



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

12 - 18 JUNE, 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**

12 June 2023

### **Beirut blast victims awarded \$1m in damages by UK court**

The company found liable for the Beirut explosion has been ordered by a British court to pay \$1 million in compensation to some of the victims. A judge awarded the victims about £850,000 after hearing first-hand accounts from four victims about the impact of the blast on their lives, including the parents of 3-year-old victim Alexandra, the family of fire-brigade martyr Ralph Mallahi, and Inaam Kayyal, who was injured in the explosion. At least 215 people were killed when a shipment of 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate, imported by Savaro, was left in a warehouse in Beirut port for several years before it caught fire and exploded in August 2020. The award of damages comes after the High Court earlier this year found Savaro liable for the explosion. The case was brought by the Beirut Bar Association and was able to be heard under English law because Savaro is registered in England and Wales. A team of British lawyers, including barrister Neil Hart KC and solicitors Dechert, waived their fees to bring the case. Savaro was not represented, and Judge Roger Eastman ordered the company to pay £760,000 in court costs, which will be paid to charity.

**Tuesday**

13 June 2023

### **Lebanon will not be able to pay salaries by end of June: Prime Minister**

Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, said that his government will not be able to pay salaries to civil servants by the end of June, Anadolu Agency reports. "The government will not be able to pay salaries if Parliament does not approve additional appropriations for wages," Mikati said in a statement following a Cabinet meeting. Forty-six members in the 128-seat House of Representatives oppose holding a session for the assembly, amid failure to elect a new president since the end of Michel Aoun's term last October. Under the Constitution, the president is the only one who has the authority to demand holding a parliamentary session. Approximately 300,000 employees, including civilians, military personnel, and retirees, are at risk of not receiving their salaries. In April, the government approved a decision to raise public sector salaries, in addition to hiking the transportation allowance for employees.

Wednesday  
14 June 2023

### Lebanon's parliament fails to elect president for 12th time

Lebanon's parliament has – for the 12th time – failed to elect a president and break a political deadlock that has gripped the country for months. Lawmakers held a session on Wednesday to pick a replacement for former President Michel Aoun, whose term ended last October, but disagreements prevented them from reaching the required thresholds. The main competition was between Jihad Azour, a former finance minister and a senior official with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Sleiman Frangieh, leader of the Marada party whose family has a long history in Lebanese politics. When elected, the new president will have to navigate a major economic crisis that began in 2019, along with a political system that has long suffered from corruption and mismanagement.

### Critical action needed to avoid another lost year of education in Lebanon

Many students in Lebanon risk losing another year of school unless foreign donors meeting in Brussels this week can devise a viable plan to deal with the education crisis. Public school students – including Syrian refugees – have suffered through four years of chaos: 27 percent dropped out last year alone. Donor support to education is critical to stabilizing the school system, but relying on Lebanese authorities to implement that support risks a fifth lost year. Learning collapsed during two years of COVID-related school closures. As Lebanon's financial crisis worsened, teachers' salaries plunged. International donors repurposed funds to boost teachers' income but the education ministry reportedly lost track of and misallocated funds. The resulting teachers' strikes meant students received just 60 days of school in each of the last two years. The international norm is 180 days. According to Human Rights Watch, instead of relying on the education ministry, donors at this week's conference should formulate a plan to work with the UN, teachers, and groups providing education to push through four crucial steps before the new school year. First, establish an emergency education plan and restore access to all students; then, assess and publish the school year's costs; next, regularly publish information about funding allocations, expenditures, and results; and finally, bypass government channels and deliver aid directly to teachers and schools.

Thursday  
15 June 2023

### Syndicate member Nisrine Chahine arrested for slander and defamation

Judge Ghassan Oueidat ordered the arrest of Nisrine Chahine, head of the executive committee of contract teachers in basic public education, over a complaint filed against her by Education Minister Abbas Halabi, after she refused to delete a post she published on social media, in which she accused the minister of being a bully and a mafiosi. Nisrine Chahine is declining to delete the post, insisting on her right to freedom of expression. Halabi had previously arbitrarily dismissed her and refused to implement the State Shura Council's ruling to reinstate her, as a punishment for her union activity and for exposing corruption within the ministry. In a call with Megaphone, Chahine's attorney, lawyer Rafik Ghraizi, said her insistence on keeping the post is her way of confirming that she will continue to expose corruption, confront the minister, and challenge the policy of silencing critical voices. According to the law, Chahine can not be detained for more than 48 hours, and activists have called for a protest in solidarity at the Palace of Justice to demand her release. Nisrine Chahine's arrest is another in a series of steps taken by political and judicial authorities against dissidents and activists to silence them, from security agencies summoning journalists, to the Beirut Bar Association amending lawyers' code of conduct, preventing them from appearing on media without prior approval.



