce, death) is accessible to all on a non-discriminatory basis, regardless of nationality, legal status, and SOGIESC.
19. Extend the alleviation of the one-year limit for birth registration to ensure that refugee children born in Lebanon receive proper documentation and are not at heightened risk of statelessness. Statelessness among refugee populations would undermine their possibilities for resettlement and return and impose further pressure on the Lebanese state.
20. Coordinate with UNHCR to assess and respond to exceptional LGBTQIA+ protection cases. Support case-by-case evaluations for LGBTQIA+ individuals whose circumstances fall outside traditional family or community frameworks, including through third-country resettlement or emergency relocation pathways.
21. Ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol to formally recognize refugee status in domestic law, align Lebanon's legal framework with international standards, and ensure access to rights and protection for all refugees.
22. Launch community outreach and legal awareness initiatives, engaging with local police and municipal actors and led by local civil society, to reduce tensions stemming from perceptions of “illegality” and “irregularity” among refugee populations.
23. Immediately ensure that all newly arrived Syrians undergo an RSD assessment process in coordination with UNHCR, in order to ensure they are provided with registration and the temporary documentation necessary during their stay in Lebanon.
24. Coordinate with UNHCR and municipalities to identify and prepare safe temporary shelters in border areas (Hermel, North Beqaa, Akkar) with access to clean water, shelter, and essential non-food items, in cooperation with humanitarian actors.
25. Issue a public communication strategy led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Information, including radio, TV, and social media campaigns to counter misinformation, reduce tensions between host and refugee communities, and avoid scapegoating of new refugees.
26. Ensure proper border management, including the recording of entries and referral to UNHCR for protection screening, rather than punitive deportations.
27. Facilitate – along with UNDP, local CSOs, and religious leaders – inclusive community dialogue and grievance redress mechanisms in municipalities experiencing tensions due to recent influxes.



K.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

SUBMITTED BY:

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- INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FIDH
- EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK EUROMED RIGHTS
- CENTRE LIBANAIS DES DROITS HUMAINS CLDH
- ACT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ALEF
- CAIRO INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES CIHRS
- ARAB NGO NETWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT ANND
- CEDAR CENTRE FOR LEGAL STUDIES, STRATEGIC STUDIES & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT TATWIR
- DEVELOPMENTAL ACTION WITHOUT BORDERS NABAA
- PALESTINIAN ASSOCIATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WITNESS
- HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CENTER
- KHIAM REHABILITATION CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE KRC
- JOINT CHRISTIAN COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL SERVICE JCC
- WOMEN HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION PWHO

INTRODUCTION

1. This report was prepared in partnership and cooperation with international and regional organizations, networks, and Palestinian and Lebanese associations²¹⁹ concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights and social development for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The report aims to review the human rights progress and violations related to Palestinian refugees, and to enhance it through advocacy. Thus, highlighting the extent to which the Lebanese state fulfills the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR): 37/2021 session; 23/2015 session; and 09/2010 session, and its commitment to the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) and the international conventions that Lebanon has signed and ratified. This report is released at a time when Lebanon's 2019 economic crisis persists and deepens in the wake of the devastating aftermath of October 7, 2023. The compounded impact has severely affected Lebanon, Palestinian refugees, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has long struggled with financial constraints and now faces the threat of being dismantled. Meanwhile, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon remain deprived of their most basic social, economic, and civil rights. Despite Lebanon's commitments to improve their conditions following recommendations made during previous UPR sessions, no meaningful progress had been achieved at the time this report was prepared.
2. The Lebanese legislator has yet to take any action to address the unjust laws, despite Lebanese currently presenting its fourth review of the UPR. Instead of expanding rights protections, Lebanon has tightened its control over them, joining the increasingly restricted civic space across the region. Notably, the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, which operates under the Council of Ministers, issued a document titled "A Unified Lebanese Vision Towards Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon"²²⁰. While the document includes recommendations concerning a legal definition of settlement and refugee status, as well as proposals for improving conditions, it continues to treat Palestinian refugees through an administrative classification system that divides them into three categories²²¹. An additional fourth category—Palestinian refugees from Syria, who fled due to the civil war and ongoing insecurity—is also included. However, this population continues to be treated primarily through a political-security lens within the jurisdictions of Lebanon's security agencies, rather than through a rights-based, civilian lens. This approach results in discriminatory and inconsistent treatment that leaves these refugees outside any meaningful protection framework and denies them access to their full human rights.²²²
3. Lebanon, which considers itself a transit country rather than a country of asylum for refugees, continues in ignoring the demands and recommendations calling for improving the conditions of Palestinian refugees, in service of the racial exclusion policies²²³ and practices that drive continued migration (often through the form of irregular migration). The features of which are evident through the shrinking numbers of refugees, as highlighted by the "General Census of Population and Housing in Palestinian Communities and Camps in Lebanon," an exercise led by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. The census highlighted that the number of Palestinian refugees present in Lebanon as of the end of 2017 was reportedly 174,422²²⁴. However, official Lebanese sources state that the number exceeds 500,000 Palestinian refugees. Meanwhile the latest update from UNRWA, the number of registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is approximately 500,000, of whom approximately 250,000 are currently residing in Lebanon, including approximately 27,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria. The multiplicity of figures and sources result in increased manipulation of the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, often serving security and political discourses in the country.²²⁵

4. It is essential to prevent the continued exploitation of the multiple crises facing Lebanon as a means for the government to once again evade its human rights obligations, this has a disproportionate impact on Palestinian refugees, who remain a marginalized and vulnerable group living in a permanent state of exception. This pattern has been evident in previous cycles: during the 9th session in 2010, Lebanon failed to implement the recommendations it had accepted; in the 23rd session in 2015, it used the presence of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees to deflect pressure; and in the 37th session in 2021, it cited the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic to justify inaction. It's time to stop prolonging the suffering of Palestinian refugees, which can be resolved while addressing the Lebanese fears and concerns through a simple and clear legislation that promotes the principles of equality and non-discrimination in enjoying human and humanitarian rights. Through the new era, we look forward to activating the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee and working to adopt and/or establish a parallel advisory committee that includes competent Lebanese and Palestinian civil society leaders, particularly from human rights associations and strategic studies centers.
5. This report highlights a range of persistent violations endured by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon—issues that were also raised in submissions to the previous three UPR sessions on Lebanon's human rights record²²⁶. These include violations of the right to legal personality; freedom of movement, residence, and travel; the right to work and access liberal professions; the right to own property; the right to adequate housing; access to social services and benefits; the right to protection and a fair trial; and the right to freedom of opinion, expression, and association. These violations have had a cumulative and deeply damaging impact on the civil, economic, and social lives of Palestinian refugees, as well as on their mental health. Persisting for over 77 years, these systemic abuses represent a form of protracted suffering that stands in clear contradiction to international human rights standards and Lebanon's obligations under instruments such as the UN treaty bodies, particularly (HRC) and the (CESCR), have issued general comments addressing discrimination against non-citizens. These general comments emphasize that while some rights in (ICCPR) and other treaties are explicitly for citizens, the general rule is that most rights apply equally to citizens and non-citizens, without discrimination based on nationality²²⁷, and emphasized that: CEDAW, CERD, and UNCAT.
6. Lebanon has accepted one of the two recommendations that directly mentioned Palestinian refugees, 150 (22) related to people with disabilities, and took note of the second recommendation, 150 (277) related to the right to work and own property for Palestinian refugees. However, other recommendations that affect Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, referred to in the WG Report A/HRC/47/5²²⁸, should also be addressed. Lebanon had taken note of the recommendations related to Palestinian refugees \ These issues were also raised in the previous report of the relevant working group (A/HRC/DEC/31/102) dated April 6, 2016, particularly through the recommendations addressed there in. It is important to recall that Lebanon had accepted recommendations²²⁹ related to Palestinian refugees during the 9th session in 2010. Therefore, its use of the phrase "taken note of" in subsequent sessions does not absolve it of the commitments it had explicitly accepted²³⁰. While the government claimed that these recommendations were being implemented or had already been fulfilled²³¹, in practice, no substantial progress had been achieved by the time this report was prepared.

a. Right to Legal Personality

7. Lack of clarity regarding the legal personality of a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon: As of the date of submission of this report, the Lebanese legislature has not enacted the law identifying Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, nor has it specified their rights and duties. The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities has proceeded in assigning the General Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees to handle the Palestinian refugee files by registering marriages, births, and deaths, as well as individual and family civil status records, in addition to issuing their own personal identification cards, which are not computerized and are completed by hand. The General Directorate of General Security (DGGs), which also reports to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, treats Palestinian refugees through a special category. This facilitated the refugees' access to biometric travel documents since 2016. However, law 296/2001, deprived refugees of property ownership, described them as stateless without directly naming them. The first time Palestinian refugees were mentioned in legislation was only in the amendments to Labor Law 129/2010 and Social Security Law 128/2010. In these texts they were considered similarly to all other foreigners. This multiple categorizations, recognition and non recognition, results in a fragmented legal personality in Lebanon and discretionary treatment by each public institution and agency.
8. Unsustainability of solution regarding legal personality of non-ID Palestinians. In 2008, Lebanon began issuing one-year identification papers for approximately 5,000 Non-ID Palestinian refugees²³². However, only a limited number benefited from this measure, Lebanon cited this initiative as an achievement during the 9th UPR session in 2010, even though it failed to respond to a related recommendation (Recommendation 84.11). Although the documents required to issue or renew identification cards are still available on the Public General Security link²³³. However, it is complex and limits the number of individuals able to obtain it. It has been almost suspended since before the 23rd/2015 session, and no recommendation was mentioned at that time or in the 37th/2021 session. Members of this group are still deprived of their most basic human rights.²³⁴
9. The Lebanese State doesn't recognize the legal personality of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (Palestinian Refugee from Syria) as refugees. The Lebanese state did not treat Palestinian refugees from Syria as refugees fleeing a dangerous country, due to the lack of clarity regarding the implementation mechanism in the memorandums and decisions issued and the large number of relevant circulars, their treatment varied between settlements as internally displaced refugees and as foreigners coming for tourism who must meet the conditions for residence in Lebanon. A policy of expulsion has been practiced against them through arbitrariness in renewing residency and entry procedures, and some have their identity documents confiscated and are only returned to them upon exit at border crossings following a settlement and payment of accrued fines.
10. Restrictions and obstacles on registering and obtaining documents for newborn children of Palestinian refugee parents from Syria. The Lebanese state obstructs the registration of newborns and the completion of issuing identity documents to them if the parents do not have a valid residence permit, and tightens procedures with those who have reached the age of 15 years²³⁵. It also applies fees and fines that have increased recently, on all legal transactions related to refugees from Syria including the Palestinian, based on treating them like any foreigner or tourist, without taking into account their status as refugees who fled a country of civil war, this approach deprives them of adequate legal status. They were also not included in plans for the voluntary return of displaced Syrians to Syria, prior to the issuance of the latest decision on July 1, 2025²³⁶. Their return or departure from Lebanon required a settlement that included the payment of accumulated fines.

