



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

03 - 09 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
03 July 2023

Dual currency disbursement makes cash assistance easier, UN said

In a joint report, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UNHCR presented the benefits they observed from the dual currency disbursement of cash assistance. Due to the high inflation in the beginning of 2023, “operational challenges were increasing”, in particular “widespread occurrences of redemption points running out of cash”, resulting in hindered access to aid and basic needs. To cope with this issue, and after months of negotiation with the Government, the UN re-established dual currency disbursement, more than 3 years after it was stopped, at the beginning of the crisis in 2019. Beneficiaries could choose to receive cash assistance in Lebanese Pounds or in US dollars. 97% of families withdrew most or all of their assistance in USD. This resulted in a 78% increase in the value delivered to families receiving assistance to meet their food needs, while cash assistance targeting non-food basic needs saw a slight decrease in the value received. The dual currency disbursement follows the trend of a growing dollarization of the Lebanese economy, as most shops now price their goods in USD and accept payment in USD.

Tuesday
04 July 2023

Questions from MPs on BDL remain unanswered

On Tuesday, seven independent and Change Members of the Parliament asked caretaker Finance Minister Youssef Khalil about the bank losses that the BDL governor moved from the bank’s sheet to state debt. Riad Salameh, governor of the BDL until the end of July, has turned USD 58,74 billion bank losses into public debt for the Lebanese state between February and June 2023. Even though the law stipulates that the Minister has 15 days to answer the questions, it is likely that no comprehensive answer will be provided, as Khalil has been known to leave similar inquiries about the BDL governor unanswered. A similar request was already made by nine MPs in March 2023: After the first batch of public debt created at the beginning of February, worth USD 16.5 billion, the MPs asked what measures the Finance Minister would take to address the transgressions of the BDL governor.

Wednesday
05 July 2023

[Pictures of accused in port explosion hung on Justice Palace as families of victims hold 35th commemoration](#)

Relatives of victims of the 4th of August 2020 Beirut Port Blast held the 35th monthly commemoration for the explosion that killed 220 persons, injured 6,500, and left 350,000 homeless. Almost 3 years after the Blast, investigations have been frozen since January, after a failed attempt to restart the probe after more than a year of pause. The victims' relatives hung pictures of those accused or wanted for investigation in the case on the walls of the Palace of Justice in Beirut. Images included Public Prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat, former Army Commander Jean Kahwaji, former Director General of General Security Abbas Ibrahim, and Director of State Security Tony Saliba, among others.

[Lebanon: Armed Forces Summarily Deporting Syrians](#)

Human Rights Watch reports on "thousands of Syrians, including unaccompanied children" forcibly deported by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) between April and May 2023. A humanitarian source told HRW about 100 raids, 2,200 arrests, and 1,800 deportations since April. HRW also documented cases of violence committed by the LAF on Syrians during the deportation process. The LAF made no distinction of the refugee status or the fear of persecution in Syria of the deportees. "Lebanon is hosting the largest number of refugees per capita in the world amid a grueling economic crisis, but this is no excuse to round up Syrians and dump them over the border into the hands of their abusive government," said Ramzi Kaiss, Lebanon researcher at HRW. Even though the LAF claims to implement the Higher Defense Council's April 2019 decision to deport Syrians entering Lebanon via unofficial routes after this date, the vast majority of the cases documented by HRW concern Syrians who entered Lebanon before April 2019. No chance was given to the Syrians to legally challenge their deportation. One person told HRW that he and 12 other persons were arrested by the Syrian Military Intelligence after his deportation, detained in the Palestine Branch, and severely tortured. As the Lebanese Army receives significant external support, including military and transportation vehicles, HRW calls on donors to "ensure that all aid and equipment provided to support the Lebanese Armed Forces is not effectively funding forced returns of Syrians".

[Gemayel directs written question to government on fate of Lebanese detainees disappeared in Syria](#)

Kataeb Leader and Member of the Parliament Samy Gemayel directed a written question on behalf of his party to the Lebanese Government concerning the fate of Lebanese detainees and forcibly disappeared in Syria. This request came after the UN General Assembly approved a resolution that would establish an independent body to uncover the fate of the people forcibly disappeared in Syria. Gemayel condemned Lebanon's abstention in this vote. In his letter, he urged the government of Lebanon "to take all the necessary measures to ensure that the scope of work of the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria [...] includes the Lebanese detainees and forcibly disappeared in Syria, and guarantees the representation of their families throughout the entire process". An unknown number of Lebanese have been forcibly disappeared in Syria, especially during the Syrian occupation of Lebanon (1976-2005).

