

ACTIVITIES REPORT

2015



C.L.D.H

Centre Libanais des Droits Humains
Lebanese Center for Human Rights
المركز اللبناني لحقوق الإنسان

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Presentation of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights

The Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) is a Lebanese non-political, non-profit and independent human rights organization, based in Beirut.

CLDH was created in 2006 by the French Lebanese Movement SOLIDA (Support for Lebanese Detained Arbitrarily) that is active since 1996 in the fight against arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and impunity of the perpetrators of gross human rights violations.

CLDH monitors the human rights situation in Lebanon, fights against enforced disappearance, impunity, arbitrary detention, and racism and provides rehabilitation to the victims of torture.

CLDH regularly organizes press conferences, workshops, trainings and awareness-raising meetings on human rights in Lebanon and records and documents violations of human rights through reports and press releases.

CLDH team on the ground supports initiatives aimed at unveiling the fate of all the missing persons in Lebanon.

CLDH regularly follows up on numerous cases of arbitrary detention and torture in coordination with Lebanese and international organizations, with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and Special Rapporteur on Torture.

In 2007, CLDH opened Centre Nassim, a rehabilitation center for the victims of torture in Beirut, a member of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture victims (IRCT) that provides

multidisciplinary support to the victims of torture and their families.

CLDH compiles a daily press review about human rights violations and ongoing judiciary cases in Lebanon, and daily updates several blogs.

CLDH is a founding member of the Euro-Med Federation against Enforced Disappearances (FEMED), a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) of the SOS Torture Network of the World Organization against Torture (OMCT) and of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).

Donors

CLDH is extremely grateful for the financial support it receives from individuals, foundations and embassies, which makes our work in Lebanon possible. Their generosity allows CLDH to respond to human rights violations, and to operate independently from political, economic or religious interests.

- **AEDH (Working Together for Human Rights)** – Supported the legal assistance activities to migrant workers.
- **DANIDA/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark** – Through its Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) supported a project titled “Legal assistance to vulnerable persons in the context of the war in Syria”.
- **EMHRN (Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders)** – Provided support to the project “Legal assistance to vulnerable inmates in Lebanese prisons”.
- **ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross)** – Partially supported the project titled “Legal assistance to vulnerable inmates in Lebanese prisons”.
- **Oak Foundation** – Financially supported Centre Nassim.
- **OMCT (World Organization Against Torture)** – Supported beneficiaries of Centre Nassim through its social assistance program.
- **Open Society Foundation** – Renewed its support to the project “Legal assistance to vulnerable inmates in Lebanese prisons”.

- **Sigrid Rausing Trust** – Provided CLDH with funding for various activities.

- **The Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Lebanon** – Provided CLDH with funding for various activities.

- **UNDEF (United Nations Democracy Fund)** – Supported the project titled “Promote a culture of human rights in Lebanon”.

- **UNOCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)** – Provided support for the project titled “Legal assistance to vulnerable persons in the context of the war in Syria”.

- **UNVFVT (United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Victims of Torture)** – Supports Centre Nassim in the rehabilitation of the victims of torture.

- **Private donors** – Regularly contribute to the funding of the organization's activities.

Facts and Figures

Arbitrary Detention and Torture in Lebanon

- 6 Lawyers (5 providing Legal Assistance and 1 providing Legal Consultations)
- 320 persons provided with Legal Assistance in 2015 (an increase of 200% compared to 2014)
- 158 vulnerable inmates released
- 157 persons provided with Legal Consultation
- 243 Legal Consultations provided at CLDH office
- 1 report published
- 4 press releases/press conferences
- 1 training for lawyers
- 1 roundtable organized
- 1 National Conference for the Prevention of Torture organized

Centre Nassim for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture

- 133 beneficiaries assisted in 2015
- 88 newly registered beneficiaries in 2015
- 1382 consultations provided
 - 611 Psychologist
 - 343 Lawyer
 - 238 Social Worker
 - 190 General Practitioner
- 80% Male and 20% Female beneficiaries

Migrant Workers, Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- 63 people assisted
- 1 event organized
- 1 press release

Overview of the Human Rights situation, capacity building and networking

- 250,850 page views on blog
- 170,000 views on website
- 6,167 articles published on website since 2013
- 1 report published
- 2 workshops with journalism students organized (132 participants)
- 4 Human Rights events organized (more than 160 participants)
- 8 students participated in journalism internship programme
- 21 Human Rights related articles published by the interns
- 1 press conference organized
- 1 “Best Human Rights Award” ceremony held

Arbitrary Detention and Torture in Lebanon

Objective: Contribute effectively to reducing the practice of arbitrary detention and torture in Lebanon

1. Legal Assistance to Vulnerable Inmates in the Lebanese Prisons

In Lebanon, the prison population exceeds almost three times the capacities of detention facilities. Meanwhile, a large amount of detainees and prisoners could be immediately released if they could avail to adequate legal assistance.

Several cases of arbitrary detention persist: foreigners detained beyond the end of their sentence, detainees “stuck” in prisons for administrative or financial

reasons, detainees convicted to several sentences and who should be released according to the law on cumulative sentences, detentions on grounds of national discrimination, arrests on grounds of sexual orientation, and non-observance of procedure.

Insufficient judiciary assistance by the Lebanese state, insufficient amounts paid to the lawyers at the end of each calendar year that do not cover their real expenses in the cases, are at the core of this problem. Consequently, lawyers do not have a possibility to effectively defend low-income inmates who are not in a position to cover certain expenses. In addition, foreigners who have been



convicted for illegal entry or stay are not included in the legal aid system provided by the Lebanese state, thus, they are left in a limbo state without lawyers defending their cases.

