



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

10 - 16 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
10 July 2023

2.3 million people in need of food assistance in Lebanon

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) released its quarterly global report on "Crop Prospects and Food Situation", reporting on 45 countries in need of external assistance for food. Between September and December 2022, 1.29 million Lebanese residents (33% of the resident population) and 0.7 million Syrian refugees (46 percent of the total number of Syrian refugees in the country) were estimated to be in IPC Phase 3 (crisis) or above (Phase 4: Emergency and/or Phase 5 : Famine). The situation continued to worsen, and between January and April 2023, the figures increased to 1.46 million Lebanese residents (38%) and 0.8 million Syrian refugees (53%). Among these 2.3 million people, 354,000 are in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency).

Lebanon daycare abuse prompts alarm

The Internal Security Forces (ISF) announced that it had opened an investigation into a Jdeideh daycare after a video circulating on social media showed staff members abusing infants. The video, shot months ago but only recently circulated on social media, depicted staff members of a daycare force-feeding infants and striking them when they cried or did not cooperate. The Health Ministry also said it was looking into the daycare center, and that it had decided to permanently closed it down. The ISF later announced that they arrested 2 suspects: the owner of the daycare and an employee seen in the video. UNICEF reported that this event was "part of a trend" of growing violence against children throughout Lebanon's meltdown.

Lebanese Navy starts 9-day long training with external support

The Lebanese naval forces kicked off their largest ever maritime exercise, Resolute Union 2023, as part of a yearly program gathering multiple regional and international maritime forces to train the Lebanese Navy. The Lebanese Army stated that "the exercise aims to enhance the capabilities of the naval forces and participating units and activate cooperation, coordination and exchange of experiences in the fields of: landing operations, surveillance and control, diving, destruction of ammunition, search and rescue, interception and inspection of ships". The multilateral event includes participation from Egypt, France, Iraq, Jordan, the UK and the US. The Lebanese Navy Chief Haissam Dannaoui highlighted search and rescue training, in a context of increasing boat departures from Lebanon towards Europe. However, such cooperation and support raises concerns due to repeated human rights violations committed by the authorities supported by external partners. Human Rights Watch recently highlighted the need for the donors to ensure that their support does not contribute to human rights violations in Lebanon.

Tuesday
11 July 2023

Miqati will not extend Salameh's mandate, office says

The Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh's term, ending in late July, will not be extended, Mikati announced. Therefore, this month will see the end of a 30-year tenure of the top financial authority in Lebanon, which is accused of bearing a major responsibility in the now 4-year-long economic and financial crisis. Mikati's office said his position was based on current legislation, which stipulates that the Vice-Governor would assume the Governor's duties until a new one is appointed. It also stressed the need that "no vacuum occurs at the Central Bank because it's the country's financial backbone". The Vice-Governors previously said that they would resign if no one was nominated to succeed Salameh. Mikati is not likely to nominate a new Central Bank Governor, in order not to strengthen concerns over a caretaker government taking too many responsibilities. A growing number of top official positions are now assumed by caretaker persons, strengthening the lack of effective response of the State to the crisis. If no solution to the political situation is found, new positions could become empty in the next months, including the Commander of the Lebanese Army in January 2024.

Prominent Lebanese journalist Dima Sadek sentenced to one year in prison

Journalist Dima Sadek has been sentenced to one year in prison and a fine of 110 million Lebanese pounds as a result of a lawsuit filed against her by the Free Patriotic Movement President Gebran Bassil. In February 2020, men loyal to the Free Patriotic Movement beat up 2 young men from Tripoli and forced one to say "[Michel] Aoun is your God and the God of Tripoli". Following this incident, Sadek described the actions as "racist and Nazi-like", which led to her condemnation on grounds of "slander, defamation and promoting sectarianism". The journalist is expected to file an appeal against the ruling. She stated that "the thugs" who were accused of beating the young men weren't "tried, arrested and no one said anything to them". Dima Sadek was previously subject to similar pressures, including from the Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh for "tarnishing the reputation of the banks and the prestige of the economy". In 2019, due to her coverage and support to anti-government protests, she also faced harassment, especially when pictures of her in a compromising position were sent to her mother, causing her to be hospitalized. Despite many political leaders publicly expressing their support to Dima Sadek, such legal actions of politicians on journalists are frequent. Ayman Mhanna, executive director of the Samir Kassir Foundation said that Sadek's prison sentence was a "dangerous precedent [... that goes] against every freedom of expression principle and clearly show[s] the degree of judiciary politicization".

State Council suspends Government's decision on bank restrictions

The State Council suspended Decision 22/2023, adopted in April by the caretaker Government, and it will work on a full assessment of its legality in the next months. This Decision was analyzed by many as recognizing the illegal capital control imposed by the banks since the end of 2019 on the depositors' money. It asked the Central Bank to take measures to force the banks to limit cash withdrawals and to make sure that the banks were ensuring the availability of fresh funds. The Beirut Bar Association presented at the end of May a complaint before the State Council, stating that that the decision was a "legalization and legitimization of dissolving deposits", violating the right to private property, to equality before the law, and entrepreneurial freedom.

