



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

02 - 08 OCTOBER, 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
02 October 2023

Wave of hate speech and violence against LGBTQ+ individuals in Lebanon

Over the weekend, at least two anti-LGBT attacks were led by violent groups against freedom defenders. In addition to a raid on the “freedom march” in Beirut, a beach bar in Tyre was also attacked on Saturday evening. The men, armed with AK-47s, knives, and sticks, shot in the air and attacked the venue. To justify the attack, the assailants claimed the party was being thrown in honor of LGBTQ+ individuals. This event recalls a previous attack by the Christian fundamentalist group “Soldiers of God” on an LGBTQ+ friendly bar in Beirut. Activists have said that the violence seen by radical groups echoes the rhetoric of Lebanese politicians and religious officials. They claim that the attacks on LGBTQ+ individuals are an attempt to distract from authorities’ failures to address the country’s worsening economic crisis.

Hezbollah chief says Lebanon should not prevent Syrians from going to EU

Hassan Nasrallah, head of Hezbollah, said Lebanon should stop preventing Syrian refugees from leaving the country by sea and instead equip them with proper boats and help facilitate their passage to Europe. He added that if such a solution was implemented “The European Countries will come running to Beirut, to the Serail, and ask the government: ‘What do you want to stop this migration of refugees towards Europe?’. Nasrallah also called for the establishment of a national commission gathering all parliamentary groups, to elaborate a plan for Syrian refugees, and pressure the government, the security forces, and the municipalities to implement it.

Tuesday
03 October 2023

The Lebanese are judges and executioners in the streets: An explosion of public violence

Over the past weeks, several instances of citizens fulfilling the task of security forces were documented. For example, last weekend, the stabbing by a Syrian national of a Lebanese man sparked the anger of local communities, who burned several bikes belonging to other Syrians and threatened to expel them. In another instance, citizens arrested a person accused of theft, before handing him over to the security services. Retaliation against the accused without referring to the security services, obtaining rights, and imposing opinions by force seems to be dominant in Lebanese public life, raising alarm bells. Security forces have confirmed that some detention centers are unable to receive new detainees and that they are sometimes unable to send patrols to receive the accused after their arrest, due to the economic crisis. All these events raise fundamental questions. For example, who guarantees the right to trial for the accused, if the accusation, reckoning, and punishment take place in the street; taking into account the legal principle that the accused is innocent until proven guilty?

Wednesday
04 October 2023

[Union leader Castro Abdallah prosecuted on charges of inciting workers to strike](#)

Judge Ziad Abu Haidar released Castro Abdallah, head of the National Federation of Employees' and Workers' Unions in Lebanon, with a residence document, after hearing his deposition in the lawsuit filed against him by Man Enterprise (the contractor in charge of the US embassy complex in Awkar). The company is suing Abdallah after he filed a complaint against it for arbitrarily dismissing over 200 workers, including those injured in work accidents. The plaintiff considered Abdallah's action an "incitement for workers to strike."

[Amnesty calls on Lebanon to investigate assault on Freedom March protesters](#)

"The Lebanese authorities must urgently investigate the violent premeditated assault during a freedom march on 30 September organized by more than 24 civil society organizations to protest the recent crackdown on personal and political freedoms in Lebanon", Amnesty International called. Of particular concern is the "security forces' abject failure to protect protesters from the attack. During almost an hour, "dozens of attackers on motorcycles" were seen "throwing stones at protesters, shouting homophobic insults at them and physically assaulting them", resulting in the hospitalization of at least two protesters for face and eye injuries. Amnesty's Regional Director for the MENA region added that "a failure to investigate this incident would signal tolerance of the attack and embolden future perpetrators to attack", noting that until now, none of the aggressors have been arrested. Videos reviewed by Amnesty show ISF members beating a protester who was urging them to stop the attackers, as well as harassing journalists verbally and physically and ordering them to stop filming the attacks. This attack took place amidst the intensification of a campaign organized by Lebanon's political and religious leaders against the LGBTI community since June 2022 and more fervently since July 2023.

