



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

24 - 30 JULY, 2023



Human Rights are inherent to all human beings, regardless of the nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language or any other status without discrimination. These rights are all universal, inalienable, interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

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LEBANON

Monday
24 July 2023

No extension of Salameh's term, but no successor yet, decides caretaker government

Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Miqati met with vice-governors of the Central Bank, to discuss their plan of action after Salameh's end of term next week. Miqati expressed his support for the plan, noting that most of it aligns with the government's strategy. However, other politicians reacted negatively to the plan, as most of the political class did after former Prime Minister Hassan Diab proposed a similar plan in 2020. Miqati also hoped to adopt a legal resolution through a governmental decision, paving the way for the State to utilize BDL reserves for financing. BDL Governor's deputies could oppose such a maneuver if they consider it doubtful or questionable, as they raised objections over the past three years to the continuous financing without legal basis. The government also held a meeting in which it rejected the possibility of extending Salameh's term after its end on Monday 31st July. The nomination of a successor would only come when circumstances allow, without the government further explaining what these circumstances would be. Critics argued that the vice governors, the Parliament, and the Government will face difficulties in dealing with the situation, with neither wanting to be on the hook for not implementing reforms. Sami Zoughaib, an economist and research manager at the Policy Initiative, [told the New Arab](#), "There is a fundamental difference between wanting power and wanting to govern. They want power in BDL, but they don't want to govern BDL ... because now it's a ticking time bomb".

Tuesday
25 July 2023

Nasrallah reiterates homophobic statements

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah reiterated hate statements against homosexuals in a public speech. He stated that "even for the first time, even if they are single, they should be killed". This new homophobic statement, if it is not Nasrallah's first, represents an escalation, calling for the murder of LGBTQ+ individuals as a solution. He also explains that homosexuality can be avoided by early marriages and argues that this is not a battle of a particular group, or sect, but rather a matter of society, affecting all Christians and Muslims. This statement was joined by several political, security and religious leaders in what became a homophobic national campaign. A complaint was filed against the organization Helem, for organizing a workshop about accepting LGBTQ+ teachers. In recent years, leaders have organized hate campaigns against groups made vulnerable by exclusionary and oppressive policies and attitudes, in an attempt to hide the leaders' responsibility of the crises that the country faces and to restore their role as protectors of a society in danger.

Wednesday
26 July 2023

French Envoy back in Lebanon to deblock presidential deadlock

French Envoy Jean-Yves Le Drian meets political leaders during his second tour in Lebanon in only a few weeks, in an attempt to find a solution to the political vacuum and the political class' inability to elect a president. This new visit comes after last week's meeting in Doha of representatives of Egypt, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, in which other countries agreed to support the French initiative. Le Drian abandoned France's initial support to the election of Suleiman Franjeh in exchange for a 14 March Prime Minister. France now appears to push for a sole debate on the Presidential vacuum. Le Drian proposed to political leaders the organization of a conference in September, with a strict schedule for dialogue first on the program needed by Lebanon, then on the future President. Such a dialogue would be followed by successive parliamentary sessions to elect the President of the Republic.

Thursday
27 July 2023

Government fails to select central bank successor amid presidential vacuum

The caretaker Government was planned to meet on Thursday to decide for a successor to the current central bank governor Riad Salameh, whose term ends on July 31. However, the cabinet session was cancelled minutes after it was set to start because there were not enough ministers to meet the quorum. This highlights the divisions among the political ruling class and raises concerns of the continuous inability of the State to respond to the crisis. While Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri pushed for the election of a new governor, the Free Patriotic Movement, followed by Hezbollah, has rejected the attempt, saying that a caretaker cabinet has no right to take that step. The same day, caretaker Prime Minister Najib Miqati met with the 4 vice-governors of the central bank and reported that they "agreed to remain at their position and to discharge their responsibilities".

New information reveals that Riad Salameh used embezzled millions to build vast property empire

New documents were obtained by the National on European investigations on Salameh's embezzlement. France, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, and Liechtenstein are all investigating allegations of embezzlement on Riad Salameh and his relatives. European judges have seized assets worth \$92 million, including mansions in European capitals as well as industrial and commercial buildings that generate significant rental income, all suspected to have been acquired with Lebanese public funds. European banks are also accused of a lack of due diligence for enabling suspicious funds to flow through Luxembourg based companies without raising any concern on the origin of Salameh's wealth. It is alleged that, between 2002 and 2016, the governor stole public funds through commissions paid to his brother's company under an irregular agreement with the Lebanese Central Bank. The company would collect a 0.38% commission each time the commercial banks bought financial instruments from the central bank, without the banks knowing and without providing any service in return. This money would then follow a complex journey through diverse continents and ultimately be used for acquiring luxury properties in Europe.