11. Denying Palestinian refugee women their right to pass on their legal status to their children. The law in Lebanon discriminates against Lebanese women, and it's heightened against Palestinian refugee women. Women married to Palestinians classified as Non-IDs are denied the right to register the births of their children. Additionally, Palestinian refugee women registered in Lebanon who are married to a Palestinian refugee registered in another country are deprived of obtaining a courtesy residency for her children, similar to a Lebanese mother. They are also denied the ability to secure annual residence permits for their spouses, a right that is afforded to Palestinian refugee men. A Palestinian refugee woman from Syria who is married to a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon is prevented from transferring registration to the General Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees and to obtaining identification papers. She is forced to obtain annual residency.
12. Restrictions and obstacles hinder the procedures granting citizenship to PRW married to a Lebanese husband. Lebanon's personal status laws treat Palestinian refugees married to Lebanese men—including those born in Lebanon—as foreigners, subjecting them to arbitrary restrictions and obstacles in the process of acquiring citizenship. This contradicts Article 5 of the Lebanese Nationality Law, as amended in 1960, which sets a legal path to citizenship based on the presence of a child and a residency period of 3 to 5 years. Despite this, discriminatory practices and inconsistencies persist. Lebanon only partially accepted Recommendation 150 (298) and merely took note of nine others recommendations²³⁷ related to women's rights to equality and non-discrimination during the 37th session in 2021. This is despite its earlier acceptance of Recommendation 80 (24) in the 9th UPR session in 2010 and Recommendations 132 (82, 85, and 86) in the 23rd session in 2015, all of which called for concrete measures to eliminate discrimination against women and uphold their rights.

➤ 13. Recommendations

- 13.1. Adopt the recommendations related to the definition of Palestinian refugees and their non resettlement status, as outlined in the document issued by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee²³⁸. These should be enshrined in clear and unambiguous legislation that guarantees Palestinian refugees their civil, economic, and social rights, and ensures their right to live in dignity.
- 13.2. Issue the necessary implementing decrees and work to digitize the files and records of Palestinian refugees held by the Directorate General for Political Affairs, so that all related documentation becomes fully digitized.
- 13.3. Issue official, viable identification documents that guarantee the third category of Refugees (NON IDs) a legal personality and preserve their dignity and equate them with Palestinian Refugees.
- 13.4. Recognize the legal status of Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon as Refugees due to the armed conflict in Syria.
- 13.5. Register and issue identification documents for newborn Palestinian Refugees from Syria, in accordance with the International Conventions Lebanon has ratified.
- 13.6. Remove the reservations to Article 9 and 12 of CEDAW and amend all relevant national legislations and sensitize the situation of Palestinian women.

b. Right to freedom of movement, travel and residence

14. Isolating PR camps by building concrete walls and erecting iron. Most of the PR camps in Lebanon suffer from severe security measures, surrounded by security cordon and military checkpoints, and since 2016 the security containment has intensified further, especially around the camps in South Lebanon, in-particularly Ein El Hilweh in Saida, which has been isolated by concrete walls, iron gates and control towers, that hinder the freedom of movement of PR living in camps and increase psychological pressure on them.
15. Restrictions on freedom of movement of PR. The imposition of heightened security measures around certain Palestinian refugee camps— particularly in southern Lebanon and, more recently, in the north—has resulted in significant restrictions on the freedom of movement of camp residents, with direct adverse effects on their daily lives. These measures include night-time traffic controls, inspection checkpoints at camp entrances, and, at times, restrictions during the day. While the authorities justify these practices on security grounds, they impose disproportionate burdens on Palestinian refugees and hinder their access to essential rights and services, including education, employment, and healthcare. Such restrictions constitute a violation of the right to freedom of movement and compromise the dignity and safety of affected individuals. In emergency situations, such as during outbreaks of violence or urgent medical needs, the inability to move freely poses a direct threat to the physical integrity and well-being of camp residents. This is further exacerbated by the classification of Palestinian refugees as “foreigners,” which results in their exclusion from border areas in the South without prior authorization from military intelligence—an approach that contravenes international human rights standards, particularly those related to non-discrimination and the right to freedom of movement.
16. Discrimination against PR in regards to travel documents and their validity and travel opportunities. Lebanon issues biometric travel documents to Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA, valid for up to five years. For those not registered with UNRWA, the travel document is valid for three years. In contrast, Non-ID Palestinian refugees may be granted a laissez-passer only in exceptional cases. The General Directorate of General Security (DGGS) also imposes additional restrictions on Palestinian refugees from Lebanon who obtain a Palestinian Authority passport for travel purposes. Despite lacking a national identification number and not allowing entry into Palestinian territories, holders of this passport must undergo a settlement process with Lebanese authorities that includes paying a fine. This process can also place limitations on their ability to return to Lebanon.
17. Restrictions on Palestinian Refugees from Syria from entering Lebanon. Since the onset of the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese government has obstructed the entry of Palestinian refugees from Syria fleeing the ongoing civil war, subjecting them to degrading treatment, intimidation, coercion to return to areas of danger, and the fragmentation of family unity by allowing entry to some family members while denying it to others. Since 2015, their entry into Lebanon has become virtually impossible and is left to the discretion of individual border officials. Entry is permitted only under narrow conditions, such as having a medical appointment, a scheduled embassy interview, transit for onward travel, or university enrollment in Lebanon.

18. Restrictions on the right to movement of Palestinian Refugees from Syria and ill treatment violating their human dignity. Lebanon imposes on Palestinian Refugees from Syria residing in Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon to obtain permits from the military intelligence to enable them to leave and return to the camps where they live. These permits are renewed every six months and require a valid residency permit, and don't allow them to enter another camp which needs another permit that is almost impossible to obtain. Palestinian Refugees from Syria are subjected to intimidation, humiliation, and sometimes arbitrary detention by security forces especially at camps entrance checkpoints. They are also subjected to the same violations by political parties, municipal police and even individuals in some Lebanese regions that restrict movement of refugees from Syria after certain hours. This continues despite the Lebanese state's accepting the following recommendations 150 (272) in the 37/2021 session, and recommendations²³⁹, and before that, recommendations²², related to the Convention Against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

➤ 19. Recommendations

- 19.1. Lebanon should reconsider the security procedures and measures followed around the Palestinian camps, especially those that affect the freedom of movement and increase pressures on the residents. The review should be carried out with the aim of reducing its negative impacts on the daily lives of refugees. We recommend adopting an approach that balances between ensuring the responsiveness requirements of security and stability, and respecting the human rights of refugees, by adopting the concept of "human security", which focuses on protecting individuals and guaranteeing their dignity.
- 19.2. Equity between all Palestinian refugee categories by granting the non-registered within UNRWA and NON IDs biometric travel documents valid up to five years similar to the registered Refugees, and to stop dealing with them with discriminatory exceptions that limit their movement to and from Lebanon.
- 19.3. Respect the right to seek asylum for Palestinian refugees from Syria by reducing entry restrictions, ensuring their right to freedom of movement, and protecting them from discrimination, humiliation, and arbitrary detention. Adopt a mechanism for determining place of residence and legal identity that upholds human dignity and rights, with the aim of abolishing the permit system currently imposed on their entry into Palestinian refugee camps.

c. Right to work and economic social protection

20. The working conditions for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have not improved despite the amendments made to the Labor Law in 2010. Several challenges still limit the implementation of the amendments, including the absence of the regulating decrees and frequent changes issued through ministerial decisions. This reality has restricted refugees' access to legally protected and regulated employment opportunities. These challenges coincide with the continuing deterioration in economic conditions in Lebanon, which has increased poverty and unemployment rates among Palestinian refugees. UNRWA data indicate that the poverty rate among Palestinian refugees has reached 90%, while approximately 80% of the families have become primarily dependent on UNRWA aid as a source of income. These conditions also contributed to high school drop-out rates, and children's attempts to enter the labor market early in the absence of legal protection, this makes them vulnerable and exposed to exploitation of various violations. In the 37th session (2021), Lebanon merely took note of Recommendation 150 (277), and also was content to take note in previous sessions of recommendations that called for improving working conditions.²⁴⁰
21. Restrictions on PR to enter the Lebanese labor market. Lebanese labor law remains incompatible with the specific situation of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon for more than seven decades, as it continues to treat them within the framework of laws designated for foreign workers. Despite the amendment introduced by Law No. 129/2010 to Article 59, which exempted them from the reciprocity requirement and work permit fees. However, maintaining the requirement to obtain an annually renewable work permit has kept their situation vulnerable to professional and legal instability. And in the absence of implementing decrees to date, the implementation of this amendment has remained subject to varying interpretations by successive ministers. In this context, the Palestinian refugees faced increasing challenges in the labor market. This was clearly evident during the implementation of the plan to reduce irregular foreign labor, which was launched in 2019, and aimed to regulate the labor market and ensure compliance with the law, this and the absence of complementary measures that take into account the situation of the refugees and provide them with more sustainable legal protection pathways²⁴¹, has contributed to deepening the vulnerability of Palestinian refugees and increased their opportunities for exploitation in the informal labor market, even-though Lebanon has ratified ILO Convention No. 111 (on discrimination in employment)²⁴².
22. Deprive Palestinian Refugees from working in professions requiring joining a syndicate "Liberal professions" that require syndicate affiliation, as the laws governing these professions impose and/or prefer Lebanese citizenship. For example, anyone practicing the legal profession is supposed to be Lebanese for more than ten years (Law No. 8/70), and in other professions reciprocity and practice of the profession are required in the country of origin, such as the Physicians Syndicate (Decree No. 1659 of 1979). Although the amended Labor Law (129/2010) exempted the PR from the condition of reciprocity, the failure to amend the laws and/or regulations of free trade syndicates in line with the amendments to the Labor Law - prevents Refugees from being affiliated with unions and deprives them of practicing the profession, knowing that Free trade syndicates offer the exception, if they want or need.²⁴³

23. Depriving PR workers from benefiting from social security services. Article 9 of Social Security Law No. 128/2010 was amended to abolish the reciprocity requirement. However, this amendment did not grant Palestinian refugees access to health insurance or family benefits, including maternity benefits. Although Palestinian workers registered with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) contribute the full required amount—25.5% of their salary, with 3% deducted from the employee, as is the case for Lebanese citizens—they are only entitled to end-of-service indemnities, which represent just 8.5% of the total contributions²⁴⁴. As a result, many are compelled to rely on private health insurance or bear additional financial burdens themselves or through their employers. This exclusion limits their employment opportunities and pushes many Palestinian refugees into informal and unprotected labor, often under exploitative conditions and with low wages.
24. Imposing additional discriminatory economic burdens on Palestinian refugees. Recently, Lebanon increased the cost of all official administrative fees by introducing two separate pricing systems: one for citizens and another for foreigners. This institutionalizes the treatment of Palestinian refugees as foreigners. For example, the cost of obtaining a criminal record certificate for a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon has risen to 2 million Lebanese lira, compared to 500,000 lira for Lebanese citizens. This document is required for numerous essential procedures, such as issuing a passport, obtaining a work permit, acquiring a driver's license, enrolling in some universities, and applying for visas at certain embassies. Furthermore, the certificate is considered invalid if more than three months have passed since its issuance, requiring frequent renewal. This discriminatory treatment fails to acknowledge the unique legal and historical status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Rather than recognizing them as stateless refugees with specific protection needs, the state treats them as foreigners who have voluntarily chosen to reside in Lebanon. This constitutes a clear violation of the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law, as guaranteed under international human rights law. Moreover, most foreigner-related administrative procedures must be completed in Beirut, forcing Palestinian refugees living in the South, North, or Beqaa to make multiple expensive and time-consuming trips to the capital—even for basic personal documentation. This places an additional financial and logistical burden on refugees and significantly limits their access to rights and services, in clear violation of the principles of equal opportunity and procedural fairness.

