



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

25 SEPTEMBER - 01 OCTOBER, 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
25 September 2023

IMF: Austerity Loan Conditions Risk Undermining Rights

The International Monetary Fund is setting conditions for its loans that risk undermining people's economic, social, and cultural rights, Human Rights Watch highlights in a report analyzing loans approved from March 2020 until March 2023 to 38 countries. The majority of these loans are conditioned on austerity policies, which reduce government spending or increase regressive taxes in ways likely to harm rights. The IMF's own internal research indicates that these policies are generally not effective in reducing debt, although it is their chief objective. The UN Human Rights Council has adopted guiding principles on economic recovery measures, prohibiting austerity unless strict criteria are met and instructing governments and financial institutions to conduct and publish human rights impact assessments. HRW reports that measures to improve social protection fall short of human rights standards, especially as IMF-promoted programs include means-testing, which has proved to exclude large segments of the population living in precarious conditions and face high error rates, corruption, and social mistrust. HRW therefore calls on the IMF to adopt "a new approach that makes the fulfillment of economic and social rights the starting point".

Joint Palestinian security force deployed to hot spots at Ain el-Hilweh

On Monday, a Palestinian joint security force was deployed to two places in Ain el-Hilweh, in the framework of the implementation of a ceasefire agreement reached on September 14th. The force includes 45 representatives of several Palestinian groups involved in the camp, including Hamas, Osbat Al-Ansar, and Al-Haraka Al-Islamiyya Al-Mujahida. It is aimed at being deployed at contact points between areas of control of opposing groups to serve as separation forces. The Palestinian Joint Action Committee will hold a meeting with groups involved in the conflict to arrange the simultaneous withdrawal of their forces from the UNRWA-run schools, where armed militants are still barricaded. It remains uncertain if the damage to the schools is too significant to allow the start of the new academic year. Moreover, UNRWA must first clear the schools from the remnants of the battles, including bullets, possible bombs, and mines. The Agency would be considering a "double shift" mechanism in schools outside the camp if previous schools were found to be too damaged. Following the withdrawal of militants from the schools, the groups are expected to hand over those wanted for the assassination of the Fatah leader Mohammed Al-Armushi in late July to the Lebanese authorities.

Tuesday
26 September 2023

Cyprus claims it is on alert for 'hundreds' of Syrian refugees coming from Lebanon

After the arrival of a boat carrying 95 individuals, Cypriot authorities publicly alleged that they were on alert, fearing that the boat was the first of the organized departure of hundreds of individuals. Based on interviews conducted with people who recently arrived, Cyprus claimed that 500 people gathered at a certain point in Lebanon and were waiting to enter boats to sail to Cyprus. The alleged high number was attributed to favorable weather conditions. The Cypriot Interior Minister entered into contact with his Lebanese counterpart, Mawlawi, to organize their interception and prevent them from reaching Cyprus. The Interior Ministry claimed that "for every boat reaching Cyprus, three or four get intercepted by the Lebanese authorities". The coordination has earned criticism from human rights groups, which say that denying migrants the chance to apply for asylum in Cyprus is a violation of its international obligations. Deporting Syrians from Cyprus to Lebanon also exposes them to the risk of chain refoulement to Syria.

Wednesday
27 September 2023

Cyprus promises support to Lebanon to prevent migration

The Cypriot Minister of the Interior Konstantinos Ioannou sent a letter to his Lebanese counterpart Bassam Mawlawi proposing support to prevent individuals from migrating from Lebanese shores. He offered to donate 6 speedboats (two 12m 12 knots by the end of 2023 and four 30 knots by the end of 2024). Trainings of the Lebanese Armed Forces will also be organized and funded by Cyprus. Ioannou additionally proposed establishing joint patrols of the Lebanese Navy and the Cyprus Coastal Police within Lebanese territorial waters using Cypriot vessels, from the port of Beirut, to intercept more people attempting to leave. Finally, Ioannou recommends Lebanon jointly submit a proposal to the EU requesting funds for the development of a practical and operational partnership between the two countries to prevent migration.

Lebanese army says it exchanged smoke-bomb fire with Israel

The Lebanese army stated that it had exchanged smoke bombs with Israeli troops over the border, the second such incident in a week. It reported that Israeli troops had fired smoke bombs at a Lebanese patrol that was accompanying workers removing "infringements" that had been set up by the Israelis north of the Blue Line. The Israeli military also said it used "riot dispersal means" against the Lebanese army "in the area of the Blue Line" and that Lebanese troops fired tear gas grenades. Five days prior, the Lebanese army had also stated that tear gas was exchanged with Israeli forces over the Blue Line.

UNRWA forced to postpone start of school year in the south

The UN Palestine Refugees Agency announced that "due to violence and clashes in the Ein El Hilweh camp", it will postpone the beginning of the school year for more than 11,000 children. It reminded that all 8 UNRWA-run schools inside the camp had been taken over by armed groups and suffered "significant destruction and damage". The Agency said it was "working to find alternatives" to ensure the children's right to education is respected.