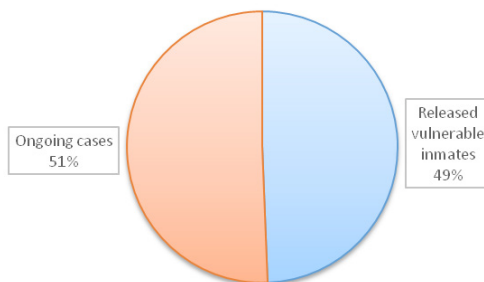
Refugees from Syria are also in a precarious legal situation in Lebanon, a country that has not signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on the refugees' status and simply tolerates them on its territory without giving them the rights and protection they should be entitled as refugees.

When Syrian refugees are arrested by the authorities in Lebanon, or when they have legal issues with the security services or the courts in Lebanon, they cannot benefit of social connections to appoint lawyers who will assist them effectively in the courts. Moreover, because of their refugee situation, they often cannot afford the services of a lawyer and the legal aid system run by the Lebanese state is insufficient to handle the high number of requests (due to insufficient funding).

Every year, CLDH provides lawyers for inmates who cannot afford it and this legal assistance allows dozens of inmates to be released.

This project is implemented with the continuous support by the Open Society Foundation and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon. In 2015, CLDH managed to secure additional funding for this programme and to assist more beneficiaries than ever. The additional funding was provided by the ICRC, DANIDA, EMHRN and UNOCHA.

Legal assistance to vulnerable inmates



2. Implementation

During the reported period, CLDH continued to visit Lebanese prisons and to meet victims of arbitrary detention and victims of torture. Many cases were also referred to CLDH by relevant prison visitors, families and relatives of inmates. CLDH continued to document and follow up their cases in accordance with the demands and specific needs of the beneficiaries of the program.

CLDH managed to secure additional funding in 2015 and expanded the team of lawyers to 5 members. Therefore, the number of beneficiaries assisted by CLDH's legal assistance programme increased substantially compared to 2014. Indeed, **320 vulnerable inmates received legal assistance by CLDH's lawyers in 2015**. Compared to 2014, this number shows an increase of 200%.

As a result of the programme, 158 vulnerable inmates were released so far, which represents 49.4% of all cases assisted. However, this number will further increase since many of the remaining 162 vulnerable inmates are still being assisted by the lawyers.

Out of the 320 persons assisted in 2015, 166 were Syrian refugees.

The legal assistance program implemented by CLDH covers the following interventions to inmates in Lebanese prisons:

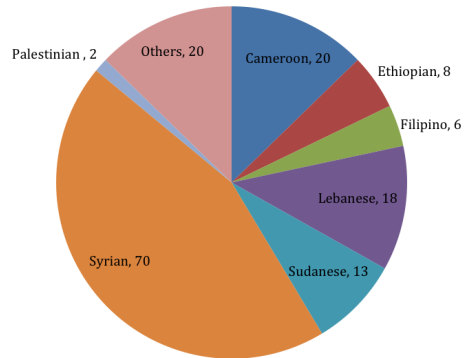
- Legal advice;
- Contacting the corresponding embassy;
- Helping travel;
- Defense in court;
- Sentence reduction;
- Paying judiciary fees;
- Assistance in police stations;
- Having the sentences run concurrently.

3. Legal Consultations at the Center

In 2015, with the support of EMHRF, CLDH started providing Legal Consultations to refugees and other vulnerable host community members (more particularly victims of torture) at CLDH's premises. A lawyer provides the refugees and vulnerable host community members with counsel regarding their file at UNHCR, their legal status in Lebanon or any other legal issue they may have (housing, evictions, land and rent disputes; civil cases; domestic violence; birth registration; cases of early marriage and recognition of documentation; legal status; renewal of documentation; etc.). Cases are referred by UNHCR, UNRWA, ICRC and their partners as well as other NGOs. Priority is given to the most vulnerable, including: LGBT, victims of SGBV, journalists, human rights defenders, Palestinian refugees from Syria, and victims of torture.

In total, 243 consultations were provided to 157 persons. Majority of beneficiaries were from Syria, Lebanon, Cameroon, Sudan, and Ethiopia.

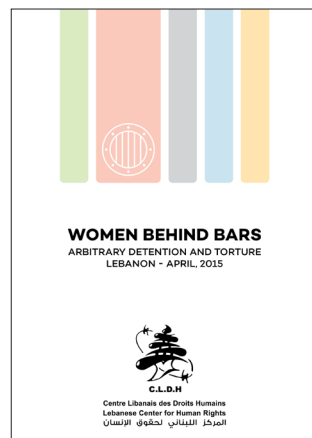
Among them, 6 were asylum seekers, 60 were registered at UNHCR, 6 were unregistered refugees.



4. Reports published

On **April 16, 2015**, CLDH published a report titled “Women behind bars – Arbitrary detention and torture”. The report states that:

“... 52% of women arrested in Lebanon in 2013 and 2014 were severely tortured by the security forces during investigations.”



Beatings, deprivation and delays

- humiliation, threats and insults - violations of privacy by male investigators or guards; those were the main methods of torture and ill-treatment suffered by the majority of women interviewed by CLDH and documented in the report.ⁱ



The report further notices *“In 76% of the documented cases, the Internal Security Forces and police stations would be responsible for torture. Several women alleged having been subjected to torture by men in civilian clothes from the army or the police intelligence services, or by militia men outside the official places of interrogation. In 60% of the cases, the purpose of the torture was to extract confessions from the detainee, or confessions along with other type of information (names, locations) in 40% of the cases.”*

The report includes a distressing testimony from a woman who was arrested in September 2014.

“...Every day, they would take me to the interrogation room and would beat me all over my body with a stick and I would be electrocuted. I would give them information so that they would stop torturing me, but they would not believe me and always wanted more. They would electrocute me and would not stop beating me and kicking me on my stomach and my back. Then they showed me a document and told me to sign it. I was not able to call anyone; neither my husband, nor a lawyer and no one visited me. I was horrified. I was then taken to the instructive judge. I asked for a lawyer but he refused. Even though the investigators who had tortured me were there, I told the judge about the torture and how they had forced me to confess. I even showed him the traces on my body and asked to see a forensic doctor, but he also refused by simply nodding his head.”