➤ 25. Recommendations

- 25.1. Amend Law 129/2010 by cancelling the work permits and granting PR the right to practice the so-called “Liberal professions”, and issue decrees to ensure implementation of the law. 4.7
- 25.2. Amend Social Security Law No. 128/2010 to allow Palestinian refugee workers to fully enjoy their rights under the National Social Security system, in particular by ensuring access to maternity benefits for employed Palestinian refugee women, and issue the necessary implementing decrees.
- 25.3. End discrimination against Palestinian refugees and ensure equal treatment with Lebanese citizens with regard to access to benefits, administrative facilitation, completion of essential personal civil status procedures, and the payment of fees, in order to safeguard their economic and social rights.

d. Right to own property

26. Depriving Palestinian Refugees of owning real estate. The amendment to the Law on the Acquisition of Property by Foreigners (Law No. 296/2001) effectively barred Palestinian refugees in Lebanon from owning real estate, on the grounds that they do not hold citizenship from a recognized state. This restriction was justified by the authorities as consistent with the Lebanese Constitution's rejection of permanent resettlement.
27. Expropriation of the property of PR who owned property prior to 2001 but did not complete the registration of their properties at the respective directory. Properties purchased through pre-registration sale deeds and fully paid for, but not formally registered before the amendment of Law No. 296/2001—which does not include retroactive provisions—can no longer be registered at the Directorate of Cadaster and Real Estate. This misapplication of the law, which lacks legal justification, places Palestinian refugee property owners at serious risk, particularly given that surveyed sale contracts carry only a customary validity period of ten years. In addition, the transfer of inherited property to Palestinian refugees—despite being acquired through valid religious court rulings—is being systematically obstructed by the Directorate, even though Law 296/2001 imposes no restrictions on inheritance transfers. This discriminatory practice has forced many affected individuals to seek judicial remedies, resulting in additional financial hardship. It is also worth noting that the resolution of such cases is often subject to the discretion of individual judges, further undermining legal predictability and equal treatment.
28. Restrictive procedures in registering property for foreigners married to PR. For foreigners, the real estate registration procedures require the possession of a “statement of non-ownership”. This procedure considers the family as a unit (husband, wife, and children under 18). If the wife or the husband is a PR, the registration will be shelved, and mostly returned, in violation of the law, this requires judicial recourse and adds a lot of financial and nonfinancial burdens.

➤ 29. Recommendations

- 29.1. End discrimination against Palestinian Refugees by issuing a law or reamending Law 296/2001PR to restore their right to own real estate.
- 29.2. End arbitrary measures that prevent the registration of real estate purchased prior to the enactment of Law No. 296/2001 and that obstruct the transfer of inherited real property. Suspend the application of the statute of limitations on surveyed sale contracts concluded before 2001 until a fair and lasting solution is adopted.
- 29.3. End discriminatory actions which hinder foreigners married to PR from owning property.

e. Right to adequate housing and shelter

30. Depriving PR from adequate housing. Palestinian refugees continue to endure inadequate housing conditions in camps whose geographic footprint has remained unchanged since their establishment in 1950, despite significant population growth. This has led to extreme overcrowding and the proliferation of poorly constructed, tightly packed vertical buildings with little to no ventilation, limited access to sunlight, and persistently high humidity levels inside homes. Narrow alleys dominate the camp layout, while wide roads, green spaces, and recreational areas are virtually nonexistent. The infrastructure is severely deteriorated, contributing to a fragile social and security environment prone to collapse, the spread of disease, and the emergence of social problems. These living conditions constitute a violation of human dignity, pose a serious threat to health and life, and deny residents their right to privacy—both between households and within individual families. The situation is further exacerbated by chronic problems related to drinking water, sewage, and unsafe, makeshift electricity networks, which have resulted in numerous electrocution incidents, including fatalities.
31. Restrictions on entry of construction materials, tools and sanitation supplies to the camps. Security regulations surrounding Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon continue to include restrictions on the entry of construction and sanitation materials, which may only be brought in with prior authorization from the relevant security agencies. These restrictions are based on a decision issued by the Council of Ministers in late 1996, followed by an executive directive in January 1997. This policy significantly impedes the ability of residents to carry out essential maintenance and rehabilitation of their homes, thereby increasing the risk of structural collapse and endangering the safety and well-being of inhabitants. According to UNRWA data, only 1,500 out of 5,500 homes in need of repair have been restored—figures that do not include homes damaged or destroyed during armed clashes, which often go unaddressed. These limitations have contributed to the emergence of informal and unregulated markets for building materials, resulting in inflated costs that burden already vulnerable refugee households. In the absence of any municipal oversight or role within camp areas, residents are left without institutional support to meet basic housing needs. Since 2023, a more stringent enforcement mechanism has been applied to refugees who attempt to construct additional living space within their homes in the camps. In several cases, individuals have reportedly been arrested, detained, fined, and compelled to demolish newly built structures.
32. Incomplete reconstruction of Nahr Al-Bared camp. 900 refugees families of Nahr al-Bared camp continue suffering, they are not rehoused in the camp despite the passage of 18 years since its destruction (2007), due to the bureaucracy of the procedures and the scarcity of funding, not to mention the suffering of 2,800 families, known as the new camp residents, whose homes UNRWA did not undertake to rebuild, as UNRWA considered it outside the camp's boundaries, Approximately 1,600 families have yet to receive any compensation for buildings, furniture, or vehicles, and are now in debt, awaiting donor fulfillment of their promises. Approximately 80 families remain displaced, unable to rebuild, and are not receiving any housing allowances.

➤ 33. Recommendations

- 33.1. Develop a comprehensive plan that upholds and promotes the right to adequate housing within Palestinian refugee camps.
- 33.2. Revoke the 1996–1997 decisions restricting the entry of construction materials and supplies into Palestinian refugee camps. It should lift all related limitations and establish clear, transparent procedures that facilitate the maintenance, reconstruction, and restoration of homes and camp infrastructure, in line with the right to adequate housing and human dignity.
- 33.3. Intensify the efforts to complete reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp, including its adjacent area (commonly referred to as the "new camp"), and ensure the prompt, safe, and dignified return of the remaining displaced residents.

f. Deprivation of social services and benefits

34. Depriving Palestinian refugees of public medical care and hospitalization Palestinian refugees in Lebanon continue to be excluded from public health services, including access to free hospitalization and medications for chronic and life-threatening illnesses, even during emergencies and public health crises. While this exclusion has persisted for decades, it has become increasingly visible in recent years due to the reduction in UNRWA services resulting from ongoing financial constraints. The absence of a national safety net for refugees poses serious risks to their right to health and well-being and raises urgent concerns about the potential humanitarian impact should UNRWA's operations be further reduced or discontinued.
35. The risk of depriving Palestinian refugee children of education. If UNRWA's operations are discontinued, thousands of Palestinian refugee children risk losing access to education due to existing restrictions on their enrollment in Lebanon's public schools. As they are classified as foreigners, they are subject to the principle of reciprocity and must compete for limited spots within the quota allocated to non-Lebanese students. This framework significantly limits their access to free, inclusive, and quality education, and jeopardizes their fundamental right to education as guaranteed under international human rights law.
36. Depriving PR from a healthy environment Palestinian refugee camps, as well as some gatherings outside the camps, continue to suffer from inadequate and deteriorating infrastructure. In many areas, drinking water is contaminated by sewage, and housing conditions are marked by poor ventilation, high humidity, water leakage, limited access to sunlight, and proximity to waste collection sites. These environmental conditions contribute to a heightened risk of respiratory infections, chronic illnesses, and other serious health concerns. Preventive healthcare services are largely unavailable, while access to medical and health assistance remains limited, increasing the vulnerability of residents—particularly during disease outbreaks. Additionally, the absence of infrastructure to support access to essential services for older persons and persons with disabilities further undermines their rights to health, dignity, and equal participation in daily life.
37. Depriving Palestinian refugees with disabilities of the services and privileges stipulated by law. Palestinian refugees with a disability do not benefit from these rights that Lebanese disabled people enjoy, despite the fact that Law 220/2000 does not exclude them from these rights because it mentions “a disabled person” and not a Lebanese disabled person, while the national mechanism distinguishes between them and deprives the disabled PR from benefiting from Services provided by law. Despite the Lebanese state's acceptance of Recommendation: 150 (22) of the same nature in the 37/2021 session and before that although Lebanon accepted recommendations²⁴⁵ in the 23/2016 UPR session relating to persons with Disabilities, and before that the recommendations in the 9/2010 UPR session.

