



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

06 - 12 NOVEMBER, 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

06 November 2023

Lebanese authorities fail to protect the right to peaceful assembly during the Freedom March of 30 September 2023, says coalition of organizations

In a letter to UN Special Rapporteurs on freedoms of assembly and of opinion and expression, eight international and Lebanese organizations raised concern about the attacks that targeted the Freedom March of September 30, 2023. The Internal Security Forces failed to protect the protesters from the attacks and were even seen beating protesters and journalists. The attack lasted for 3 hours until the Lebanese army intervened and evacuated the protesters in armored vehicles unworthy of the transportation of civilians. "The Lebanese authorities have failed to respect their obligations arising from the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly enshrined in articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as well as article 13 of the Lebanese constitution", the organizations argue. These attacks took place amidst a rise of civilian groups' physical assaults in public spaces, whose impunity "reflects the erosion of the rule of law in the country". The blatant lack of any explanatory statement regarding the assault from the authorities as well as the failure by the Lebanese judicial authorities to hold the perpetrators accountable, despite their identities having been revealed, can only confirm this worrying trend. The organizations called on the Special Rapporteurs to urge the Lebanese authorities to conduct an investigation into the assault of the Freedom March and call on the Public Prosecutors to open a judicial investigation.

Tuesday

07 November 2023

More than 4,5 million square meters burnt in South Lebanon after Israeli shelling

In a month, around 4.5 million square meters of wooden fields were burnt in South Lebanon following Israeli shelling. This includes 200,000 square meters of hundred-year-old olive trees. The Israeli army has repeatedly bombed forests and fields with white phosphorus to burn border areas. Animals residing in these areas have also been impacted by the fires. The latter are more difficult to extinguish than regular wildfires because they start simultaneously in multiple locations. Firefighters struggle to access the burning areas due to repeated bombings, which further facilitates the fire's spread. Caretaker Minister of Environment Nasser Yassine said that Lebanon would send an official complaint to the UN for Israel's scorched earth policy in Lebanon. White phosphorus shelling creates dense fires and slows down the regeneration process. Economic losses amount until now to 20 million US dollars, and could have long-term consequences. "Burnt olive trees are hundred-year-old. If we had to plant them again today, how much time before these fields become productive?" said the head of the Green Southerners NGO. Consequences on the environment could also be heavy, as white phosphorus is absorbed by the soil and the water.

Wednesday
08 November 2023

[Israel, Lebanon ignore US envoy's plea for calm](#)

Clashes between Hezbollah and the Israeli army have shown no sign of easing following an appeal by US envoy Amos Hochstein for calm along Lebanon's southern border. Military operations appeared to intensify after the envoy departed from Beirut, with at least 10 Israeli air raids on Lebanese border areas. MP Hadi Abu Al-Hassan from the Progressive Socialist Party told Arab News that the message that Hochstein carried to Lebanon "should have been directed to the Israeli enemy and not to Lebanon." Hochstein reportedly told Parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri that Washington is prepared to settle the dispute over land border points between Lebanon and Israel when the fighting ends.

Thursday
09 November 2023

[Could Salameh's case be reopened?](#)

Charbel Abou Samra was replaced by Bilal Halaoui as Beirut's first instruction judge, raising numerous questions on whether the file of the Former Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh, frozen since August, could be reopened. On the 9th of August, Judge Abou Samra was put under an action in State responsibility for not having arrested Salameh after his interview a week earlier. Due to this complaint, the instruction judge was removed from the file, and the investigation was suspended until Abou Samra's verdict. The latter could not be decided, due to the retirement of many magistrates that cannot be replaced. Now that Abou Samra is retiring, the appeal against him does not force his successor to manage Salameh's file again. Bilal Halaoui is respected within the judicial system for handling his case without political engagement. However, he could face other appeals, which would de facto stop the investigations again.

Friday
10 November 2023

[Lebanon's tourism industry's recovery hampered by Israel's war on Gaza](#)

Israel's war on Gaza and clashes on the southern border has hindered Lebanon's tourism industry, one of the beleaguered economy's only well-performing sectors. The boom in tourism that Lebanon experienced over the summer was interrupted by the steadily escalating clashes between Israel and Hezbollah. The President of the Lebanese Federation for Tourism Industries estimates the current occupancy rates for hotels between zero and seven percent on average, compared to 25 to 50% in the same period in 2022. Last year, the tourism industry generated around US\$7 billion and brought fresh dollars into the economy. The President of the Federation said that "if [the war] continues to next month, hotels might have to start cutting salaries". Even if a full-blown war does not occur, the current style of low-intensity, daily bombing of south Lebanon is enough to keep tourists, events, and conferences away from the country.

Saturday and Sunday
11 and 12 November
2023

['What we are doing in Gaza, we can also do in Beirut', says Israeli Minister](#)

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant reiterated Israeli threats that if Hezbollah were to launch a war, it would result in widespread destruction in Lebanon. "What we're doing in Gaza, we can also do in Beirut", he added. In recent days, Hezbollah has used new types of weapons and struck new targets in Israel, Nasrallah said in his second speech since the war began in October. He explained that Hezbollah has used a missile known as the Burkan, able to carry between 300 and 500 kg of explosives, as well as weaponized drones for the first time. He also announced that "reconnaissance drones" were sent deep into Israel, "some reaching Haifa, Acre, and Safed".

New increase of tensions along the Southern border

The weekend has been the most tense in South Lebanon since the beginning of the missile exchanges in early October. Hezbollah launched several missiles, including anti-tank and guided missiles, towards Israel, wounding both soldiers and civilians. Israeli media Haaretz reported that 18 soldiers and civilians were wounded in these incidents. In retaliation, Israel bombed several locations in Lebanese territory, including with white phosphorus. For the first time, it bombed a location far within Lebanese territory, in the region of Zahrani, approximately 40 km from the Southern border. UNIFIL reported that one of its soldiers was wounded by shots coming from a “non-identified source”, but his state was stable. After Sunday’s attacks, the Israeli Army claimed to have a “plan” to stabilize the situation along the border, without further details. The Lebanese National News Agency reported that Israeli planes and drones were seen over border areas.

Access to water becomes difficult in South Lebanon due to the tensions

Access to water has become more difficult for residents in South Lebanon due to the exchange of missiles between Israel and armed groups in Lebanon. Israel has targeted crucial infrastructure, including water stations, forcing residents to rely on tanker owners. The price of water delivery has considerably risen. One resident reported that “the price of a 20-barrel water transfer has risen from 800,000 LBP to more than three million LBP”. This has increased difficulties for farmers whose salaries depend on irrigated crops and left families unable to buy a single barrel of water.



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