Friday
28 July 2023

Integration of Syrian refugees with Lebanese students 'not feasible'

Caretaker Education Minister, Abbas Halabi, said on Friday that the rumored integration of Syrian students with Lebanese students in public schools is "not feasible". The Ministry intends to continue with the current system, in which Lebanese students attend classes in the morning, while non-Lebanese attend in the afternoon. To accommodate the Syrian refugee students, which constituted 20% of Lebanon's total student population in 2019, 337 schools began hosting afternoon classes. The latter are funded by external donors, but the Minister claimed that "this education imposes burdens on the Lebanese state's budget, as it requires the use of public-school buildings for both morning and afternoon shifts". Public schools that accommodate Syrian students in the afternoons receive \$140 per student from donor countries. However, the Ministry receives fundings that also benefit morning classes. For example, it is collaborating with UNICEF to implement solar-energy systems in all public-school buildings (more than 850 facilities). Blaming Syrian students has repeatedly been a strategy used by the Ministry to divert criticism, especially as the Ministry faces teacher strikes demanding for salary raises.

CLDH launches report on European Policies of Border Externalization in Lebanon

The report, written by the Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (CLDH), and reviewed by EuroMed Rights, presents the findings of a research project on the support provided by the European Union (EU) and European States to Lebanese security apparatus in their border control tasks, both along the border with Syria and in the Lebanese territorial waters. The European support to border enforcement in Lebanon has remained surprisingly under documented. The research presented below intends to be a first step to increase visibility and accountability of European policies in Lebanon, especially regarding their consequences for the human rights situation. This is particularly important as European border externalization practices have been increasing in Lebanon, resulting in human rights violations being repeatedly committed by the Lebanese authorities with the support of the EU and European States. Therefore, the support of the EU and European States to Lebanese security agencies in their border-related tasks is the topic of this study.

Saturday and Sunday
29 and 30 July 2023

At least 6 dead in inter-Palestinian clashes in Ein el-Hilweh

At least 6 persons were killed in the Palestinian camp of Ein el-Hilweh. The fighting broke out after an unknown gunman tried to kill Islamist militant Mahmoud Khalil, killing a companion of his instead. Later, Islamist militants killed a Fatah military general and 3 escorts. This 55,000-people camp hosts heavily-armed factions, which used assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, hand grenades, and snipers. Some residents in neighborhoods near the camp fled their homes as stray bullets hit buildings and shattered windows and storefronts. The clashes also damaged several houses, shops, and cars. Several soldiers from the Lebanese Army were also wounded, and the public Sidon General Hospital evacuated its staff and patients. UNRWA also reported that two of its schools were damaged in the fighting and that it suspended all its operations in Ein el-Hilweh. Later on Sunday, the factions published a joint statement saying that they had agreed to a ceasefire during a mediation meeting hosted by Amal movement and Hezbollah. However, the truce was not fully respected, and fighting was still reported on Monday morning. Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said that "the timing of the Palestinian clashes in Ain al-Hilweh camp, in the current regional and international circumstances, is suspicious, and falls within the context of repeated attempts to use the Lebanese arena to settle external scores at the expense of Lebanon and the Lebanese".

Lebanese reopen a road closed since 2006 on the Palestinian border

Lebanese individuals crossed a border fence in an attempt to reopen a road linking 2 Lebanese towns close to the border with Palestine: Al-Wazani and Al-Abbasiya. UNIFIL closed this road after the war in 2006 and prevented anyone from crossing it. This new violation of the Blue Line comes as a protest against the occupation by the Israeli regime of the northern part of the border village of Ghajar, still claimed by Lebanon even though recognized as Syrian by the international community. Two weeks ago, in a similar move, the municipality of Kafr Shuba reopened a road that had been closed since 1978. On Sunday, Israeli media reported that the Defence Minister Yaov Gallant approved plans for a possible escalation with Hezbollah. He ordered Israeli forces along the Palestine-Lebanon border to mobilize in order to test their readiness for an incursion by Hezbollah's elite Radwan Unit.



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