Thursday
28 September 2023

No, Syria Is Still Not Safe for Refugee Returns, responds Human Rights Watch to Cyprus

On September 15, Cyprus Interior Minister Ioannou called on the EU to reevaluate whether Syria is safe for returns so that asylum seekers could be deported there. This call was announced the day before the UN's Human Rights Chief warned of worsening security in Syria. Human Rights Watch has continuously documented human rights violations on returnees, including as recently as last July. The human rights organization reported that returnees had been tortured in Syrian military intelligence's custody and conscripted to serve in Syria's military reserve force. "The Assad government's long-standing intolerance and suppression of dissent, and its suspicion and hostility toward Syrians whom it believes opposed it, means fear-of-persecution claims of anyone who fled the country must be seriously considered," recalled HRW Refugee and Migrant Rights Division's Director, Bill Frelick. The threat of generalized violence and security, as well as the threat of personal persecution, should prevent States from deporting individuals to Syria or they will violate their non-refoulement obligations.

Lebanese Army kills van driver smuggling Syrians into the country

The driver of a van being used to smuggle people from Syria into Lebanon was killed by a Lebanese Army patrol. The driver, reportedly a 35-year-old Lebanese from the border town of Mashta Hammoud, was injured by shots from the Lebanese army and lost control of the vehicle. Army patrols have been on the rise in recent weeks after officials publicly claimed that attempts by Syrians to enter Lebanon increased. The Lebanese Army's Land Border Regiments, in cooperation with its intelligence services, have intensified their efforts to monitor known illegal border crossings. Their operations include patrols and mobile security checkpoints along the border to inspect vehicles and check the identities of the people they are carrying. Since mid-August, the Lebanese Army reportedly arrested more than 6,000 individuals while they attempted to enter Lebanon from Syria. The Lebanese security apparatus also increased pressure on non-governmental organizations, blaming them for providing support without being properly authorized by Lebanese authorities.

Lebanese children 'miss out' on education as crisis takes toll

Lack of funding for the school system has precipitated repeated teachers' strikes and school closures, resulting in children being increasingly pulled out of the formal learning system and in some cases being forced to work. UNICEF reports that "a growing number of families" can no longer afford "the cost of education including transport to school, food, textbooks, stationery, and clothes". 15% of households have pulled their children out of schools, UNICEF reported in June, up from 10 percent a year ago. This has a particular impact on girls, as it increases the risk of child marriage. The education ministry largely relies on donor funding, mainly from the World Bank and the UN. Human Rights Watch recently reported that the number of teaching days fell from 180 in 2016 to about 60 in the past two years. It criticized the ministry for having "no plan" to secure the funds needed for schools to remain open without interruption.

Friday
29 September 2023

Generator prices up more than ever in September

For the 4th consecutive month, private generator prices have increased, reaching their highest level in dollars in the year. The energy minister has established the price of kilowatt-hour at 36,605 L.L., an increase of 5.5% compared to August. In dollars, this price (0.41\$) is higher than the previous record of 0.39\$ reached in January and August.

Saturday and Sunday
30 September and 01
October 2023

[A health crisis in the making: How Lebanon's biggest landfill is making everyone sick](#)

Bourj Hammoud's landfill is currently the biggest waste dumping site in the country. It emerged as a response to the 2015 waste crisis, after which the Lebanese government reclaimed over 280,000 square meters, equivalent to more than 39 football fields to establish this landfill. As much as 88% to 90% of the generated waste in Lebanon can be recycled, pushing many, including children, to work there. Several children have reported being beaten up by older people who want to steal the waste they collected. Both those working with trash and those living near waste suffer from health issues. The summer is particularly dangerous, as, due to the heat, chemicals from the landfill evaporate into the air, a situation likely to worsen due to the climate crisis. These gases are associated with higher rates of lung cancer, skin cancer, or depression. The landfill also has dramatic consequences on the water: it contaminates the tap water and nearby sea, impacting the number and quality of fish.

['Freedoms march' under attack in Beirut](#)

A "freedom march" in Riad Solh Square in Beirut came under attack by individuals in civilian clothes who had arrived on motorcycles. Several people were injured in the incident, especially as assailants were seen kicking some protesters. The latter were later followed by a group of motorcycles when they tried to escape the violence. Assailants were also heard spreading insults against the LGBT community. Organized by human rights organizations, the march was called the "freedom march" as an official stance against authorities complicit in suppressing various freedoms, including individual, press, or union. Officers from security agencies have also actively prevented individuals from filming the event, including by arresting at least one participant, ordering the photographers to lower their cameras, and forcibly lowering them with their hands. A number of journalists suffered from bruises as a result of severe beatings from assailants and security forces. Protesters reported that the security forces were colluding with extremist groups by order of Interior Minister Bassam al-Mawlawi, who is reportedly known for his stance toward such gatherings, while others denied any collusion.



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