5. Court sessions against CLDH

The first public court session against CLDH members for denouncing torture allegations was held on March 17, 2015

at Baadba Palace of Justice (publication court). CLDH members were indicted based on a report published in 2011, which CLDH published in partnership with other NGOs. The document provided a comprehensive report on torture in Lebanon, based on testimonies and first-hand information, denouncing the practice of torture by various security services and non-state actors.

Short after the report's publication, two of CLDH board members, namely Marie Daunay and Wadih Al-Asmar, were summoned by the police for investigation. They were explained that Amal Movement leader Nabih Berri (who is also the head of the Lebanese Parliament) had filed a complaint against them because the said report mentioned allegations of torture perpetrated by Amal members.



Mr. Wadih Al Asmar (General Secretary of CLDH – left), & Mrs. Marie Daunay (Director of CLDH) at the court session

The police said Amal considered the denunciation of these allegations as an incitement to sectarian strife, an infringement to the country's unity, defamation and false accusation.

Representatives of the European Union, United Nations, various embassies, media^{ii, iii, iv, v}, NGOs, INGOs and other citizens attended the public session.

The second session was scheduled for June 11, 2015. Representatives of the European Union, United Nations, various embassies, media, NGOs, INGOs and other citizens attended the session. However, the session was postponed to December 17, 2015. On December 17, 2015, the session was postponed to April 19, 2016.

6. Other activities

During the reported period, CLDH conducted the following activities:

March 08, 2015 – Press conference on the occasion of International Women's day

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the International Women's Day, CLDH issued a press release^{xi}, during which some data from the “Women behind bars – Arbitrary detention and torture” report were presented. “Men and women continue to face systematic and widespread torture during investigations” said Wadih Al-Asmar, Secretary General of CLDH, adding, “we hoped, in preparing this report, that women would be less affected than men by arbitrary detention and torture, but it is not so.”

April 16, 2015 – Launching of the report “Women behind bars – arbitrary detention and torture”

CLDH held a press conference and launched the report titled “Women behind bars – Arbitrary detention and torture”. On this occasion, Mr. Wadih Al Asmar, Secretary General of CLDH, noted that “the provisions of article 47 of the Criminal Procedure Code are insufficient to protect people in custody from torture, especially because the defendant cannot speak confidentially with a lawyer, and therefore possibly denounce torture. Moreover, the duration of custody can be exceeded by the police without any judiciary intervention.”

May 04, 2015 – Press conference

CLDH held a press conference^{xii} and raised concerns about Tarek Al Khoury, a 40-year-old Lebanese citizen, who was arrested on May 02, 2015 in the morning by the General Security upon his arrival at Beirut airport. According to CLDH, he was sentenced in absentia on the basis of confessions extracted under torture to another detainee and documents signed by the hand of General Raymond Azar. The press conference was covered by the following media: LBC^{xiii}, Al-Jadeed, Al Anwar, Al-Liwaa^{ix}, NNA^x, Al-Modon^{xi}, Woman News^{xii} and L'orient le Jour^{xiii}.



Mr. Wadih Al Asmar – General Secretary of CLDH

May 22, 2015 – Training for lawyers

A training for lawyers was organized by CLDH. Me. Hasna Abdel Reda, one of CLDH lawyer, held a training session for other lawyers – members of Beirut Bar Association. During the training, several techniques and methods of assisting beneficiaries were presented and explained by Me. Abdel Reda.





June 26, 2015 – International day in support of victims of torture

On the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, CLDH issued a press release, underlining that almost 60% of all those arrested between 2009 through 2014 have been tortured, according to studies conducted by CLDH. The press release also addressed the leaked videos of inmates being tortured and stated that *“what happened in Roumieh that has just been made public is an overview of what happens every day in police stations, barracks and other places of interrogation in Lebanon.”*^{xiv} The press release was featured in the As-Safir^{xv} newspaper.

July 23, 2015 – Roundtable “Legal aid in Lebanon in 2015: facts and challenges”

CLDH held a roundtable entitled *“Legal Aid in Lebanon in 2015: Facts and Challenges”*. The roundtable was organized under the patronage of His Excellency Me. George Jreij – President of the Beirut Bar Association. During this roundtable, the work of CLDH in the field of legal assistance was presented and discussed. A debate on the challenges of the Legal Aid system in Lebanon followed the presentation. At the press conference, Me. George Fiani, representing the President of the Beirut Bar Association, and Me. George Jreij, held an opening speech along with Mr. Wadih Al Asmar – Secretary General of CLDH. Me. Hasna Abdel Reda, one of CLDH lawyers, proceeded by presenting some facts and figures of CLDH's Legal Assistance programme.

Judge Bernard Choueiry, a Ministry of Justice representative, proceeded by presenting current and planned activities by the Ministry of Justice in terms of legal assistance.

Representatives of various NGOs,



Mr. Wadih Al Asmar, Me. George Fiani and Judge Bernard Choueiry at the roundtable

INGOs, EU, UN, various embassies and governmental institutions attended the roundtable^{xvi}.

September 16, 2015 – Press release – Right to demonstrate and gather peacefully

With the start of the waste management crisis on July 17, 2015, several peaceful protests were organized in the following period. On September 17, 2015, several peaceful protestors of the “You Stink” collective gathered in front of the Parliament where a national dialogue session was being held. The collective requested a solution to the problem of garbage piling up for 2 months and the resignation of the Minister of Environment. During the protest, dozens of demonstrators were arrested by the internal security forces for the simple fact of exercising their right to demonstrate. Many of them were beaten to the point that medical assistance had to be provided to them by the Red Cross. CLDH issued a press release calling for their immediate release and reminded the Government of Lebanon that the right to demonstrate and gather peacefully is enshrined in *“... the Lebanese constitution (article 13), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 19) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 21)”*^{xvii}.

