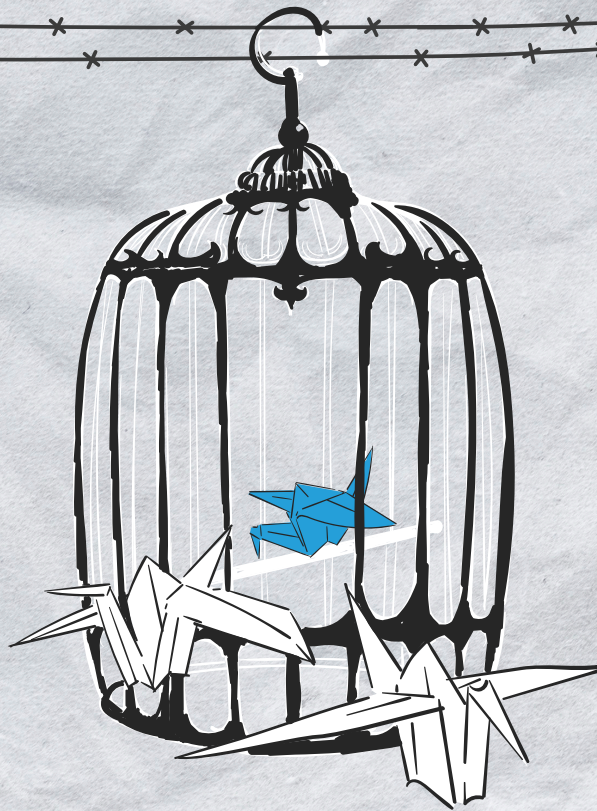


# INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN LEBANON

x x x

Key issues, statistics, and recommendations  
based on **Law 422/2002** and **child protection standards**







## What Is a Child?

A *child* is anyone **under the age of 18**.

Every child no matter their nationality, gender, or background, has the same right to protection, education, and care.

This definition comes from the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, Article 1)**, which Lebanon has ratified.

## What Is Institutional Violence?

*Institutional violence* happens when **systems meant to protect people, like schools, prisons, or social services, end up harming them instead.**

It can take many forms:



A child being detained in poor or unsafe conditions.



A refugee child being deported without protection.



A lack of proper healthcare, education, or legal aid from the State.

When these failures are repeated and ignored, they become **violence through neglect** a form of abuse by the system itself.

## What Is Law 422/2002?

**Law 422/2002** is Lebanon's *Juvenile Protection Law*.

It was created to protect children who are:

- **In conflict with the law**  
(accused or convicted of an offense, whether a crime or a misdemeanor).
- **At risk**  
because of abuse, neglect, or dangerous living conditions.

The law gives judge the power to:

Apply alternative non-custodial measures when it comes to minors, as detention should be used only as a last resort.

However, many parts of this law are **not fully applied**, meaning children still face detention, unfair trials, and unsafe conditions, which directly leads to **institutional violence**.

# CHALLENGES FACING CHILDREN IN LEBANON



## Overcrowded and Unsafe Detention Facilities

Numerous minors remain detained in police stations despite being arrested pursuant to judicial warrants, rather than being transferred to the Warwar rehabilitation center for minors as required by law.

This practice results in their deprivation of essential social and psychological support services, constituting a violation of their rights to protection, dignity, and appropriate care.

## Lack of Rehabilitation and Basic Services

Most detention facilities lack proper rehabilitation programs or basic living necessities. Children often depend on NGOs for food, hygiene, and mental health support, services that should be provided by the State.

This lack of care and reintegration opportunities deepens the cycle of exclusion and neglect.



**Source:** Prison Insider Report, 2023 / UNICEF Lebanon Situation Report, Jan–Jun 2025

**Source:** CLDH – Lebanese Center for Human Rights, “Prison Conditions and the Role of Civil Society,” 2023  
UNICEF and MoPH, Child Protection and Welfare Program Report, 2024–2025