[Lebanon urgently requires comprehensive child protection and social protection systems, calls UNICEF chief](#)

Edouard Beigbeder, UNICEF representative in Lebanon, calls on Lebanese authorities and civil society to establish a proper child protection system. Recent revelations of severe abuse of children (maltreatment of infants at a daycare center, sexual abuse in institutions, abandonment of newborns, etc.) are only the visible manifestation of a deeper crisis. The "list of horrors continues to grow, and it will persist unless we take immediate action". Lebanon's socio-economic poly-crisis has a greater impact on children. Families are forced to resort to harmful coping strategies, such as sending their children to work or marrying off girls at an early age. According to Beigbeder, the solution is the establishment of "comprehensive child protection and social protection systems". In particular, Lebanon needs robust child and family welfare services, reporting, and referral mechanisms to ensure no child falls through the cracks and to confront cultural practices and social norms that endanger children. Finally, the UNICEF representative calls for the widespread implementation of 'Qudwa' ('Role Model'), "a ground-breaking program that promotes prevention of violence and prioritizes early intervention".

Thursday
05 October 2023

[In Lebanon, poor miss out as 'faulty' algorithms target aid](#)

Lebanon is one of nine Arab nations using an algorithm-powered poverty assessment formula funded by the World Bank that ranks welfare applicants according to dozens of different data points. Called Proxy Means Testing (PMT), the software considers factors such as family size, address, and ownership of livestock or cars, but the full details of the metrics have not been disclosed. Activists and researchers say algorithmic tools often wrongly exclude people as they “only capture a static picture of what people are going through at a single point in time - but this is not how people actually suffer hardship” (Human Rights Watch). PMT-based aid programs in Lebanon use census data that is more than a decade old, and fluctuating levels of household income and consumption can also skew poverty assessments. Aya Majzoub, Amnesty’s deputy director for the MENA region, says that a better - a more cost-effective - approach to algorithmic targeting would be for governments to move towards universal social protection systems. Others argue that algorithmic tools are a reasonable option for countries that cannot afford universal social protection.

[Nearly 4 million people in Lebanon need humanitarian help but less than half receive aid, UN says](#)

Lebanon faces one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises, following a “compounding set of multiple crises” that the World Bank describes as one of the 10 worst financial and economic crises since the mid-19th century. Imran Riza, the UN humanitarian chief for Lebanon, highlights that the amount of assistance the UN is giving out is “much less than the minimum survival level” that it normally distributes, as “the UN received more or less 40% of the funding it needed” and as the situation in Lebanon “doesn’t have the attention that some other situations have.” The 4 million people in need of humanitarian support include 2.1 million Lebanese, 1.5 million Syrians, 180,000 Palestinian refugees, 31,000 Palestinians from Syria, and 81,500 migrants. Imran Riza also criticized the “very negative rhetoric” and disinformation about Syrian refugees that “raises tensions and raises worries among the Syrian refugees”.

[Health crisis in Lebanon is 'catastrophic', head of parliamentary committee warns](#)

“Funds allocated for purchasing medications for cancer, chronic diseases, and kidney dialysis are nearly depleted”, Bilal Abdullah, the head of the Parliamentary Health Committee said, warning that the health situation was “catastrophic”. Failure to provide early treatment of such conditions ultimately results in higher healthcare costs, which in turn increases mortality rates among people who lack the financial resources to afford treatment. Abdullah warned that all government decisions currently being made in Lebanon “fall into the category of temporary solutions until the political situation is resolved and the economy recovers”. A number of state-funded subsidies on everyday goods and services have already been removed, and others could come in the following months, including subsidies on bread. In 2021, the Ministry of Finance received \$1.135 billion from the IMF in Special Drawing Rights (SDR). MPs have criticized the lack of parliamentary supervision and transparency on the spending of these funds. A Ministry of Finance source replied, “The SDR funds were spent on urgent matters, most notably supporting medications for cancer, some chronic diseases, and kidney dialysis, as well as purchasing wheat, supporting electricity, and repaying state debts.”