➤ 38. Recommendations

- 38.1. Ensure that Palestinian refugees have access to free social services and public benefits, particularly those offered by the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Education, including access to public schools.
- 38.2. Take measures to improve the health and environmental conditions in Palestinian refugee camps and gatherings by ensuring their integration into municipal service frameworks and public infrastructure systems.
- 38.3. Take steps to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities among the Palestinian refugee population by ensuring their equal access to the rights and benefits outlined in Law No. 220/2000. This includes issuing disability identification cards to Palestinian refugees with disabilities on an equal basis with Lebanese citizens.

g. Right to protection and fair trial

39. Arbitrary detention and depriving PR from the minimum conditions of fair trial. Palestinian refugees residing in camps in Lebanon are often subjected to security and intelligence-based procedures in cases of suspicion, arrest, and trial, without adequate differentiation based on the nature of the alleged offense. This practice contravenes fundamental fair trial guarantees, as individuals may be prosecuted or detained solely on the basis of suspicion or unverified information, often by security or intelligence agencies rather than judicial authorities. In such cases, the presumption of innocence is frequently disregarded, and some individuals are reportedly subjected to coercion, intimidation, or pressure to serve as informants. Concerns have also been raised regarding instances of arbitrary detention, incommunicado detention, and ill-treatment during interrogation, including denial of adequate legal assistance and the inability to properly prepare a defense. Discrimination in access to legal aid further exacerbates these violations. After enduring such treatment, suspects are sometimes transferred to the competent judicial authority, but prolonged detention without charge or trial remains a concern. Illustrative of this is the situation of individuals detained following the 2007 conflict in Nahr al-Bared camp, where some Palestinian refugees continue to be held without trial. These practices persist despite Lebanon's acceptance of key recommendations during the 37th UPR session in 2021 (Recommendations 150.16, 150.48, 150.49, 150.56, 150.195, and 150.124) related to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as earlier recommendations accepted in the 23rd (2015) and 9th (2010) sessions, (The recommendations mentioned in Reference also apply to it.)
40. Barriers to women's access to justice. Law No. 293/2014 on the "Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence" offers partial legal protection for women in Lebanon. However, refugee women, including Palestinian refugees, face significant barriers in accessing justice and enjoying effective protection from domestic violence. These challenges stem from weaknesses in Lebanon's procedural justice system and the near-total absence of formal legal mechanisms within the refugee camps, where cases are often handled by informal popular or security committees lacking legal training and accountability. The absence of human rights-sensitive systems within camps—especially gender-sensitive mechanisms—combined with the influence of restrictive customs and traditions, further hinders the ability of refugee women to seek protection or redress. These structural and social obstacles contribute to an environment where survivors are left unprotected and violence often goes unreported or unaddressed. These gaps persist despite Lebanon's acceptance of Recommendations 132 (86, 129) during the 23rd UPR session in 2015, which called for measures to combat and criminalize domestic violence, and its prior support for Recommendations 80 (22, 23, 24) in the 9th session in 2010 addressing similar concerns.
41. Early marriages and sexual abuse. In the absence of a unified civil personal status law in Lebanon, Palestinian refugee girls—particularly those from Syria—remain at risk of early marriage and its associated serious health and psychological consequences. These risks are exacerbated by poverty and the lack of legal protection, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. Despite the severity of these concerns, Lebanon has not accepted UPR recommendations related to marriage, divorce, and child custody in previous review cycles, citing the exclusive jurisdiction of religious courts over such matters. And as Lebanon has accustomed us in the two previous sessions 2010/9 and 2015/23, in the 2021/37 did not accept any recommendation related to matters of marriage, divorce and child custody, as they are confined to the religious courts. Lebanon was satisfied with partial acceptance of one recommendation.150 (249) and took note of some other recommendations.

42. Human trafficking and exploitation of vulnerability. The lack of a comprehensive protection framework and the absence of clear legal accountability mechanisms have contributed to the continued exploitation of Palestinian refugees, particularly among the four most vulnerable categories of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Traffickers have capitalized on their precarious legal status and socio-economic marginalization. Following the gradual ²⁴⁶disappearance of organized smuggling routes—once used to transport Palestinian refugees by land and air through multiple countries in exchange for large sums—many traffickers, including travel agency owners and brokers, disappeared with the victims' funds. As a result, dangerous "death marches" and sea journeys have resurged. Desperate to flee, refugees have been forced to sell all their possessions, including informal shelters within camps that they do not legally own and which fall under UNRWA's purview, to finance their smuggling. These journeys expose them to severe risks, including human rights violations and, in some cases, the tragic death of entire families. Despite Lebanon's acceptance of several recommendations related to combating human trafficking and protecting victims—most recently Recommendations 150 (168 -169 -170 -171) during the 37th session in 2021, and previously Recommendations²⁴⁷ in the 23rd session 2015, and Recommendations²⁴⁸ 80 (18–20) in the 9th session (2010)—serious gaps remain. Lebanon also claimed that Recommendations 81 (7–13) were either in the process of being implemented or had already been fulfilled; however, the lived reality of Palestinian refugees suggests otherwise.

➤ 43. Recommendations

- 43.1. End all forms of inhumane treatment of Palestinian refugees by intelligence and security forces and uphold the principles of due process and the rule of law. It should expedite the judicial proceedings of the Nahr al-Bared detainees, ensure that all trials meet fair trial standards, and release those found to be unlawfully or arbitrarily detained.
- 43.2. Strengthen procedural justice, include camps, and provide protection for Palestinian refugee women who resort to justice.
- 43.3. Raise the age of marriage to 18, criminalizing early marriage and punishing the perpetrators, and provide protection for vulnerable women and girls from being sexually exploited, as well as giving married minors and their children the necessary attention, protection and guidance necessary to ensure that their health and psychological status does not deteriorate and reduce the deaths of minors and their children.
- 43.4. Seriously pursue human traffickers and amend Law 164/2011 to protect victims of human trafficking, exempt them from criminal liability, and sensitize Palestinian refugees without discrimination, in accordance with international standards in this area.

h. Right to freedom of opinion and expression and Right to freedom of association

44. Restrictions and obstacles prevent Palestinian refugees from organizing demonstrations. The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities Decision 352 "Paragraph 3 Article 1" (20/2/2006) limits the right to organize demonstrations only to Lebanese, which deprives the Palestinians of this right and pushes them to use the Lebanese, as sponsors of protests, to organize the demonstration outside the camps. This is often exploited by certain Lebanese groups involved in organizing the movements, by imposing political positions on Palestinian demands and exploiting them for internal alignment by sending messages to other Lebanese groups.
45. Depriving PR of the right to publish publications and leaflets. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are effectively denied the right to formally publish periodicals due to the restrictive provisions of the Lebanese Publications Law of 1948. Article 4 of the law stipulates that the owner of a periodical must be Lebanese, and if a foreign national, must obtain approval from both the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Interior, in addition to the requirement of reciprocal treatment between Lebanon and the person's country of nationality. This poses a particular barrier for Palestinian refugees, who are stateless and do not possess a recognized nationality or a state capable of establishing reciprocal arrangements with Lebanon. As a result, they are structurally excluded from the legal framework governing media ownership and publishing, which significantly restricts their right to freedom of expression, limits their ability to contribute to public discourse, and prevents them from independently documenting and amplifying issues affecting their communities.
46. Depriving Palestinian Refugees from the right to form associations and restrict their membership in Lebanese associations. Palestinian refugees, being classified as a special category and other times as foreigners, are prohibited from establishing associations and restrictions are imposed on their participation in Lebanese associations. Articles of the law, executive procedures, and related decisions are not sensitive to the special situation of PR; for every association "is actually run by foreigners or has either foreign management members or at least a quarter of its members are foreigners", the foreign association is subject to Resolution No. 369 LR issued on December 21, 1939. A foreign association can only be created by a special decree issued by the Lebanese Government.

➤ 47. Recommendations

- 47.1. Issuing a decision that allows Palestinian Refugees to express their opinion through gathering and peaceful demonstrations, without any hindrance.
- 47.2. Recognize the specific legal and humanitarian status of Palestinian refugees and refrain from treating them as foreign nationals with regard to the issuance of media publications. It should amend the Publications Law to allow them to exercise their right to freedom of expression and publishing within a legal framework that is fair and responsive to their stateless refugee status.
- 47.3. Amend the Association's Formation Law to allow Palestinian refugees to register their own associations, which would contribute to institutionalizing, democratizing, and developing governance within these associations.



L.

RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SUBMITTED BY:

- THE LEBANESE UNION FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES
- LEBANESE ASSOCIATION FOR SELF-ADVOCACY (LASA)
- LEBANESE UNIVERSITIES LEAGUE FOR THE BLIND (LULB)
- LEBANESE FEDERATION OF THE DEAF (LFD)
- LEARNING CENTER FOR THE DEAF (LCD)
- ECUMENICAL DISABILITY ADVOCATES NETWORK (EDAN)
- FRIENDS OF THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION (FDA)
- FORUM FOR THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (FRPD – MOUNTADA)
- YOUTH ASSOCIATION OF THE BLIND (YAB)

INTRODUCTION

The Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities, in collaboration with the Coalition of Organizations of People with Disabilities including the Lebanese Association for Self-Advocacy (LASA), Lebanese Universities League for the Blind (LULB), Lebanese Federation of the Deaf (LFD), Learning Center for the Deaf (LCD), Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN), Friends of the Disabled Association (FDA), Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disability (FRPD – Mountada), and the Youth Association of the Blind (YAB) seeks to present the rights of people with disabilities in their current reality and to present recommendations related to their rights through this presentation.

In the previous cycle of the Universal Periodic Report, Lebanon has received a number of recommendations from UN member states regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. These recommendations focused on the Lebanese Parliament's ratification of the 2006 International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ensuring universal access to information and services related to sexual and reproductive health, developing a national strategy for the education of children with disabilities, and civil and political rights. The issue of defining a person with a disability and the general principles related to the scope of rights received a recommendation, along with the right to health for persons with disabilities and ensuring the rights of refugee children with disabilities.

Despite the importance of the efforts, fragmented approaches prevail in Lebanon of a number of topics in each individual file, on the one hand, and the disregard for the application of international laws and legislation related to their rights, on the other, are two obstacles that stand in the way of persons with disabilities accessing the minimum requirements for a decent life. We note that the fragmented treatments are limited in impact and limited in duration and funding, and are offered by the relevant ministries from time to time. They partially address the symptoms while neglecting the root of the problem, and have no real impact on the ground. To this day, persons with disabilities in Lebanon remain outside the development agenda, hostages of chronic marginalization and exclusion from their natural role in economic and social life.

a. General Framework

1. Today, Lebanon's population is approximately five million and four hundred thousand²⁴⁹. According to the World Bank's International Disability Report and estimates by civil society organizations, the percentage of people with disabilities among the population is 15 percent, meaning their number exceeds eight hundred thousand people. However, only 14 percent of the total number of people with disabilities hold a disability ID card²⁵⁰. The Lebanese government, which was supposed to conduct a survey of people with disabilities in Lebanon with the Central Administration of Statistics back in 2015-2016 never revived the project until today.²⁵¹

1.1 The Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities obtained a data sheet relating to persons with disabilities who obtained a disability card (as of March 31, 2023²⁵²), indicating that it "has reached only about 120,000." Given that services related to basic rights are scarce, most people with disabilities see no reason to obtain a disability card²⁵³. Indeed, 564 people with disabilities participated in a survey²⁵⁴ between June 24 and July 1, 2021 in which 33% of them did not have a disability card, despite knowing about it.

1.2 First, the Lebanese Parliament ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its annexed Protocol on April 12, 2022 (without reservations), pursuant to Law No. 291/2022, and it was published in the Official Gazette on April 14, 2022. Parliament referred the agreement to the Lebanese government, which issued Decree No. 42 on February 6, 2023, ratifying the agreement and its related protocol. The agreement became binding. On April 10, 2025, the newly elected president Joseph Aoun signed the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with its Optional Protocol. This step is considered a positive achievement, as it reaffirms Lebanon's commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

1.3 Second, despite the ratification of the Convention, the Lebanese Parliament has not repealed the mistake it made in enacting Law 171/2020 on April 19, 2020, which replaced the term "persons with disabilities" - provided in Law 220/2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - with the term "persons with additional needs"²⁵⁵. This unfair law remains in effect.