October 31, 2015 – National conference

for the prevention of torture in Lebanon CLDH, with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon, organized the first *“National Conference for the Prevention of Torture in Lebanon”*. The event took place in Beirut under the patronage of the Minister of Justice, General Ashraf Rifi and in the presence of many judges and prosecutors who work in Lebanon.

The conference explored the role of the judicial and legislative powers in the fight against torture. Participants discussed the various efforts currently being put forward in Lebanon to ensure that the country abides by its international commitments as a state party to the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT). Participants were also introduced to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in instances of allegations of torture. The conference served as a platform for judges and prosecutors interested in upholding human rights standards to meet and share concerns, best practice and lessons learned based on their experience with torture in Lebanon. Her Excellency Hester Somsen, the

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon, spoke about torture in the specific context of Lebanon. H.E. Somsen mentioned the fact that the United Nations Committee Against Torture estimates that 45% of detainees are subjected to torture in Lebanon – a number that rises to 60% according to CLDH statistics.

CLDH Secretary General, Mr. Wadih Al-Asmar, proceeded by reminding the audience that the aim of the event was to provide a platform for actors of the judiciary to exchange on their experiences and to discuss potential pathways toward the prevention of torture in Lebanon. As stated by Mr. Al-Asmar, the judiciary is on the frontline in the fight against torture as individual judges and prosecutors have the power to implement Lebanon’s international legal obligations through court decisions.



H.E. Hester Somsen, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon



Mr. Nidal Jurdi, OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) representative, spoke about United Nations’ core treaties, along with its optional protocol (OPCAT). He also reminded that the Constitution of Lebanon elevates rights derived



from international conventions into constitutional rights. As such, the ratification of the UNCAT and its optional protocol provides lawmakers, civil servants, judges and prosecutors with strong tools to fight torture, provided, of course, that there is a political will to do so.



Judge Johannes Silvis, ECHR representative

Judge Johannes Silvis, European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) representative delivered a speech about the handling of the issue of torture by the ECHR. He highlighted several cases filed under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (*"no one shall be subjected to torture or inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment"*). The Judge highlighted the importance of differentiating torture from inhumane treatment and from degrading treatments, which he interprets as three entirely different concepts. Judge Silvis addressed the fact that torture is often associated with terrorism situations and he acknowledged that a debate must take place regarding the use of tough interrogation methods in ticking bomb situations.

Mr. Derk Kuipers, the Secretary General of the International Association of Prosecutors, addressed the role of

prosecutors in the promotion of human rights worldwide. He gave an overview of the international and regional legal framework surrounding torture (UDHR, ICCPR, Cairo Declaration, Arab Charter on Human Rights...) that Lebanese judges, prosecutors and lawmakers can draw upon for guidance in the fight against torture. Mr. Kuipers highlighted the idea that a prosecutor's role is to guarantee that a person's privacy is not violated during investigation and that torture is not used to extract legal evidence and build a case against the detainee: prosecutors must send the signal that confessions extracted under torture will not be used and that torture is therefore entirely useless from a legal standpoint.

The conference was covered by NNA^{xviii}.



Mr. Derk Kuipers, IAP Secretary General

7. Advocacy activities

During 2015, CLDH as part of its advocacy activities attended meetings with:

- The Minister of Justice;
- The Minister of Foreign Affairs;
- The General Director of the General Security;
- Two meetings with the Human Rights Commission of the Parliament;

- The EU Special Representative for Human Rights;
- The EU representative for Human Rights Defenders in Lebanon.

Implementing the Universal Periodic Review Recommendations”.

February 26, 2015 CLDH representative attended a press conference ceremony titled “Shattered dreams: Children of Migrants in Lebanon”, organized by Insan Association.

June 14, 2015 CLDH representative attended a ceremony entitled “Empowerment of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon in the Absence of Legal Protection”, organized by Amel Association International.

June 17, 2015 CLDH representative attended a conference titled “When Employers and Domestic Workers Meet” organized by Insan Association.

June 18, 2015 CLDH representative attended a roundtable for celebration of 800th Anniversary of the Magna Carta, an event organized by the British Embassy in Lebanon. The event was held at the Beirut Bar Association.

June 29, 2015 CLDH representative attended the announcement of the results of a survey conducted by the Institute of political sciences at the Saint Joseph University. The survey was titled “Early marriage in Lebanon: a survey of Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees”.

October 06, 2015 CLDH representative attended an informative session for creation of “Global Network for Southern NGOs”.

October 19, 2015 CLDH representative attended the launch of the EU- funded OHCHR project “Assisting Lebanon in



Centre Nassim for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture

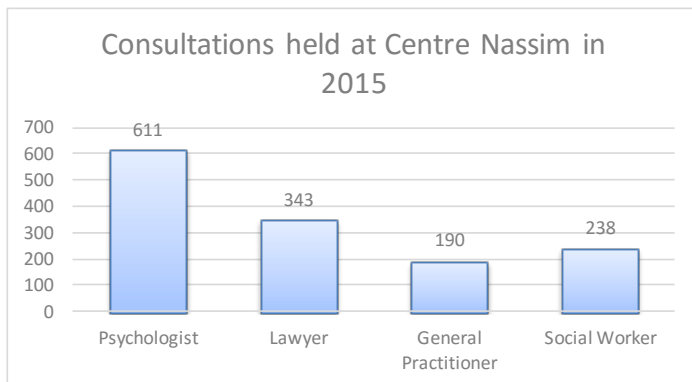
Objective: Offer and provide multi-disciplinary assistance to the victims of torture

1. Services

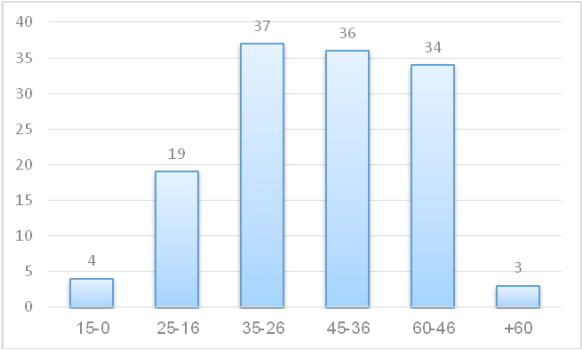
In 2015, 88 new beneficiaries availed to the services of Centre Nassim. In the meantime, Centre Nassim continued its

support to 45 beneficiaries which had been registered in the previous years. In total, Centre Nassim dealt with 133 beneficiaries during the reporting period. In total, 1382 consultations were held with the beneficiaries.