### Environmental, health crises await Palestine refugees in Lebanon

Researcher and human rights activist, Hassan Al-Sayeda, has warned of an environmental and health crisis awaiting Palestinian refugees living near the Beirut if the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) does not address the waste collection and disposal issue. Al-Sayeda, who works for the Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness), told Quds Press that Palestinian refugees have the right to live in a healthy and clean environment free of disease, adding that it is the Lebanese state's duty to abide by its responsibilities towards the refugees. He stressed the need to enhance cooperation between the state, UNRWA, and the Palestinian factions, in order to strengthen the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in the refugee camps and to secure the minimum requirements for a decent human life.

### Lebanon to bill Syrian and Palestinian refugees for electricity use

Lebanon appealed to the UN this week to help cover the electricity expenses of Syrian and Palestinian refugees living in the country, repeating calls for the deportation of Syrian refugees to Syria. Caretaker Energy Minister Walid Fayyad said that refugees will now be billed for their electricity use. "The cost of electricity consumed by refugees ... must be paid through electricity tariff," Fayyad said. After meeting with UN agencies, Fayyad said an agreement was reached to form two technical committees; one to deal with the electricity consumption in Syrian camps and the other in Palestinian camps. "We cannot allow this issue to disturb the financial balance of Lebanon's state power company, which was on the brink of collapse," Fayyad said.

### Donors in Brussels pledge €9.6bn in aid to Syrians at home & refugees abroad

Donors in Brussels have pledged €9.6 billion (\$10.3 billion) in grants and loans to support Syrian people both in and around the country. The money committed at the Brussels VII Conference: Supporting the future of Syria and the region, was held in the Belgian capital on Thursday and is supposed to help the 15 million people inside war-torn Syria, as well as the neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees, which themselves are in a dire economic situation. The money donated by the international community amounts to €4.6 billion for 2023 and €1 billion for 2024 and beyond. €3.8 billion in grants were pledged by the EU, with €2.1 billion from the European Commission and €1.7 billion pledged by the EU Member States. The rest is made up of loans from international financial institutions and donors who pledged €4 billion.

### Protesters in Lebanon demand their money back

Protestors in Lebanon have attacked several bank buildings, set tires alight, and smashed windows to demand their money back. The demonstrations took place in a suburb outside the capital, Beirut, and targeted the branches of Bank Audi, Bank of Beirut, and Byblos Bank in Sin el-Fil in Mount Lebanon Governorate. People demanded the return of their money, also calling for officials involved in corruption, including the central bank Governor Riad Salameh, to be held accountable. "We are done with them. We've waited too long, it's enough," one protester told Al Jazeera. Another said they were sending the banks a message. "We will not lose our rights, not today and not after 100 years. This is a message they need to understand," he said.

**Friday**  
16 June 2023

### Libya's Hannibal Gaddafi's health worsens two weeks into hunger strike in Lebanon

The health of Hannibal Gadhafi, son of the late Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi, is rapidly deteriorating in the second week of his hunger strike to protest his prolonged detention in Beirut without a trial, according to his lawyer. Paul Romanos, the lawyer representing Gaddafi, disclosed that his client was only consuming minimal amounts of water and had been experiencing weakness and muscle pains. He further mentioned that a doctor was carrying out daily check-ups on the detainee, who was also grappling with back pain caused by inflammation in his spine. Romanos had previously said that the back pain was a result of being confined to a small room where he lacks freedom of movement and cannot exercise. Gaddafi has been in Lebanese custody since 2015 when he was abducted from Syria, where he had sought political asylum. He has since remained in detention without a trial in a Beirut prison.

### Islamic Cultural Center asks authorities to dissolve LGBTQ+ rights NGO

The Islamic Cultural Center in Lebanon asked authorities on Saturday to investigate Helem, an association that defends LGBTQ+ rights, and called for its "dissolution, due to its provocative actions in public spaces," the National News Agency reported. According to the NNA, the office of the public prosecutor at the Court of Cassation accepted the association's request to open an information note and forwarded it to the relevant authorities. Helem declined to comment to L'Orient-Le Jour, pending further developments in the case. In a press release, the Islamic Cultural Center denounced the "numerous celebrations organized by homosexual associations during this month, notably in Gemmayze and at the Beirut racecourse," as well as the decision taken by certain embassies to raise rainbow flags. June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month, dedicated to the celebration and commemoration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender pride. On June 9, the US Embassy in Lebanon raised a Progress Pride flag to celebrate the "diversity and perseverance of the LGBTQ+ community," as announced on the chancellery's Twitter account. The Cultural Islamic Center called on the authorities to "immediately ban" these events "in order to prevent the country from falling into sedition."



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