1.4 No serious movement has been observed to bring domestic legislation up to the level of the Convention, while civil society and human rights organizations concerned with issues of persons with disabilities are awaiting the organization of a national legislative workshop in which legislators and the stakeholders themselves participate, to review the national strategy for the rights and integration of persons with disabilities, which was hastily drawn up²⁵⁶, in accordance with clear funding sources and a specific timetable²⁵⁷.

1.5 The problem for persons with disabilities in Lebanon was not the legislation, but its implementation. Law 220/2000 has not been implemented for 25 years.

1.6 Ratification of the international convention was supposed to usher in a new era, but it remains burdened by the reality of persons with disabilities, who struggle to achieve their basic rights to health, education, accessibility, an inclusive environment, decent work, voting, housing, and other rights.

b. The right to health

2. The National Health Sector Strategy - Vision 2030²⁵⁸ has been issued. However, persons with disabilities were only mentioned in the "Health Awareness and Disease Prevention" section. The donor-funded primary care support protocol, signed by the ministry in 2021, conflated infectious diseases with disability and impairment. The reality is that the level of health care services provided to persons with disabilities has suffered two major setbacks in recent years:

- The first setback: the COVID-19 pandemic, where it became apparent that the Ministry of Public Health had failed to consider and address people with disabilities' needs, in terms of providing them with vaccine doses as a priority group, or preparing vaccination and PCR testing sites, temporary shelters for potential contagious arrivals, or in terms of adequate awareness-raising²⁵⁹. As a result, civil society organizations, with the support of UNICEF, have been lobbying and the Ministry of Health partially responded by organizing a vaccination marathon. Yet, this plan showed not being sustainable.²⁶⁰

- The second setback: the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020. A large number of people with disabilities and injured people only received initial treatment, then their files were neglected afterwards. Many still require treatment and the deaths of four of them were even neglected²⁶¹.

2.1 This is in addition to a number of obstacles that prevent a disabled person from enjoying the right to have his health file covered, including: The provision of services is subject to discretion and favoritism, and is not covered by the relevant ministry to a large extent. There is clear discrimination in dealing with persons with disabilities when completing the required transactions. In addition to providing... Rehabilitation, physical and occupational therapy Low rates, and a lack of early detection and intervention. Hospitals are clearly lenient with regard to prevention standards, particularly in terms of incorporating inclusive standards. There is no evidence²⁶² of any awareness-raising efforts related to services or training medical staff to meet needs.

2.2 A new circular was issued by the Ministry of Public Health in May 2025, granting people with special needs, including persons with disabilities 100% coverage of medical expenses at the Ministry's expense.

c. The right to work

3. Law 220/2000 stipulates mandatory employment at a 3 percent quota in public and private sector jobs. This quota is accompanied by incentives for employers, such as tax exemptions, and fines are imposed on those who do not comply. However, the public sector has not complied with the employment quota²⁶³, while the private sector has complied with small quotas through civil initiatives²⁶⁴. Publicly, however, it has not complied, prompting organizations of persons with disabilities to file lawsuits to compel this sector to implement the law. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities exceeds 83 percent, and the available data indicates that within 11,321 persons with disabilities reported being employed, only 1,071 of them are in the public sector²⁶⁵. This is due specifically to the lack of inclusive engineering equipment and the lack of equipped public transportation, despite Law 220/2000's requirement that 15 percent of public transportation will be equipped

4. Reality indicates a lack of empowerment, qualification, and training for the human resources of institutions responsible for securing jobs for persons with disabilities in both the public and private sectors.

5. Persons with disabilities face significant difficulties in obtaining insurance, forcing them, along with their employers, to conceal their disability and, in rare cases, to circumvent insurance. In official statistics, surveys, and studies on the employment of persons with disabilities and their job adaptation, the benefits of employing persons with disabilities and the diversity in the workplace are not mentioned. The available studies are mostly produced by associations on rights of people with disabilities themselves. Disability criteria are not included in market and unemployment studies.²⁶⁶

d. The right to education

6. A comprehensive and productive strategy for educational integration is absent from state interventions being rather fragmented initiatives²⁶⁷. The Ministry of Education claims to have developed a strategic plan for educational integration through various projects funded by donor associations and organizations. However, such a plan does not view the issue comprehensively -all disabilities and all regions - and it does not have a specific timeline for completion but is rather based on the limited funding available for civil society projects.

6.1 A very small percentage of public and private schools comply in providing services, whether in terms of the spatial environment, curriculum, or teaching staff skilled in deal-

ing with students with disabilities in regular classes²⁶⁸. The reality indicates²⁶⁹ the absence of serious statistics and studies related to persons with disabilities, their density, the schools surrounding them, and the distribution of needs according to the disability. There is a noticeable scarcity of engineering equipment and systematic adaptation in educational institutions, as well as vocational rehabilitation and training for persons with disabilities in technical educational institutions for the four disabilities.²⁷⁰

6.2 In the curriculum, there are no appropriate adaptations to the needs of students with disabilities: resources, alternative means to facilitate communication and provide information. There has been no development since 1997, which deprives students with disabilities of opportunities to integrate these institutions, except in rare cases in which educational institutions are expensive and adopt an inclusive policy according to their vision²⁷¹. Meanwhile, isolated institutions continue to receive financial allocations from the government, which contributes to the perpetuation of the policy of exclusion.²⁷²

e. Non-discrimination in an inclusive environment and political rights

7. Law 220/2000 requires public and private institutions to provide the necessary engineering equipment to ensure the independent movement and accessibility of persons with disabilities. However, the relevant ministries have not taken the necessary measures nor implemented any associated decrees. Civil studies have shown the feasibility of such equipment at a low cost²⁷³, and civil surveys²⁷⁴ have revealed the scarcity of engineering equipment for public use.

7.1. Expenditures for engineering equipment are absent from the general budget for public and private buildings and places of public use. Furthermore, associations of persons with disabilities are generally unable to access and use information related to an inclusive environment. International organizations, United Nations agencies, and donors are not obligated to include inclusive standards in the programs and projects they implement in Lebanon, although they acknowledge the necessity of doing so after reviewing them.²⁷⁵

7.2 Regarding access, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport was unable to operate the buses it received as a donation from France 50 buses²⁷⁶ or the other 45 buses owned by the Railway and Public Transport Authority that were still operational. Controversy continued for months over the registration and operation of the buses, in the absence of a national public transport plan²⁷⁷. The buses were put into operation in December 2024 after being awarded to a private company.²⁷⁸

f. Political rights of persons with disabilities

8. The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities issued binding circulars to governors and mayors urging them to implement the law facilitating their voting process. Likewise, a circular was issued to encourage municipalities that provide the best facilities for this process. Yet, municipalities have not complied with these circulars to provide what they can according to inclusive standards. Furthermore, no volunteers were present to assist voters with disabilities²⁷⁹.

8.1 A comprehensive census of polling stations revealed that eight percent of polling stations were not fully equipped, sixty-three percent of them were schools, zero percent were fully equipped and the remaining percentages were distributed between centers, meeting one to five engineering specifications²⁸⁰. The reality also indicates the lack of a comprehensive census of voters with disabilities, making their concentrations on election

day unknown to the relevant ministries. In addition, the relevant ministries failed to prepare polling stations in Lebanon, despite the availability of detailed information about each center based on the results of a comprehensive field survey²⁸¹. This was compounded by the ministry's disregard for the engineering study submitted by the "My Right" campaign, which included the preparation of ten polling stations as models for the centers.²⁸²

8.2 The 2022 parliamentary elections witnessed a relative development after the "My Right" campaign, including demands for voting on the ground floor, operating elevators wherever possible, and installing polling stations in courtyards. The awareness campaign that preceded the elections impacted the relevant ministries, particularly the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The Ministry of Interior's cooperation with the union's demands, and its daily communication with its administration, led to the removal of obstacles that could have prevented disabled voters from voting in the two months preceding the elections. The campaign established its demands if cooperation continues on an upward trajectory before the 2024 elections, it could expand its demands, particularly regarding awareness-raising among polling officials, candidate representatives, and electoral machines to prevent violations inside polling centers and stations.²⁸³

8.3 For the 2025 municipal and mayoral elections, the campaign is collaborating with the Ministries of Interior and Social Affairs. For the first time, the Ministry of Social Affairs shared data on disabled voters with the Ministry of Interior²⁸⁴. The campaign is also implementing the principle of using ground-floor rooms as polling stations, pending the implementation of the provisions of Executive Decree 2214/2009, prior to the 2026 parliamentary elections.

g. Social protection

9. With the release of the "National Strategy for Social Protection in Lebanon"²⁸⁵ in October 2023, it was clear that the category of persons with disabilities living below the extreme poverty line was only addressed in fragmented ways. Meanwhile, the implementation of international laws and regulations related to their rights was ignored. The strategy failed to overcome the obstacles hindering persons with disabilities' access to the minimum requirements for a decent life. The absence of an inclusive engineering and technical environment that guarantees persons with disabilities access to places and information, the absence of healthcare services (medicine, medication, and hospitalization), rehabilitation, education, and the high unemployment rate, coupled with the economic downturn, have placed persons with disabilities in harsh living conditions. This particularly affects those who have acquired disabilities in recent years, including those injured in the Beirut port explosion and those wounded in the recent war, making persons with disabilities more vulnerable to death than others.²⁸⁶

9.1 The cash allowance program for persons with disabilities is considered one of the fruits of this strategy. Currently, it covers only 18,962 people²⁸⁷, with a cash allowance of just \$40, out of a total of 130,000 people²⁸⁸ who are supposed to have obtained a disability ID card. Although the amount is small, it still provides modest meals. Yet, its delivery to beneficiaries is irregular and the announced figures do not match the total expenditure²⁸⁹. What is needed is an unemployment allowance for persons with disabilities, which covers their needs.

h. Wars, disasters, and early recovery

10. The recent aggression, along with the year of attacks that preceded it, resulted in 16,638 wounded, with the number of wounded children reaching 1,456, and women and girls reaching 2,567. ^[45] While the Ministry of Public Health has not issued any report on the number of people injured and permanently disabled as a result of the aggression, the ministry is again ignoring the category of people with disabilities, as it did in August 2006 and August 2020.

10.1 Despite the constant emphasis on the importance of establishing a disability integration unit at the core of disaster risk management²⁹⁰, and the Ministry of Interior having had 11 months to follow up on the issue²⁹¹, the massive displacement on September 23, 2024, represented the first serious test of the emergency plan. It demonstrated the Ministry's disastrous failure in dealing with persons with disabilities and its inability to facilitate the movement of hundreds of thousands of displaced people to the north. Displaced people with disabilities spent between 12 and 18 hours on the road in extremely difficult conditions.