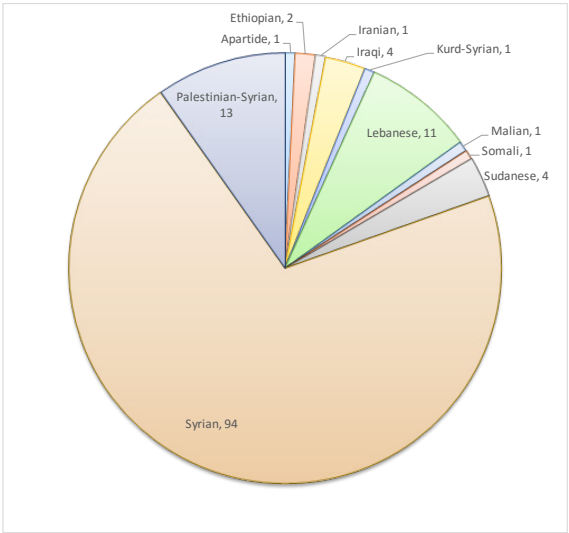
The consultations were as following:



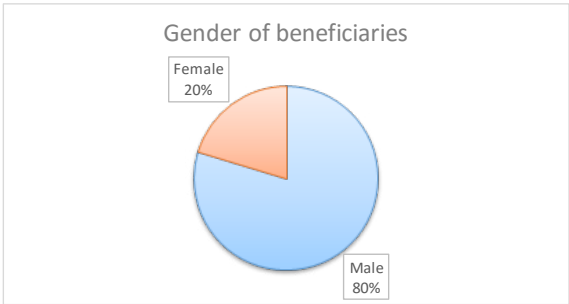
The age group of the beneficiaries of Centre Nassim is as following:



The nationalities and number of Centre Nassim’s beneficiaries are shown in the following chart:



The gender of Centre Nassim beneficiaries is reflected in the following chart:





2. New foreseen activities

As shown in the previous graphs, the highest number of beneficiaries is from Syria. CLDH will stay committed to helping these vulnerable groups.

For the following period, CLDH is planning to continue its rehabilitation activities, but also to increase its advocacy and awareness raising activities through organizing conferences and workshops with lawyers and prosecutors, similar to the “National Conference for the Prevention of Torture in Lebanon”, organized on October 31, 2015. These

activities are planned following the findings in CLDH’s previous reports on torture as well as UNCAT’s findings in its latest report and will be funded notably by the continuous support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon.

3. Event

On **December 21, 2015** an event for the children of Centre Nassim beneficiaries was organized at CLDH’s premises. The children had a chance to play and engage in social activities in a safe and friendly environment.



An event for children of Centre Nassim beneficiaries

Enforced Disappearance

Objective: Support the families of disappeared and NGOs working with this issue, and contribute effectively to the establishment of truth and justice for all victims of Human Rights violations

Since 1996, CLDH works closely with the families of the disappeared, who are suffering from the psychological torture of not knowing what happened to their loved ones and who are therefore not being able to properly mourn their relatives if indeed they have been killed as a result of enforced disappearance, or to get information on their whereabouts in case they are still being detained in foreign jails. At the very least, the authorities should respect their right to Truth and help shed light on the fate of all disappeared persons in Lebanon in

order to resolve this issue and start a real national reconciliation process. For this reason, CLDH is calling for improvement of the draft law on enforced disappearance and the missing, prepared by a number of NGOs. In 2015, CLDH continued to be in the forefront of various activities undertaken in support of families of the disappeared and working towards the establishment of truth and justice for all victims of Human Rights violations.



Migrant Workers, Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Objective: Raising awareness of the Lebanese society and authorities about the rights of migrants and refugees, strengthening and promoting the legal and social protection of migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees.

1. Individual cases follow-up

There is an estimated number of 200,000 (50,000 more than in 2006) migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, most of them from Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Philippines, Nepal and Madagascar. These women are often victims of exploitation, non-payment of wages, excessive working

hours, verbal harassment, confinement, confiscation of their passports, physical and sexual abuses, and sometimes even torture.

CLDH which assists more than a hundred people each year in detention is recognized for the competence of its team for legal aid. This recognition has led the organization to be more extensively consulted by migrant workers in Lebanon asking for help from the organization.

CLDH achieved satisfactory results by resolving more than three-quarters of the cases referred to the organization.

Migrant domestic workers do not fall

under the labor law, and are subject to restrictive immigration rules based on the “kafala” system, which exposes them to the risk of being exploited, and makes it difficult for them to leave an abusive employer. Moreover, domestic employees who denounce their employers for abuse are confronted to a hostile judiciary system. The only solution for most domestic migrant workers is to run away from their work place, which expose them to arrest and arbitrary detention, or even to the threat of being deported to their country of origin, which sometimes leads to suicide.