Wednesday
12 July 2023

[European Parliament calls on Lebanon to adopt reforms to end political and economic crisis](#)

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the current situation in Lebanon, describing it as “extremely alarming and deeply concerning” and stressing the responsibility of the ruling class in Lebanon’s present situation. It denounces the “unconstitutional tactics” used to prevent reaching a presidential vote and the postponement of the municipal elections, which “could further intensify the existing institutional paralysis and the Lebanese people’s lack of confidence in democracy”. The resolution also criticizes the obstacles hindering the investigation of the Beirut Port Blast. The Parliament called on the Lebanese government “to swiftly implement key governance, economic and financial reforms that will ensure political and economic recovery”. It also called on the Council of the EU to adopt sanctions on those “who are infringing the democratic and electoral process [...] or obstructing the domestic investigation into the Beirut port explosion”, calling in parallel for “an independent international fact-finding mission” on the explosion, to counter “the culture of impunity that has flourished in Lebanon”. The European Parliament expressed “its concern about numerous cases of mismanagement and fraud related to EU-funded projects due to the lack of transparency and oversight”, and called on the EU to ease independent public scrutiny on EU-funded projects. Finally, it recalled that “the conditions are not met for the voluntary, dignified return of refugees in conflict-prone areas in Syria”, suggesting that it does not oppose returns to areas not subject to conflict. This last statement has created tense political debates both in Brussels and Lebanon, mainly created by political leaders pushing for the return of Syrian refugees.

Thursday
13 July 2023

[Army prevents new boat departure](#)

On Thursday, the Lebanese Army halted a boat from taking to sea off the coast of Abdeh in Akkar. The number of individuals affected remains unknown. In less than one week, the Lebanese authorities have announced having prevented 4 attempts and arrested 288 individuals (excluding Thursday’s event). Such figures are likely to exceed last year’s record of 16 attempts prevented and 664 individuals affected, as recorded by the United Nations. Preventing people from leaving by boat fails to significantly reduce the number of departures and increases the risks undertaken while migrating.

[CMA CGM's bid to handle postal services approved](#)

After two failed attempts to find a successor to LibanPost since October 2022, the Telecoms Ministry commission approved a tender by two subsidiaries of the French logistics giant CMA CGM to take over Lebanon’s postal services from the previous contracting company LibanPost for 9 years. The bidders committed to pay 12 percent of their revenue to the Lebanese State. The French Postal services (La Poste) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with one of the bidders, committing to provide “technical assistance”.

Friday
14 July 2023

[Ghada Aoun faces judiciary inspection after attending a conference abroad](#)

The Public Prosecutor in Mount Lebanon, Judge Ghada Aoun, announced that the Justice Minister referred her to the judiciary inspection due to a conference she attended abroad without his permission. She labeled such an action as “persecution”, stressing differences in approaching other judges. Ghada Aoun participated in a conference titled “What Future for Lebanon?” at the EU headquarters in Brussels at the end of June. The Judge was earlier dismissed by the Judges High Disciplinary Council but continues to handle her files after filing an appeal against this decision. Despite being close to former president Michel Aoun, Ghada Aoun is known for leading anti-corruption cases.

Foreign Minister left refugee repatriation committee due to upcoming travel

The Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib withdrew from leading a ministerial committee dedicated to establishing a plan for the organized and massive return of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, in full coordination with the Syrian regime. Early rumors reported that his decision was due to the recent European Parliament's resolution on Lebanon opposing returns in "conflict-prone areas", but the Minister issued a statement justifying his withdrawal by his busy schedule in the next months. The European resolution was largely opposed by politicians and ministers. Caretaker minister of the Displaced Issam Charafeddine called for an emergency cabinet meeting "to respond to the arbitrary decision" of the European Parliament.

After new Lira depreciation, Salameh confirms Sayrafa continues as usual

On Saturday, the Lebanese Lira depreciated from 91,500 to 98,000 against the US dollar, coming back to its original level after a few hours. This new spike comes after a month-long stability. In March, after a record rate of depreciation at 143,000 against the dollar, the Lira remained stable at around 93,000 LL. This depreciation is likely to have been caused by rumors of the possible end of the Sayrafa platform. Central Bank Governor, Riad Salameh, issued a statement on Sunday, in which he confirmed that the Sayrafa platform continues as usual and according to the same rules approved by Banque du Liban since March 2023. Salameh's term ends at the end of July, after a 30-year-long ruling of the BDL. The absence of a non-caretaker successor is likely to bring more instability to the Lebanese Lira.



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