Most families with disabilities were displaced under Israeli threats to bomb their homes, creating a state of terror among them. The Emergency Program monitored²⁹² 901 families with a disabled person among their members and addressed their needs. 58 percent of the displaced persons with disabilities were distributed among the homes of relatives, acquaintances and rented apartments, with the minimum level of engineering facilities. Schools (accounted for 38 percent of the displacement centers, which are not adapted either to persons with disabilities in terms of engineering facilities. Notable observations in the displacement centers include:

- Failure to provide shelter that is at least appropriate to the nature of the displaced person's disability, and its inability to use toilets and bathrooms.
- Not allowing disabled displaced persons to stay on the ground floor, and not operating elevators when they exist.
- The lack of privacy for persons with disabilities, especially girls with disabilities, has negatively impacted their psychological well-being. This is in addition to the lack of special needs for women and girls, including a shortage of drinking water containers in most shelters, a lack of lighting, and a shortage of medications for chronic diseases and neurological conditions.
- There is a shortage of drug treatment medications, medical beds, hearing aids, and medical supplies for urination and defecation, which has led to the appearance of ulcers (bedsores) and urinary tract infections among most of the displaced persons with disabilities.²⁹³

➤ 11. Recommendations

- 11.1 It appears that Lebanon's failure to implement Law 220/2000 and its laxity in implementing the international convention lays the foundation for depriving persons with disabilities of their basic rights. If the elderly and those with temporary disabilities are added to this category, injustice will be inflicted on more than 20 percent of the population, who are deprived of the right to access places and information, and the right to health coverage, work, education, sports and entertainment... In light of the current reality:
- 11.2 Urge the Parliament and the government to immediately implement the international agreement after upgrading domestic legislation to achieve the Convention's objectives and integrate persons with disabilities into all aspects of life in accordance with the social model, and to issue the required laws and decrees. Implementation should also be accompanied by an action plan, implemented by the relevant ministries and departments, under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office. This plan should be accompanied by a specific timetable and allocated specific expenditure items in the general budget. At the same time, associations of persons with disabilities have the right to monitor implementation.
- 11.3 Incorporate inclusion and diversity standards into the structures and frameworks of Lebanese ministries: equipment and adaptation, training, commitment to employment rates for persons with disabilities, and inclusive projects.
- 11.4 Integrate disability inclusion standards into all programs and projects implemented in partnership with the Lebanese state, ensuring accessibility, participation, and non-discrimination in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 11.5 Update educational curricula for primary, secondary, university, vocational, and technical education according to an inclusive vision, and making them accessible to learners with hearing, visual, and mental disabilities.
- 11.6 Implement the promises made to organizations of persons with disabilities to equip public and private buildings for public use.
- 11.7 Establish a disability integration unit for disaster risk management, ensuring the evacuation of displaced persons with disabilities and their accommodation in displacement centers that respect their dignity.²⁹⁴
- 11.8 Make information available on civilian casualties who have permanent disabilities, especially children and women, and not withholding it from organizations of persons with disabilities. It will help develop programs targeting their rehabilitation and meet their needs.
- 11.9 Reconstruct demolished residential buildings, production and commercial units, public places, and public-use areas in accordance with inclusive standards.



L. HUMAN RIGHTS & CLIMATE CHANGE

SUBMITTED BY:
-ARAB NGO NETWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

During the 3rd cycle review, Lebanon received one recommendation with regard to environmental challenges and climate change impacts, calling “to intensify efforts to develop and strengthen the necessary legislative frameworks, address cross-sectoral environmental challenges, including climate change adaptation and mitigation frameworks, and ensure that women, children, persons with disabilities and indigenous and local communities are meaningfully engaged in this implementation”. This submission presents the status of progress on the recommendation and provides a list of recommendations in relation.

II. The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment

1. While only responsible for around 0.06% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Lebanon is among the countries with the lowest readiness to face climate change. This stems from an increasingly high exposure to climate risks and a limited capacity to prepare for, respond to and adapt to these risks. Climate vulnerability in Lebanon is characterized by the impacts of increased temperatures, decreased rainfall, and the increase in frequency of droughts, floods, fires and storms, which pose a threat to aging infrastructure, diminishing natural resources, and the health and livelihoods of the population. These impacts raise great social concerns in the absence of a rights-based framework to increase the country and population’s adaptive capacity. Overlapping crises have had resounding impacts on vulnerable groups that are likely to continue to bear the greater social, economic and health impacts of climate change.
2. Currently, Lebanon has no major overarching legislation or national strategy that directly addresses climate change mitigation or adaptation. National climate policymaking in Lebanon is driven primarily through the ratification of the Paris Agreement through Law 115/2019, which includes the preparation of mitigation and adaptation roadmaps through the submission of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in line with Articles 4.9 and 4.11 of the agreement.
3. The NDCs outline national mitigation and adaptation priorities, putting forward in its latest update in 2020 an unconditional target of 20% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2030. This ambition is supported by sector-specific objectives that center on principles such as green mobility, sustainable urban development, low-carbon production practices, and energy security. These measures are designed to transition the country toward a more climate-resilient and sustainable economy.
4. The Ministry of Environment (MoE) is mandated with preparing the NDCs and overseeing climate-related policy in the country. However, the MoE has limited capacity to prepare NDCs, relying on a small, externally funded team supported by UNDP secondaries. An inter-ministerial NDC committee, chaired by MoE, was formed in 2017 to oversee and coordinate the country’s climate change policies and commitments. However, the committee is yet to be institutionalized due to inadequate staffing, unbalanced technical capacities between ministries, and high levels of staff absenteeism as a result of the crises. Despite 15 years of efforts to improve climate data quality and establish sustainable data systems, through training, awareness, and enhanced availability, progress has been hampered by resource constraints, staff turnover, and political instability, preventing institutionalization (Oxfam, 2025)

5. Complementing the NDC, Lebanon has also developed its Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS), in accordance with Article 4.19 of the Paris Agreement. The LT-LEDS is intended to guide Lebanon's economic planning by embedding sustainable and resilient growth models into its development path. It advocates investments in green technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable infrastructure, while also aiming to foster innovation and open up new economic opportunities within a low-carbon framework. The LT-DES, however, remains an economic planning framework, requiring substantial investment, rather than an actionable cross-sectoral climate response strategy.
6. Institutional fragmentation further complicates climate finance management. Weak coordination among ministries and the absence of a unified tracking system reduces transparency and hinder Lebanon's ability to align funding with national priorities. Addressing these challenges will require comprehensive reforms, including the establishment of a centralized climate fund and capacity-building initiatives to improve governance and financial management²⁹⁵. In order to facilitate access to climate finance, MoE issued Decision No. /1 defining the procedures for granting "no-objection" approvals for funding proposals submitted to the Green Climate Fund aimed at reducing Lebanon's greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change impacts.
7. Climate change considerations have been absent in discussions on public finances and investments, despite efforts by MoE and international development agencies to mainstream climate-sensitive policy and align mitigation and adaptation targets with Lebanon's economic recovery efforts within a green economic framework. This is reflected in the failure of the Government's 2022 "Lebanon Financial and Economic Reform Policies" to address critical environmental and climate challenges, leaving out recommended stimulus programs to promote climate-responsive recovery and reforms in agriculture, transport, tourism and industrial sectors, and approaches to expand the scope of green investments.²⁹⁶
8. According to Lebanon's fourth national communication to the UNFCCC, the energy sector is the largest contributor to emissions and air quality deterioration, especially with the increased prevalence of highly polluting private diesel generators to compensate for shortages of public electricity supply by Électricité du Liban (EDL). Steps have been taken in the energy sector to increase the share of renewable energy (RE) generation (mainly solar energy) to 30% of the total energy mix by 2030. This includes the ratification of the Distributed Renewable Energy Law (DRE) in December 2023 under law No. 318/2023. The DRE law sets the regulatory framework for decentralized RE production, including the introduction of various types of net metering, peer-to-peer power exchanges using EDL's public grid, municipal level private energy production and private sector engagement in production. While DRE law is a step forward in decarbonizing and attracting green investment in the Lebanese energy sector, it remains predicated on the formation of an Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA) tasked with authorization and regulation of RE production and exchange. The ERA has not been formalized since its establishment under Law No. 462 of 2002. Without the formation of the ERA, and without updated standardization and certification systems, end-of-life management and disposal mechanisms for RE technologies, the energy sector may struggle to meet its mitigation targets.

9. Lebanon's transport sector contributes up to 23% of Lebanon's emissions. Emissions concentrated within the dominant use of privately owned gasoline powered passenger vehicles, in the absence of an organized and efficient public transport system. Mitigation efforts in the sector have taken the form of incentive programs to encourage the use of less-polluting vehicles. These include the 2022 amendment of the Budget Law (Law 10) exempting fully electric vehicles from custom fees and reducing duties and taxes by 70% for hybrid vehicles within three years of the enactment of the law. Custom exemptions between 50 and 70% were also included in the 2024 National Budget. However, these incentive programs remain disjointed and mitigation measures for the transport sector are greatly hindered by the lack of planning, clear legal frameworks or implementation and financing mechanisms for reliable and low-emission public transport systems. (World Bank, 2024).²⁹⁷
10. In the solid waste sector, continued open dumping and burning of solid waste contributes greatly to Lebanon's emissions and poses a great threat to public and environmental health. Despite the ratification of Law 80/2018 on Integrated Solid Waste Management and the Lebanon Solid Waste Roadmap for 2023-2026, legislation specifying the procedures, conditions, standards and specifications regarding waste management is still absent. More recently, the government launched the National Strategy for Integrated Solid Waste Management, following its approval by the Council of Ministers pursuant to decision No.5 dated 17/12/2024²⁹⁸. Despite an earlier freeze on the appointment of a National Solid Waste Management Authority to organize the sector's activity, a decree to organize the National Solid Waste Management Authority was drafted in late 2024, and its appointment remains impending.
11. The MoE has taken steps to monitor and manage emissions from point sources, gradual reduction of air pollution from stationary sources (including energy and waste sectors) towards the implementation of the Air Quality Protection Law 78/2018. Decision No. 16/1 dated 4 February 2022 was issued to update the emission limit values for stationary sources, particularly in the industrial and energy sectors, in accordance with Article 9 of Law 78/2018. The decision is being implemented in two phases, starting in February 2023, with stricter limits applied in the second phase. Environmental regulations were also issued for private and municipal generators through Circular 2/1 dated 1 September 2023, specifying filter types, allowable emission limits, exhaust stack height, and waste disposal requirements, all aimed at protecting public health and the environment.
12. Importantly, Lebanon falls short on its adaptation efforts and lacks a comprehensive national adaptation policy. MoE began a national dialogue for the development of Lebanon's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) in 2017, but it has yet to materialize. However, MoE is currently working to develop the NAP, holding consultations with experts and stakeholders. Adaptation priorities set out in Lebanon's NDCs in 2020 focus on recommendations for initiatives in climate-smart agriculture, sustainable water and irrigation practices, sustainable landscape, forest and biodiversity management and restoration, and building resilience in the health sector, infrastructure and coastal zones. As such, adaptation remains fragmented across sectors.
13. As such, several sectoral plans have echoed the similar adaptation recommendations including the Ministry of Agriculture's 2020-2025 Strategy, the National Water Strategy 2024 – 2035, and the National Health and Environment Strategy 2016-2021. These strategies represent a starting point for further regulation and planning for adaptation, but do not provide clear means for implementation. On the other hand, the National Strategy for Forest Fire Management, updated through Cabinet Decision No. 45 dated 26 May 2023, has produced a 91.7% reduction in burned areas in 2022 (vs. 2012–2019 average) and 81%

reduction in 2023. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has also contributed to increasing protected area coverage in Lebanon, with two proposed laws submitted to establish the Jbeil and Anfeh Marine Protected Areas.²⁹⁹