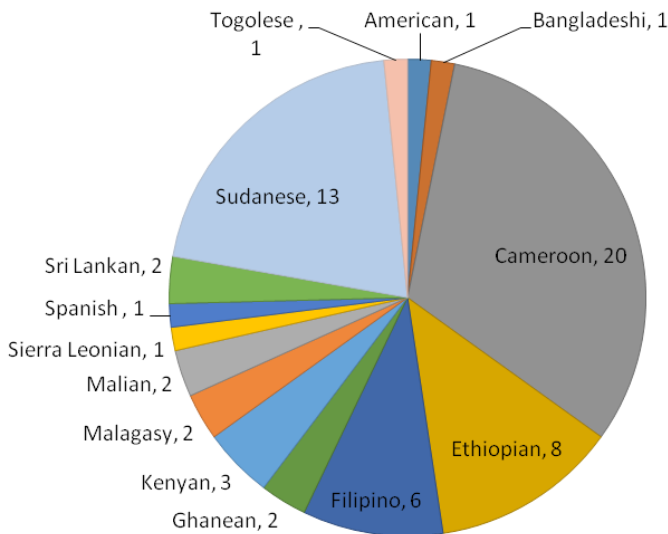
In the absence of legislation or practices that protect migrant workers, the interventions of the organization are of several types:

- Negotiations/Pressure on the employer - to recover the passport of the employee, to obtain permission from the employer for a change of employer, or to let the employee leave the country;
- Administrative procedures - Regularization papers, registration to the Ministry of Labor, registration to the General Security;
- Legal Assistance - Removal of false complaints, defense in courts

In total, **63 people** at the risk of becoming slaves were assisted by CLDH in 2015 thanks to various donors. These cases were referred to CLDH by:

- Community leaders;
- Neighbors for abuse cases;
- Relatives;
- Other NGOs and the ICRC

The nationality of the beneficiaries is as follows:





The usual interventions are:

- Registry of a child;
- UNHCR follow up;
- Residency renewal;
- Legal counseling;
- Facilitate in the return to their home country;
- Follow up with administrative detention;
- Defense in court;
- Legal advice and negotiations with employer, etc.

2.Events

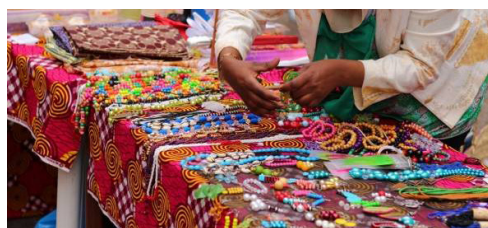
May 01, 2015 – Participation to the 3rd annual Fashion show

CLDH team member attended the 3rd Annual Fashion show organized by Insan Association. During the fashion show, Migrant Domestic Workers and Women from all segments of society modeled side by side the latest designs donated by young and upcoming Fashion Designers many of whom were migrants themselves.

May 03, 2015 - Workers' Day Parade and Festival for Migrant Domestic Workers

CLDH was part of a coalition of NGOs that organized the 5th Annual Workers' Day Parade and Festival for Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon. The coalition consisted of: CLDH, Anti-Racism movement, KAFA, Insan Association, Amel Association, Migrant Community Center, FENASOL and the Domestic Worker's Union in Lebanon. On May 03, 2015, a Workers' Day Parade and Celebration was organized. The parade was led by the Migrant Domestic Workers from Wata El Msaytbeh to Hamra. On a parking lot in Hamra, Cultural Festival and Market were organized. During the parade, the Migrant Workers chanted and cheered for their better legal protection and called for the abolition of the "kafala" system. The newly established Domestic Worker's Union in Lebanon received wide support from the Migrant Domestic Workers during the event.

"We are paid employees and we deserve better working conditions" – some of the domestic workers chanted.



May 28, 2015 – Participation to a Workshop

CLDH team member attended a workshop titled “Suggested Alternative of the Kafala System” and “Suggested Practical Procedures that improve the working and living conditions of MDWs in Lebanon”. The workshop was organized by Amel Association.

July 03, 2015 – Participation to MSF meeting

CLDH team member attended a meeting with Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) and other organizations working with migrant workers, to discuss the sponsorship system and lack of legal protection.

3. Press release

March 10, 2015 CLDH, together with more than 100 NGOs and INGOs issued a press release calling for a protection of migrant workers under the Labor law and for recognition of the Domestic Worker's Union.

The Domestic Worker's Union was established with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Union Federation (ITUC), and the Federation of Trade Unions of Workers and Employees (FENASOL) in Lebanon. However, Mr. Sejaan Azzi, the Minister of Labor, swiftly denounced the union as illegal.

As stated in the press release: “A Lebanese decision to deny domestic workers the right to form a union would violate the country's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which it is party. Lebanon's obligations under the ICCPR, including to non-citizens in its territory, stipulates that “everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form

and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.” It further requires that “no restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are ... necessary in a democratic society in the interest of national security or public safety.” The ICCPR requires Lebanon to ensure that everyone in its territory can exercise freedom of association, “without distinction of any kind.”

It recommended that: “The Lebanese government should amend the labor code or adopt a new law to protect the rights of domestic workers and to abolish the kafala system [...]. A new law to protect domestic workers should, at a minimum, ensure equality with all workers included in the labor law. Such measures should also ensure the right to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining without discrimination to all workers.”

4. Testimony

The story of Corinne, Cameroonian domestic worker in Lebanon

It all started in 2014 when Corinne decided to travel and work in Lebanon, hoping to save some money and then go back to Cameroon, where work is much less paid. In Cameroon she signed a contract with a recruitment agency guaranteeing proper work conditions in Lebanon.

But once in Lebanon, the guarantees were gone and a nightmare worthy of the worst hours of slavery began for Corinne.

She would start working every morning at 6.am and finish at 1.am. She lost weight and became malnourished since she could only eat leftovers. She was not allowed to go out unaccompanied or without permission, her passport and



her phone were confiscated to limit her freedom of movement and she could talk to her family only once a month.

Undernourished and with a dislocated back, she finally decided to go to what she called “the office” (the recruitment agency) to demand to be placed in a new family. But the transfer did not improve her situation; her new 12 children family was not treating her any better. She just worked more and in harder conditions.

