



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

04 - 10 SEPTEMBER, 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

04 September 2023

Critical funding gap of \$76 million in Lebanon, says UNHCR

UNHCR says additional fundings are needed before the end of the year, or vulnerable populations will be put at higher risk. It calls for \$76.1 million for Lebanon only, the second highest gap in the MENA region, after Jordan. \$339 million is needed for the whole MENA region. UNHCR says it already operates with \$110 million less in the region than in 2022 and is confronted with additional needs amidst funding shortfalls. The socio-economic crisis in Lebanon “has led to an exponential rise in extreme poverty”, as 90% of Syrian refugees currently live in conditions of extreme poverty. 94% of refugee households in Lebanon had to incur debts to meet their essential needs. UNHCR says urgent additional funding is needed particularly to ensure cash assistance and access to secondary healthcare and safe shelter until the end of the year.

Tuesday

05 September 2023

Attack on freedoms targets LGBTI People in Lebanon

The Coalition to Defend Freedom of Expression in Lebanon, gathering 15 Lebanese and international organizations, said that LGBTI people’s human rights are “systematically” attacked by the Lebanese authorities. Over the past year, “a series of hostile incidents” raised the pressure already exercised in Lebanon on LGBTI people. An online harassment campaign was organized by political and religious authorities against members of the Lebanese parliament who submitted a draft law to repeal the prohibition of “any sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature”, which is used to criminalize homosexuality. In response, in August 2023, two separate bills were introduced to explicitly criminalize same-sex relations and punish anyone who “promotes homosexuality” with up to three years in prison. On August 23, a group of men, the Soldiers of God, attacked people at a bar where a drag event was being held, threatening that this was “only the beginning”. The Internal Security Forces, although at the bar while the attack was under way, reportedly did not intervene. To oppose the “unlawful directive” issued by caretaker interior minister Bassam al-Mawlawi in June 2022 instructing security forces to ban pro-LGBTI events, the Coalition calls on the Lebanese authorities to “safeguard the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association, privacy, equality and nondiscrimination of everyone in Lebanon, including LGBTI people”. Wadih Al-Asmar, president of CLDH, added that “LGBTI rights are fundamental human rights and stifling them as an excuse to keep a portion of society marginalized under the false pretext of so-called public morals is detrimental to everyone’s human rights”.

Wednesday
06 September 2023

[Journalist Mariam Laham released after 11 hours in detention](#)

After appearing before the Central Department of Criminal Investigations, Lebanese journalist Mariam Majdouline Laham was detained for 11 hours before her release on bail Wednesday evening. Reportedly, she was summoned to appear before the Department following a message she posted on social media in July, in which she accused Judge Mohammah Ahmad Assaf, President of the Sunni Higher Court of Beirut, of obtaining personal benefit from a case he was handling. The journalist and her lawyer criticized the numerous violations that she suffered from. In particular, the key to her house was forcibly taken and her home was searched even if her lawyer was forbidden to accompany the inspectors. While the authorities were at her home, they reportedly used her laptop without her permission and deleted the social media post she was summoned for. For the past months, several journalists were summoned to appear before diverse authorities, threatening the freedom of press and is illegal before the Lebanese law. "Any journalist prosecuted in a publication case should only appear before the court of prints", as recalled by the President of the Press Editors Syndicate, Joseph Kossaidi, and not before the Central Department of Criminal Investigations or the Cybercrime Bureau, as it is often the case.

Thursday
07 September 2023

[New clashes between Palestinian factions in Ain el-Hilweh](#)

One month after the end of previous clashes, Ain el-Hilweh has been the place for renewed armed tensions between Fatah and Jund al-Sham. Fatah claims fighters belonging to the movement were targeted by heavily armed islamist individuals and responded to defend their positions. Jund al-Sham contradicted this claim, stating that Fatah members shot first. These clashes resulted in several injuries. Hundreds of refugees also fled into Al-Mousali Mosque, recalling displacements caused by previous fighting - thousands were displaced by the July clashes. Earlier the same day, it was agreed to evacuate UNRWA-run school buildings, which were previously occupied by armed individuals for a month. This question is likely to have sparked the clashes, and tension has continued since the truce was announced in the beginning of August, as islamist groups have not handed over the accused killers of the Fatah general Mohammad "abu Ashraf" al-Armoushi to the Lebanese judiciary. Individuals involved and/or responsible for the clashes benefit from a large impunity as they are rarely handed over to the Lebanese authorities. Accountability is accomplished by force, between armed groups, which jeopardizes long-term peace. Following last month's clashes in Ain el-Hilweh, UNRWA appealed for \$15,5 million to repair infrastructure, provide education for children whose schools were damaged or occupied by fighters, and cash assistance to displaced people.