14. In the face of increased exposure to climate risks, the state's ability to coordinate and respond to disasters is greatly limited. Despite the establishment of a Disaster Risk Management Unit at the Prime Minister's Office, the unit has not received appropriate support funding from the Lebanese Government and remains without a clear strategy, command structure, or a communication and coordination protocol, especially in regards to climate-related disasters. Disaster management responsibilities are fragmented and overlapping across public offices, distributed between the Ministries of Environment, Public Works and Transport, Interior and Municipalities, and Social Affairs. In January 2024, flooding and storm surges affected more than 3100 individuals and resulted in 4 deaths in displaced Syrian communities in the North, in addition to blocking and damaging major transport infrastructure across the coast and Beirut. The response to these floods, in the absence of a national disaster management mechanism, saw ministries unable to assign or coordinate responsibility and unable to address infrastructural issues exacerbating the impacts of the storm. Disaster risk management projects in Lebanon are also considered to be exclusionary, limiting local community participation and overlooking socio-cultural aspects of disasters.³⁰⁰
15. Overall, most policies and strategies related to climate change and included in Lebanon's NDC do not thoroughly address socio-cultural dimensions, including gender. Based on the assessment included in the 4th National Communication, gender integration is missing from water, energy and biodiversity policies, with greater integration in agriculture and forestry projects. While the NDCs do recognize gendered aspects of climate change impacts, and Standard Operating Procedures for gender sensitive policy making have been developed at the ministerial level, women's participation in decision making, and community involvement at large, is still limited.³⁰¹
16. Finally, Israel's war on Lebanon between October 2023 and November 2024, has greatly impacted large areas of forested and cultivated land. This included the burning of over 5,745 hectares of forests and groves, destroying thousands of fruit-bearing trees, especially olive and grapevines, in towns including Kfar Kila, Meiss El Jabal, Al-Bustan, Aitaroun, and Aita al-Shaab. The use of incendiary weapons, white phosphorus, has greatly contaminated soils with phosphorus levels in soils of towns such as Kfar Kila and Aita al-Shaab exceeding safe thresholds. The contamination of soil, groundwater and the degradation of forested land greatly impacts the adaptive capacities of local communities. No national policy exists to rehabilitate war-damaged soil and the Moe lacks funding, equipment, and specialized staff to monitor war-related pollution. Although laws were proposed in Parliament to create a National Commission for War Environmental Impacts, these impacts have been stalled due to political deadlock or lack of prioritization.

III. Recommendations

17. Prioritize the development of the National Adaptation Plan using a rights-based approach to address current and future socioeconomic vulnerabilities, while strengthening the resilience of natural, urban, and infrastructure systems. The process should involve inclusive national dialogue—not only among ministries and public agencies, but also with climate-vulnerable groups, including women, people with disabilities, youth, unions, agricultural cooperatives, and civil society. In the short term, sector-specific adaptation strategies must be translated into actionable plans with defined responsibilities and coordination mechanisms.
18. Consolidate climate policies into a unified legal and regulatory framework covering sectors such as energy, waste, water, agriculture, land reform, public finance, investment, and procurement. This overarching legislation should be supported by near-term reforms, including updating the Water Code and implementing Law 192/2020; revising land and forest laws; enforcing the National Strategy for Integrated Solid Waste Management; establishing the National Authority for Solid Waste Management.
19. Expedite the establishment of the Energy Regulatory Authority (ERA) to drive renewable energy development and attract investment. Recovery efforts should focus on enhancing technical and administrative capacities and staffing to ensure effective service delivery and alignment with broader mitigation and adaptation goals.
20. Institutionalize national disaster preparedness, response, and recovery plans. Enhance the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Unit's mandate and authority to lead and coordinate comprehensive, binding national strategies.
21. Ensure public access to climate and environmental data, enhance early warning systems, and disseminate information on natural hazards. Risk assessments for floods, wildfires, and erosion should be integrated into urban planning, infrastructure development, and land management.
22. Expand public participation in climate policy development beyond awareness efforts. Guarantee transparent, equitable consultation processes that actively include vulnerable groups such as women, youth, people with disabilities, and local communities.

DRAFTING NGOS







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- ¹⁰Recent pilot initiatives include the Productive Economic Inclusion in Lebanon (PEIL), launched in 2024 by the René Moawad Foundation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, targeting 1,500 low-income households across Baabda/El Metn, Minnieh-Dennieh, and Saida/Jezzine. The Women Economic Empowerment for Lebanon (WEEL) program, launched in 2021 by Berytech and Expertise France under EU4WE, supports women-led MSMEs with grants of €15,000–€50,000. Since 2020, the Crisis Management for Women-Led Businesses initiative under the Mashreq Gender Facility has provided support to 160 women-led businesses to navigate economic and pandemic-related challenges. Meanwhile, the Women’s Economic Participation (WEP) project, active since 2019 and funded by Canada through UNDP, has worked in South and Bekaa to enhance women’s access to sustainable livelihoods, supporting cooperatives, startups, and municipalities across key value chains, like agriculture, handicrafts and ICT
- ¹¹In April 2023, the Government of Lebanon launched the National Disability Allowance (NDA) program, implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) in collaboration with UNICEF and the ILO. The NDA provides monthly cash assistance to individuals with disabilities born between 1994 and 2009, helping to offset the additional costs associated with disability and promoting greater social inclusion.
- ¹²Developed with UN agencies, civil society actors, and donors, the NSPS outlines a roadmap toward a unified, rights-based system focused on five pillars: social assistance, social welfare, social insurance, financial access to basic services, and economic inclusion and labor activation. These 5 pillars are yet to be operationalized and implemented into specific programmes and schemes.
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of the explosion was 7,413, and the number of those who stopped working as a result of the explosion was 4,188. This reality changed the following years of the blast as the port resumed its activities. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of workers whose work was stopped did not receive legal compensation, in addition to the fact homes of more than 350 day laborers adjacent to the port were damaged and are now uninhabitable.

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²¹⁷The New Arab. (2025, March 9). Thousands of Syrian Alawites cross into Lebanon to flee violence. Retrieved from: <https://www.newarab.com/news/thousands-syrian-alawites-cross-lebanon-flee-violence>

²¹⁸UNHCR. (2025, March 12). Protection Monitoring - Situation of Forcibly Displaced Syrians in Lebanon, 4th Quarter 2024. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/protection-monitoring-situation-forcibly-displaced-syrians-lebanon-4th-quarter-2024>

²¹⁹Palestinian Human Rights Organization PHRO, International Federation for Human Rights FIDH, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network EuroMed Rights, Centre libanais des droits humains CLDH, Act for Human Rights ALEF, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies CIHRS, Arab NGO Network for Development ANND, Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Strategic studies & Human development TATWIR, Developmental Action Without Borders NABAA Palestinian Association for Human Rights Witness, Human Development Center, Khiam Rehabilitation center for Victims of torture KRC, Joint Christian committee for Social service JCC, Women Humanitarian Organization PWHO

²²⁰<http://www.lpdg.gov.lb/archive/a-unified-lebanese-vision-for-the-palestinian-refu/424/en>

²²¹Refugees registered with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees (UNRWA); Refugees registered with the Directorate of Political Affairs but not registered with UNRWA; Refugees not registered with the Lebanese government and UNRWA (losing identity papers)

²²²It is worth noting that the preamble to the Lebanese Constitution, paragraph (b), stipulates that "Lebanon is a founding and active member of the United Nations and is committed to its charters and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," and Article 2 of the Lebanese Code of Civil Procedure stipulates that "when the provisions of international treaties conflict with the provisions of ordinary law, the former shall take precedence in the field of application over the latter."

²²³The migration of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon
<http://www.palhumanrights.org/PalRefugeesMigration.pdf>

²²⁴<https://lpdc.gov.lb/?s=General+Census+of+Population+and+Housing+in+Palestinian+Communities+and+Camps+in+Lebanon>

²²⁵<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

²²⁶<https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2013-09/phropalesteanianhumanrightsorganizationjs.pdf>
 - https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2015-10/js12_upr23_lbn_e_main.pdf -
https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021-08/js23_upr37_lbn_e_main.pdf

²²⁷<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CMW/GC5/MigrationTeam.pdf#:~:text=15%20Likewise%2C%20the%20Committee%20on%20Economic%2C%20Social,prohibited%20ground%20of%20discrimination%20under%20international%20law>

²²⁸Supported 150 (269 - 106 - 158 - 171- 172 - 243 - 272) Partial support 150 (215 - 289) Noted 150 (206 - 216 - 237- 256- 278)

²²⁹132 (40 - 162 - 167 - 203 - 211 - 215)

²³⁰Recommendations that Lebanon supported in the "Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review" A/HRC/16/18 dated March 16 2011 are: 80 (1-2-3-4-5-6-11), concerning signing and / or ratifying international conventions, and not abiding by them.

²³¹Recommendations that Lebanon claimed to be under implementation or implemented in the "Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review" A/HRC/16/18 dated March 2011 are: 81 (6), which Lebanon considered to be implemented by issuing the law 164/2011 "Punishment for the Crime of Trafficking in Persons". Lebanon also considered that recommendations 81 (1-2-10-14-15-17-25-26) under implementation and ignored recommendations 81 (4-7-8-9-13-16-21)

²³²http://www.palhumanrights.org/rep/ENG/phro_report_non-id.pdf

²³³<https://www.general-security.gov.lb/en/posts/90>

²³⁴Such as the right to health, especially hospitalization, education, especially university, work, and registration of marriage contracts, and thus the impossibility of registering births.