Friday
06 October 2023

Interior Minister launches a series of anti-Syrian measures

Lebanese caretaker Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi issued a series of circulars addressed to the Internal Security Forces and the Beirut Governorate, calling for a crackdown on Syrians in Lebanon. First, Mawlawi called for “stopping motorcycles driven by Syrians who don’t have a residence permit” and to arrest them, particularly in Beirut and the surrounding area, from the Damour River to Nahr al-Kalb. The second circular urges the governors, presidents of municipalities, and mukhtars to enforce a “categorical ban on accepting all donations, conditional or not, from wherever they come, in regard to anything related to displaced Syrians and which may justify staying in Lebanon or not being able to be repatriated safely to their country”. The third circular, titled “combating begging in the streets of the capital”, asks the municipal police to intensify their patrols to “put an end” to this phenomenon.

General Security director makes veiled threat against UNHCR

Acting General Security Director Elias Bayssari threatened the UNHCR with a refusal to issue employees’ residency permits. Bayssari was interviewed on the handing over of data by the UNHCR to the Government of Lebanon in the framework of an agreement signed by both institutions in August on the provision of data on Syrian refugees within 3 months to the Lebanese authorities. Two months have now passed, and, according to the Lebanese authorities, the data is yet to be transferred. When asked what he could do if UNHCR failed to hand over the data, Bayssari answered that UNHCR employees “are foreigners” and their case falls within the remit of General Security. “We’re the ones who give them their residence permits,” he said. “We’ll know what to do, don’t worry. This land is ours.”

Politicians’ speeches are extremely disturbing and the Lebanese authorities must intervene to prevent the escalation of violence, says ACHR

Since last April, Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) has reported “a marked intensification” of governmental resolutions, security protocols, official and unofficial declarations, and provocative media initiatives directed at Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The last campaign led to an incident on Thursday, October 5, in Dora, at the northern entrance of Beirut, and repercussions in other regions of Beirut. What initially began as an individual conflict among Lebanese citizens swiftly transformed into protest gatherings affiliated with political parties in the region, vehemently opposing the existence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The situation resulted in acts of violence, assaults, and arbitrary expulsions against Syrian refugees. Armed individuals, including the “Soldiers of God” group, assaulted refugees with sticks and iron bars, resulting in approximately 10 refugees injured, and at least 1 individual in a serious condition. “Other factions aligned with the Lebanese Forces Party assaulted refugees, invaded their homes, and perpetrated acts of violence against them”. ACHR denounces such attacks, which “collectively represent a substantial infringement upon human rights”, and urges the Lebanese government to intervene to stop hate speech campaigns and acts of violence. A call is also made to donor nations to Lebanon, urging them to ensure that assistance provided to the Lebanese Army adheres to relevant international law and that reporting protocols for potential misuse of aid are provided.

Saturday and Sunday
07 and 08 October
2023

3 inmates die as protest fire engulfs Zahle prison

Three prisoners died and 16 others were injured in Zahle prison after a fire broke out. Authorities stated that the blaze started in several cells after prison guards discovered a hole dug in a wall as part of a planned tunnel. Prisoners then attempted to take several hostages among the guards, before setting fire to mattresses and blankets in their cells. The fire got out of control, quickly spreading to the upper floors of the prison building. Three inmates died from smoke inhalation, while others were treated for minor injuries and breathing difficulties. Zahle, like all Lebanese prisons, suffers from overcrowding, particularly due to trial delays. Lawyer Ashraf Al-Moussawi said that all communication with the prison has been cut off, and it is difficult to know the details of what is going on. The Lebanese Army was called to support the Civil Defense in extinguishing the fire and evacuating prisoners.

Israel, Hezbollah exchange artillery, rocket fire

On Sunday, following the attack led by Hamas against the Israeli regime, the latter and Hezbollah exchanged artillery and rocket fire over the border. Hezbollah said it had launched guided rockets and artillery onto three posts in the Shebaa Farms "in solidarity" with the Palestinian people. The Israeli military said it fired artillery into a Lebanese area where cross-border fire was launched. They reportedly hit the tent set up by Hezbollah in the Shebaa Farms, but Hezbollah fighters erected a new one. There were no immediate reports of casualties in either Lebanon or Israel from Sunday's exchanges of fire. Another exchange of fire took place hours later. Lebanese security sources stated that rockets were fired from Lebanon against Israeli positions in the Shebaa Farms and that the Israeli regime responded with artillery fire on the village of Kfar Shouba. On Saturday, UNIFIL said it had enhanced its presence along the border, including its operations to counter rocket launches.



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