CLDH's legal team receives the ratification of a judicial ruling based on the Anti-Torture Law (65/2017) from the Court of Cassation

In August 2022, A.A. and R.A. were arrested for drug promotion and abuse, as well as suspected affiliation to ISIS. During preliminary investigations, the defendants had confessed to everything. However, during their interrogation before the judge, the defendants denied all that had been attributed to them in the preliminary investigation, claiming that beating and torture were used to extract their statements, a claim later confirmed by the Military Public Prosecutor. The Investigating Judge of the Military Court therefore nullified the defendants' initial statements in accordance with Article 4 of law 65/2017, as they were given under torture, which impedes the defendants from being prosecuted for terrorism in the absence of supporting evidence. The Associate of the Military Public Prosecutor filed a cassation application before the Criminal Court of Cassation against this decision. CLDH represented the defendants A.A. and R.A. before this Court. On 1/6/2023, the Court of Cassation of the Sixth Criminal Chamber issued a decision confirming and concluding the decision of the Judge of the Military Court, as it was determined that there existed no evidence supporting the alleged crimes against the defendants and that the invocation of the preliminary statement was not permissible under the provisions of Law 65/2017, given the established presence of torture inflicted upon them. Despite Lebanon having ratified the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol, having adopted Law 65/2017, having established the National Committee against Torture in 2019 and having amended Article 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, practices of torture have remained prevalent and have been ignored as perpetrators are not being held accountable by the competent judicial and security authorities. The decision of the Court of Cassation constitutes a remarkable development in the punishment of torture and holding perpetrators accountable regardless of the offense attributed to the detainee and the responsible security agency, and sets a precedent for future decisions. Moreover, Law 65/2017 should be amended, as it does not conform to international standards such as the referral of torture cases to the military courts instead of the civilian judiciary.

Lebanon deputy central-bank governors could resign if no new chief appointed

The successor of Central Bank's governor Salameh is yet to be appointed, less than a month before the latter's term ends. Several sources confirm that all four deputy governors could resign if the Central Bank does not have an appointed chief after Salameh, raising the prospect of a leaderless central bank amid a financial crisis. These sources spoke after a statement signed by all four deputies, saying the central bank could not be run in a caretaker capacity at such a sensitive time. This comes as a probable attempt to push for the nomination of a successor or even to keep Salameh after his term. The central bank governor is named by a cabinet decree for a six-year mandate, based on the finance minister's recommendation. If no name for the position is put forward, the first vice-governor is supposed to take over. Salameh has been accused of bearing a major responsibility in Lebanon's economic and financial crisis, which could be further aggravated in the absence of any effective power at the head of the Central Bank. As the government is in a caretaker capacity since May 2022, many top-leading administration positions are vacant, further hindering the State's ability to cope with the crisis.

Thursday
06 July 2023

Friday
07 July 2023

At least one dead, 5 wounded after shooting inside Bekaa mosque

In Bar Elias, a shooting inside a mosque during prayers left at least 1 person dead and five wounded, a security official said. More gunfire broke out later between the Lebanese army and the shooting suspect, who was wounded in the exchange and later died. The man killed and the five wounded were all Syrian citizens, as the city is home to many Syrian refugees. The origin of the shooting was reportedly a personal dispute. A sit-in was organized the same day, and the house of the suspect was set on fire.

Saturday and Sunday
08 and 09 July 2023

Lebanese authorities thwart 3 migration attempt to Europe, arrest hundreds

The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Internal Security Forces (ISF) conducted 3 operations to prevent hundreds from leaving Lebanon by boat towards Italy. The LAF reported that its Intelligence Directorate arrested 5 Syrians in Deir Ammar for preparing a migration journey by sea, as well as 49 Syrians who were heading to migrate. It later announced that it arrested 7 people in Bebnine, Akkar, for organizing the migration journey. The ISF also reported that it led 2 operations, arresting respectively 111 and 120 Syrians who were heading towards the coast to try to migrate. In previous similar interceptions, the Syrians arrested were forcibly deported to Syria and handed over to the Syrian authorities. Despite the ISF presenting the interceptions as humanitarian, they force would-be migrants to take higher risks in their migration attempts and to rely even more on smugglers. They also violate the people's human right to leave any country and to seek international protection in Europe.



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