[Cabinet approves Sayrafa's succession](#)

Caretaker government approved the replacement of the Sayrafa exchange platform with another tool, operated by the American company Bloomberg. No timeframe of the effective establishment of the new instrument was announced. The Sayrafa platform was created 3 years ago, with the aim of being the sole reference for the exchange rate between the Lebanese Lira and the US dollar. This goal was never achieved, and authorities hope to succeed in this with the new platform. The replacement of Sayrafa was pushed for by the new caretaker governor of the Central Bank Wassim Manssouri, at the end of the 30-year-long Salameh's ruling. The Cabinet also approved the renewal for a 3rd year of the fuel swap agreement with Iraq to supply EDL and the Telecommunications Ministry with oil. After numerous statements by politicians and public officials speculating on a possible rise of border crossings from Syria, the Cabinet announced that a cabinet meeting would be devoted to this question next week, in the presence of the heads of the security agencies.

Friday
08 September 2023

[In the US, new hope for Beirut Blast investigation](#)

A court in Texas declared itself competent to handle a complaint filed in July 2022 against Spectrum Geo Ltd, which unloaded the cargo of ammonium nitrate to Beirut Port. Families of victims of the Blast filed the lawsuit to understand the choice of the ship - which was in a decrepit state - and the reason why it unloaded the ammonium nitrate in Beirut. They seek a \$200 million compensation. The US court's decision was seen as a "significant breakthrough" by the lawyer of the victims, as it ruled against the company's argument that the British and Lebanese courts were the sole competent courts to investigate (as Spectrum is a British company, and the facts occurred in Lebanon). The lawyer added that the "group should provide all documents they hold, including correspondence, records, and any communications with politicians before the actual trial begins". The trial could facilitate the discovery of the facts surrounding and explaining the Blast but risks maintaining impunity of Lebanese leaders, as the domestic investigation faces significant obstacles.

[Beirut Today editor-in-chief summoned after abuse accusations](#)

Editor-in-chief of news website Beirut Today, Lynn Cheikh Moussa, was summoned by the Internal Security Forces' Cybercrimes Bureau, over a post she published on X which accused an unidentified person of being a predator. In December 2022, Beirut Today published an anonymous testimony accusing an unidentified individual of sexual abuse and privacy violation. A few days later, Lynn Cheikh Moussa received a call from the accused's lawyer, threatening to sue her and the news website if they did not withdraw the post. Beirut Today decided to comply. However, last month, Cheikh Moussa shared the accused man's dating app profile, stating that he is a predator and abuser who threatened to sue her and Beirut Today. The Cybercrime Bureau summoned her for this case, following the trend of growing threats to freedom of expression and press freedom in recent months.

Saturday and Sunday
09 and 10 September
2023

[4 dead in renewed clashes in Ain el-Hilweh](#)

3 fighters - 2 from Fatah and 1 from an Islamist group - were killed in Ain el-Hilweh amidst renewed fighting between Palestinian armed groups. One Lebanese citizen was also killed by a stray bullet while driving in the outskirts of the camp. According to the Lebanese army, several shells fell in centers belonging to army units deployed near the camp, which wounded 5 soldiers, including one in a critical condition. The Army also said it "will take appropriate measures". Forced displacement of residents continued, reaching 1 to 2000 individuals. This pushed aid workers to set up emergency shelters inside schools, a mosque, and to build tents outside the municipal stadium in Sidon. More than 750 escapees would be sheltered by UNRWA and other organizations. UNRWA also stated that the ongoing fighting in and around schools was violating international human rights and humanitarian law, as children are at risk of being deprived of their right to education starting at the beginning of October, when class is planned to restart.

Mercy Corps concerned over food insecurity in Lebanon due to end of Black Sea corridor

The international humanitarian organization Mercy Corps released a report raising concerns over the impact of Black Sea escalations on food insecurity in the Middle East and North Africa. Lebanon's domestic cereal production is low - only 20% of consumption needs - making the country dependent on external supply. Therefore, Lebanon faces a "high" vulnerability to external market shocks, both regarding quantities and prices. Lebanon benefits from a \$150 million World Bank loan, securing Lebanon from price hikes for 6 to 9 months. However, in the longer term, supply could be threatened. Lebanon is particularly dependent on Ukrainian wheat, as it represented 77% of total wheat imports in 2022; the World Bank considers this unlikely to change in the near future. Therefore, escalations in the Black Sea would threaten wheat imports "in the short run". Due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, grain shipments from this country were at severe risk, but a major global wheat crisis has been avoided due to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which enables Ukraine to continue exporting through the Black Sea ports. However, in July 2023, Russia refused to renew the Initiative, raising new concerns on global food insecurity. The report mentions the possibility of increased tensions in Lebanon due to a potential wheat crisis, in particular between Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees, as experienced in 2022.



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