Therefore she finally took the decision to run away, putting herself in an illegal situation and at the risk of detention. She took shelter at a friend’s place and started looking for possibilities of leaving Lebanon. She contacted several NGO’s to ask for advice and then, she was referred to CLDH where the team helped her find a way to fly back to her country.

When we met her in CLDH’s office in Dora, Corinne was accompanied by a friend facing the same situation but whose return is not yet possible. They talked about their everyday life as domestic workers in Lebanon; about the nights they spent crying and felt hopeless. They even talked about several cases of suicide among working women like them.

But in spite of the suffering they went through, these girls did not carry resentment toward Lebanon. They just regretted that some people behave as real slave owners.

“If only the families were treating us as human beings, we would have peace in our hearts and in our minds” said Corinne as a conclusion.

Overview of the Human Rights situation, capacity building and networking

Objective: Provide a clear and complete overview of the Human Rights situation in Lebanon, and to be an active partner along with the other Lebanese Human Rights NGOs

During the reporting period, CLDH continued to compile a daily press review, gathering all articles on human rights issues as published in the Lebanese press.

Currently, CLDH manages a press review blog (www.cldhpressreview.blogspot.com) and a press review website (www.rightsobserver.org).

The press review blog has 250,850 all-time page views and includes 16,638 articles.

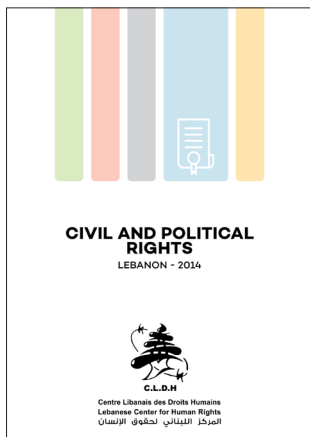
To this date, the press review website has more than 170,000 views and compiles 6,167 articles.

Both the website and the press review blog are updated on a daily basis. CLDH also continued to maintain and to add new publications to its open library. With the support of UNDEF, over 80 books were added to the library.



1. Reports published

On **November 20, 2015**, a report titled *“Civil and Political Rights - 2014”*^{xix} was launched. The report was prepared with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lebanon.



Since 2007, CLDH is drawing up an assessment of the situation of civil and political rights in Lebanon, synthesizing and analyzing the data collected in this regard within its press review, and publishing the findings in a report titled *“Civil and Political Rights”*

This report covered the period from January 2014 to December 2014.

The report focuses on the following human rights topics:

- Civil and Political Rights & Commitments in Lebanon;
- Right to life;
- Detention and Torture;
- Enforced Disappearances and Incommunicado Detention;
- Women's Rights;
- Refugees in Lebanon;
- Migrant Workers in Lebanon;
- Discrimination;

- Freedoms of Expression and Opinion;
- Special Tribunal for Lebanon;
- Administration of the Lebanese Judiciary.

2. Human Rights Journalism campaign

With the support of UNDEF, the project titled *“Promote a culture of Human Rights in Lebanon”* continued during the reporting period. The project's goal is to promote democracy and Human Rights in Lebanon through the organization of activities targeting journalism students. A series of workshops, an internship program for students in journalism, Human Rights events at Lebanese Universities, the organization of a press conference and an open library day were part of organized activities.

On **February 28, 2015**, CLDH organized its second workshop, at the Lebanese American University, as part of the project.



Human Rights Journalism workshop at LAU

The trainers, Ms. Laya Bahnam (Maharat Foundation) and Mr. Wadih Al Asmar (CLDH) highlighted the importance of Human Rights approach and objectivity in reporting. The students demonstrated great interest in expanding their knowledge and in Human Rights approach of reporting.

On **April 24, 2015** CLDH organized its third workshop, at the Lebanese University, as part of the project.



Human Rights Journalism workshop at the Lebanese University (LU)

The trainers, Mr. Habib Battah (The Beirut Report) and Mr. Wadih Al-Asmar (CLDH) highlighted the importance of Human Rights approach of reporting as well as objectivity in reporting. Mr Battah talked about the mainstream media being the voice of business elites and politicians, the importance of holding decision-makers accountable, ethical relationship between the journalist and decision maker, etc.

On **29 July, 2015** CLDH organized the first Human Rights event, at CLDH's office, as part of the project.



Human Rights Event at CLDH, with students from the Beirut Arab University (BAU)

Mr. Wadih Al-Asmar (CLDH) and Mrs. Farah Salka (Anti-Racism Movement) talked about the general human rights issues and Mrs. Salka highlighted the issue of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon.

The event was organized with the support of Human Rights Center at Beirut Arab University.

On **07 October, 2015** CLDH in collaboration with the Human Rights Club of Notre Dame University, organized a Human Rights event at the Notre Dame University - Louaize. Mr. Wadih Al-Asmar (CLDH) and Mr. Saadeddine Shatila (Alkarama for Human Rights) talked about the issue of torture in Lebanon.



Human Rights Event at Notre Dame University – Louaize (NDU)

Mr. Al-Asmar talked about torture, its definition and the various related conventions and declarations, as well as prevention mechanisms applied in different countries in the world. Mr. Shatila talked specifically about torture in Lebanon and how it can be perpetrated by state and non-state actors, as well as about the status of draft laws which were submitted to the Parliament for criminalization of torture and establishment of National Prevention Mechanism.



On **28 October, 2015** CLDH organized a Human Rights Event at the Lebanese University in Saida.



Human Rights Event at Lebanese University – Saida

Mr. Wadih Al-Asmar (CLDH), Mr. Nadim Houry (Human Rights Watch) and Dr. Kholoud Khatib (Lebanese University) talked about the rights of minorities at times of war in terms of protection in the MENA region.

On **29 October, 2015** CLDH organized a Human Rights event at the Lebanese International University in Beirut, as part of this project.