²³⁵to obtain residency, required obtaining identity card from Syria that requires presence the child with his/her guardian in order to take fingerprints, or obtaining a passport that can be issued by the Syrian embassy in Lebanon at a high cost, and this is a difficult process almost impossible

²³⁶<https://www.general-security.gov.lb/ar/posts/490>

²³⁷150 (36, 39, 70, 71, 216, 286, 287, 288, and 290) 37th session in 2021

²³⁸"Unified Vision..." document, previously mentioned source

²³⁹132 (34 - 35 - 36 - 56 - 57 - 58 - 59 - 60 - 111 - 113 - 114 - 115 - 116 - 117 - 118 - 119 - 120) of 23/2015 UPR session 22 80 (13-14-14-16-16) in the 9/2010 UPR session

²⁴⁰as well as Recommendations 132 (162, 203, and 215) from the 23rd session (2015), all of which called for improving the working conditions of Palestinian refugees. While Lebanon accepted Recommendation 80 (32) on this matter, it failed to respond to Recommendation 84 (10) from the 9th session (2010), suggesting—without clear evidence—that some of these demands had already been addressed

²⁴¹<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CMW/GC5/MigrationTeam.pdf#:~:text=15>

%20Likewise%2C%20the%20Committee%20on%20Economic%2C%20Social,prohibited%20ground%20of%20di
scrimination%20under%20inter national%20law

²⁴² https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312256

²⁴³ For example, Palestinian nurses, due to necessity, are allowed to work in the nursing profession after obtaining a license to practice the profession from the Ministry of Health and submitting a work permit application. They are only required to obtain a registration number from the Ministry of Labor and be registered in the union's special records. This is a temporary, exceptional procedure that keeps the situation suspended, preventing them from joining the union and benefiting from benefits and privileges. This requires repeating all procedures annually

²⁴⁴ <https://www.cnss.gov.lb/index.php/pubcirculars/pubcirc0437>

²⁴⁵ 132 (183 – 184 – 185 – 186 – 187 – 189 – 190 – 191 – 192 - 193), in the 23/2015 UPR Session 29 80 (1-2-3-4-5) in the 9/2010 UPR session in response to recommendation 80 (21) regarding the creation of additional national mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights of vulnerable groups, especially women, children, and people with disabilities.

²⁴⁶ The migration of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon
<http://www.palhumanrights.org/PalRefugeesMigration.pdf>

²⁴⁷ 132 (142- 143- 144- 145- 146- 147- 148) in the 23rd UPR session 2015

²⁴⁸ 80 (18-19-20) of the 9/2010 session, and claimed that recommendations 81 (7-13) were being implemented

²⁴⁹ <https://www.populationpyramid.net/ar/%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86/2023/>

²⁵⁰ For example, reports from the Emergency Relief Program, implemented by the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (LPHU) in the summer of 2006, which accommodated 1,500 displaced families from the south, provided that one of their members was disabled, revealed that approximately 82 of the displaced persons with disabilities had not obtained a disability ID card.

²⁵¹ "Disability and Access to Information in Lebanon" - Report, Edward Thomas, Article 19 and the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union, Beirut, May 2015.

²⁵² An unpublished paper on the Ministry of Social Affairs website, obtained unofficially by the Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through a member of the National Authority for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities on May 5, 2023.

²⁵³ <https://lphu.com/category/almarsadnews/>

²⁵⁴ Health Conditions of Persons with Disabilities in Lebanon – Needs and Challenges, Lebanese Union of People with Physical Disabilities, 2021. Follow:
<https://www.facebook.com/lupdlb/videos/4206118676134877>

²⁵⁵ See the statement of the Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entitled "For the Parliament," at the link: <https://rb.gy/b1yao1>

²⁵⁶ Regarding the " National Strategy for the Rights and Integration of Persons with Disabilities", there is only the news, see: <https://nhrcib.org/archives/1660>

²⁵⁷ See: Annual Monitoring Report, Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – 2023, p. 3.

²⁵⁸ To view the plan, its attachments, and its executive summary (available in Arabic), please visit the following link:https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/files/About%20MOPH/StrategicPlans/National-Health-Strategy%E2%80%93Vision2030/LHS_220124.pdf

²⁵⁹ Temporary accommodation: <https://shorturl.at/6KeCH>

²⁶⁰ About the Ministry of Health's response to the demands: <https://shorturl.at/qo9WL>

²⁶¹ The health situation is one aspect of the ongoing suffering of those injured in the Beirut port explosion. The effects of the explosion have impacted various aspects of the wounded's lives, and neglect and discrimination

against them have increased, particularly at the economic and livelihood levels, as well as in terms of access to and equipped facilities.

²⁶²The health file for the Beirut port explosion victims, at the link:
<https://lupd-lb.com/resource/beirut-port-explosion-victims-healthcare/>

²⁶³Towards Developing Standards for the Employment of Persons with Disabilities in the Public Sector through the Civil Service Council – Research Paper (Lebanese Union of People with Physical Disabilities, Seminar on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities, Beirut, Crowne Plaza, August 9, 2019).

²⁶⁴“Diversity in the Workplace” Guide, a guide for employers on employing people with disabilities, An-Nahar Newspaper, issues 4-9, 2007-2009.

²⁶⁵Internal Report – Program for Ensuring the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Ministry of Social Affairs, Information Date: September 22, 2018.

²⁶⁶Annual Monitoring Reports - Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: 2018-2023.

²⁶⁷Policy Paper: Towards Achieving Access to Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities, Lebanese Union of People with Physical Disabilities, February 25, 2019.

²⁶⁸Final Report of the “National Integration Project” (Youth Association for the Blind, Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union, and Lebanese Down Syndrome Association), Beirut, 2009.

²⁶⁹Policy Paper: Towards Achieving Access to the Right to Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities, op. cit.

²⁷⁰Towards Inclusive Vocational and Technical Education in Lebanon – A Guidance Manual, Ideas 3, (Media Unit, 2016).

²⁷¹Wow Magazine, Issue 14, December 2007, Educational File for People with Disabilities, pp. 3-12

²⁷²Policy Paper: Towards Achieving Access to the Right to Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities, - Op. cit.

²⁷³Progress towards an inclusive environment - an architectural and budget-based approach (Beirut: Lebanon Budget Project - Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union, and the Research and Consulting Foundation, 1st ed.: 2008).

²⁷⁴“Reconstruction and the Inclusive Environment” – A Field Survey on the Application of Engineering Specifications and Standards for Persons with Disabilities in the Reconstruction Process (Beirut: Media Unit of the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union, 1st ed.: 2008).

²⁷⁵See: Annual Monitoring Report, Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – 2023. Appendix 1.

²⁷⁶Immediately after the arrival of the French bus donation in May 2022, a specialized team from the Lebanese Union for Persons with Disabilities inspected the buses at Beirut Port to document their readiness for use by passengers with disabilities. The inspection revealed that the buses include equipment that facilitates their use by users of crutches and wheelchairs, in addition to other equipment for the deaf and blind. It was found that the equipment is available and present. (Inspection report, Fadi Al-Sayegh, May 25, 2022).

²⁷⁷See: Annual Monitoring Report, Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – 2023. pp. 13-14.

²⁷⁸<https://shorturl.at/2kOsD>

²⁷⁹My Right Campaign Reports, 2016, 2018, 2019.

²⁸⁰“The Eligibility of Polling Stations for Voting by Persons with Disabilities, Administrative Districts Across All Lebanese Territory,” (Beirut: Lebanese Physical Handicapped Persons Union, 1st ed.: 2009) – Administrative districts across all Lebanese territory, a report based on a field survey.

²⁸¹Results of the Comprehensive Field Survey of Polling Stations in Lebanon (Beirut: Lebanese Physical Handicapped Persons Union, 1st ed.: 2009) in five volumes. Also: Survey Updates in the Beirut District, October 2015.

²⁸²A needs assessment study for ten model polling stations in Lebanon, prepared by Hanin Chemali (Beirut: Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities, 2018)

²⁸⁷Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the 2022 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections - Monitoring Report.

²⁸⁸<https://shorturl.at/bNE9K>

²⁸⁹National Social Protection Strategy in Lebanon , at the link: <http://www.pcm.gov.lb/Admin/DynamicFile.aspx?PHName=Document&PageID=23997&published=1>

²⁹⁰Social and Health Protection for Persons with Disabilities in Lebanon, Lebanese Union of People with Physical Disabilities, at: <https://lupd-lb.com/resource/health-and-social-protection-pwd/>

²⁹¹Ministry of Social Affairs, dated March 20, 2025, at the link: <https://shorturl.at/piZv8> . Note that not all beneficiaries are Lebanese, but detailed data in numbers or percentages are not available on the Ministry's website.

²⁹²See: footnote 7.

²⁹³See: Report of the Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Lebanon - 2023.

²⁹⁴The Observatory for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a workshop on "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Comprehensive Humanitarian Assistance," with the participation of Minister of Environment Nasser Yassin, who heads the Disaster Risk Management Department of the Prime Minister's Office, along with representatives from municipalities, the International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations agencies, and international organizations. December 22, 2023. See link: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=880599490522016&set=pcb.880599773855321>

²⁹⁵See a sample of disability unit claims. <https://www.facebook.com/lupdlb/videos/1600251770742201>

²⁹⁶Emergency Program 2024, one of the programs of the Lebanese Union for People with Disabilities, at the link: <https://lupd-lb.com/magazine/emergency-program-2024/>

²⁹⁷2024 Aggression - People with Disabilities between Displacement and Securing Needs, Emergency Program Report, available at: <https://lupd-lb.com/resource/2024-aggression-pwd-displacement-and-securing-needs/>

²⁹⁸See: Discussion Paper on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Priorities in Lebanon - Disaster, Emergency and Recovery, Lebanese Union of People with Physical Disabilities, January 2025.

²⁹⁹MoE/UNDP/GEF (2024). Lebanon's First Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) on Climate Change. Beirut, Lebanon.

³⁰⁰World Bank. (2024). Lebanon - Country Climate and Development Report

³⁰¹LCPS. (2024). Regulating the Energy Transition: Lebanon's New Law on Distributed Renewable Energy. <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/en/articles/details/4853/monitor-%7C-regulating-the-energy-transition-l-ebanon%E2%80%99s-new-law-on-distributed-renewable-energy>

³⁰²CDR. (2024). Final Draft National Integrated Solid Waste Management Strategy of Lebanon. https://www.cdr.gov.lb/getmedia/12957a66-0f74-40b3-a6da-d52e73b6eb8f/Draft-National-Integrated-Solid-Waste-Management-Strategy_Executive-Summary_EN.pdf.aspx

³⁰³NNA. (2025). *ةيفافشلا نيدمتعم ةفيظن ةئيب نيمأتل ريثكلا انتقح: نيساي هتهجاوم بلع ةدهاج تلمع ةئيلا ةرازوو نانبل هجاوي كئاش يئيب فلم ءمالعائل ةينطولا ةلاكولا*. نيناوقلا بلا نيدنتسمو.

<https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/hotreports/763350/%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A6%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%80-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85>

³⁰⁴El Murr, Y. (2023). Three Years After the Beirut Explosion: Where Does Lebanon's Disaster Management Stand?. Public Source. <https://thepublicsource.org/lebanon-disaster-risk-preparedness>

³⁰⁵MoE. (2021). Lebanon's Nationally Determined Contribution. Updated 2020 Version.