Mrs. Carole Mansour (UNRWA), Ms. Farah Salka (Anti-Racism Movement) and Dr. Kholoud Khatib (Lebanese International University) talked about the rights of Palestinian refugees and Syrian women refugees.

On **27th October 2015** CLDH organized a press conference as part of the project.

At the press conference, Mr. Wadih Al

Asmar – Secretary General of CLDH reflected on the series of workshops with journalism students, the internship program for journalism students, and Human Rights events at various Lebanese Universities that were organized as part of the project. At the press conference, major accomplishments of the project were presented and certificates were handed to the interns that were part of the project.

In addition, an award was presented to one intern for her outstanding skills. An open library day followed the press conference.

The press conference was featured in: NNA^{xx}, Mo5tar^{xxi}, Tripoli Scope^{xxii}, Lebanon Files^{xxiii}, Noursat.tv^{xxiv}, and Lobnan.org^{xxv}.

3. Social Media

During the reporting period, CLDH was active daily on several Social Media sites. The Lebanese Center for Human Rights Fan page on Facebook^{xxvi} counted 1,356 “likes”. CLDH’s Facebook group^{xxvii} is also daily active and had 1861 members at year end.

CLDH also uses Twitter^{xxviii} to engage with its followers and counted 741 followers in 2015.

CLDH Instagram^{xxix} profile has 136 followers.

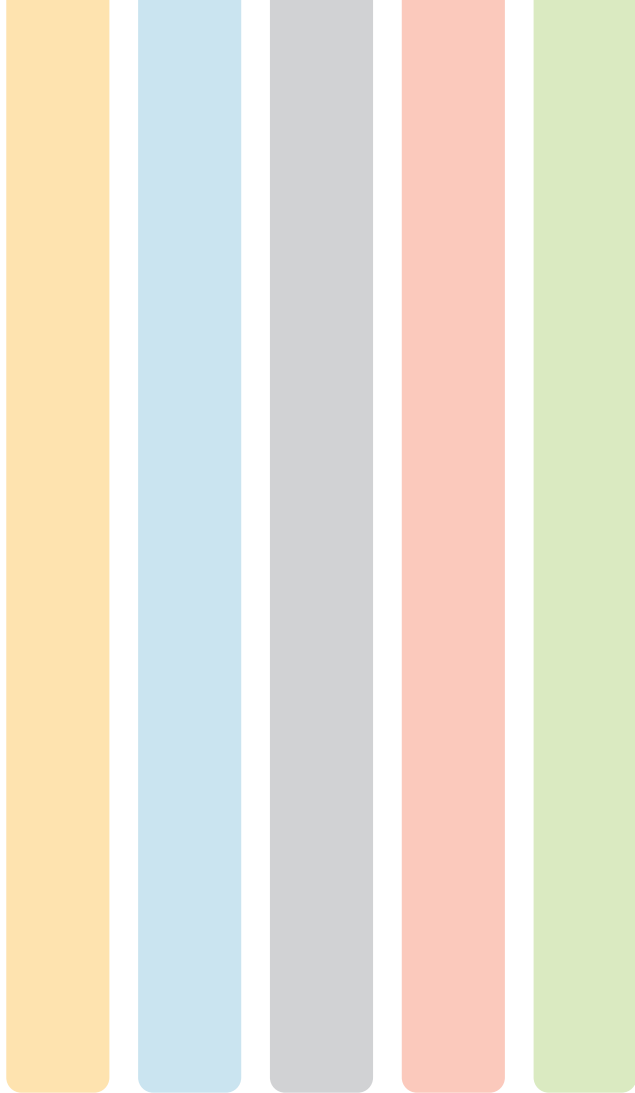


The interns who were part of the project



Ms. Vanessa Herro receiving the "Best Human Rights Article Award"

- i “Women behind bars – Arbitrary detention and torture” – CLDH, April 2015
- ii Al-Akhbar - <http://bit.ly/1VngMX5>
- iii LBC - <http://bit.ly/1S9Qv9>
- iv L’Orient le jour - <http://bit.ly/1nXj5Tl>
- v Now Lebanon - <http://bit.ly/1Zdi1YV>
- vi Press release – “40th anniversary of the International Women’s Day” – available at: <http://bit.ly/1WykOW5>
- vii Press Conference – YouTube link available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OKXAiPz1S4
- viii LBC - <http://bit.ly/22pC6k1>
- ix Al-Liwa - <http://bit.ly/1R5GLQW>
- x NNA - <http://bit.ly/1R5GPAr>
- xi Al-Modon - <http://bit.ly/1pSXBsm>
- xii Woman News - <http://bit.ly/1pSXLjg>
- xiii L’orient le jour - <http://bit.ly/1MkGkSC>
- xiv Press release – “Support the Victims of Torture in Lebanon in a hostile environment” – available at: <http://bit.ly/25dvX9l>
- xv As-Safir - <http://bit.ly/1TZ6TPW>
- xvi Al-Anwar - <http://bit.ly/1puZ9Z1>
- xvii Press release – “Violent arrests of dozens of peaceful protesters in downtown Beirut” – available at: <http://bit.ly/1XFccC6>
- xviii NNA - <http://bit.ly/22zKHxi>
- xix “Civil and Political Rights” – CLDH; available at: <http://bit.ly/1RhZ1KB>
- xx NNA - <http://bit.ly/1RhU5kg>
- xxi Mo5tar - <http://bit.ly/1Rxjqnk>
- xxii Tripoli Scope - <http://bit.ly/1UiXJOQ>
- xxiii Lebanon Files - <http://bit.ly/1ULtrCH>
- xxiv Noursat.tv - <http://bit.ly/1Sgf9Yu>
- xxv Lobnan.org - <http://bit.ly/1ULtE8Q>
- xxvi <https://www.facebook.com/cldh.ngo>
- xxvii <https://www.facebook.com/groups/107869015821/>
- xxviii <https://twitter.com/HumanRightsCLDH>
- xxix <http://instagram.com/cldh.ngo/>



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