## No Legal Protection During Interrogation

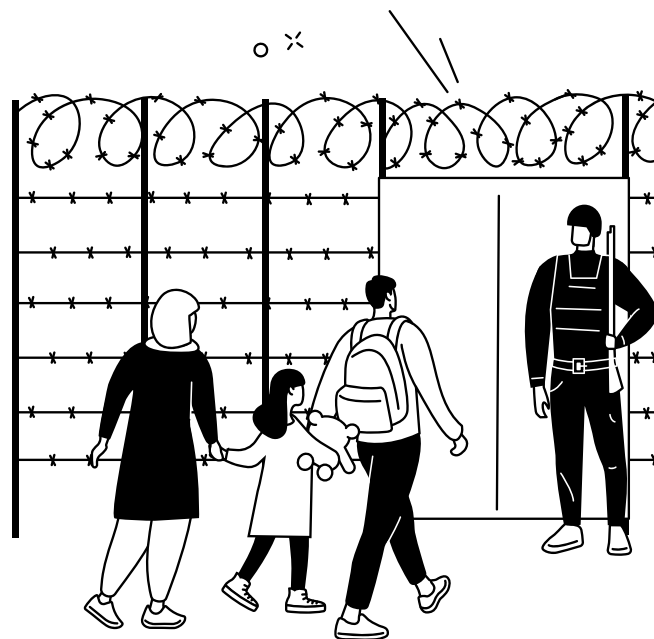
Many children are interrogated without a lawyer or guardian present. Without proper legal support, minors face intimidation, and sometimes coerced confessions. This violates both Lebanese law and international child protection standards.

## Forced Deportations and Family Separation

Syrian refugee children face serious risks of being deported without their parents or guardians. These forced returns put them in danger and breach Lebanon's obligations to protect all children on its territory, regardless of nationality.

## Role of Social Workers

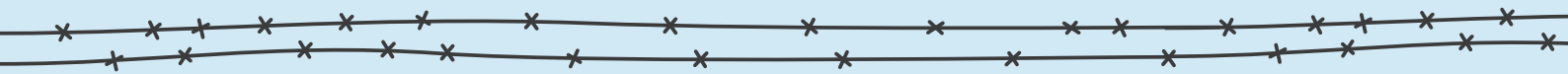
Social workers often fail to conduct the social investigations required when a child is arrested. Without their reports, judges may issue inappropriate sentences, including unnecessary detention. Strengthening the role of social workers is key to ensuring justice decisions are humane and child-centered.



**Source:** Law 422/2002 / Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 24 (2019)

**Source:** Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: Refugees at Risk of Forced Return," 2024  
Reuters, "Lebanon Plans to Deport Syrian Detainees," April 2025  
UNHCR Lebanon Protection Update, May 2025

**Source:** Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, Child Protection Division Operational Review, 2023



## **KEY STATISTICS:** INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE IN NUMBERS



## Justice and Detention

- Children in Lebanon can face **criminal responsibility as early as 7 years old**<sup>(1)</sup>, far below the international minimum of 14
- **Juvenile detention is overused**<sup>(2)</sup>, and minors are often held with adults in overcrowded facilities.
- The **Warwar Rehabilitation Center**, opened in 2025, can host only **100 minors**<sup>(3)</sup>, highlighting the gap between capacity and need.
- In most cases, **NGOs (not the State) provide basic services** inside detention facilities.

## Violence and Neglect

- At least **7 minors were killed** in shootings or family feuds across the country <sup>(4)</sup>.
- **5 children** died in home or facility fires (Akkar and Hermel), and **1 child** was killed in an explosion involving a military vehicle <sup>(5)</sup>.
- **1 infant** died in a nursery that lacked medical supervision <sup>(6)</sup>.

## Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

- Reports of child sexual abuse continue despite a slight decrease in total cases.
- Among the most alarming:
  - A **father arrested** for abusing his son using narcotic pills <sup>(7)</sup>.
  - A **security officer** arrested for harassing a **6-year-old Syrian girl** <sup>(8)</sup>.
  - **15 girls (ages 6–7)** sexually harassed during a school trip in Metn.



## War and Displacement <sup>(9)</sup>

- **At least 10 children were killed** by Israeli attacks or remnants of war between January and June 2025.
  - Victims included a **7-year-old** in South Lebanon, **two sisters (7 and 8)** in Saida, and several teens in Houla and Nabatieh.
- The conflict displaced nearly **900,000 people**, including **400,000 school-aged children**.
- Many displaced children live in shelters with **no access to education or psychosocial care**.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing <sup>(10)</sup>

- **70% of caregivers** report children showing signs of **anxiety and nervousness**.
- **62%** report symptoms of **depression** among children.
- **1 in 3 children** in Lebanon experiences **crisis-level hunger**.
- **45% of children** in the Bekaa and **51%** in Baalbek-Hermel live in **severe food poverty**.
- **25% of children** remain **out of school**, many due to displacement and insecurity.



## RECOMMENDATIONS





## Strengthen the Role of Social Workers

Ensure that every child in conflict with the law is immediately supported by a **social worker** from the moment of arrest.

Social workers must:

- Attend all interrogations.
- Conduct and submit a **social background report** before any decision is made.
- Be available at all detention centers without delay.



## Raise the Age of Criminal Responsibility

Lebanon's current **age of criminal responsibility is 7 years old**, far below international standards.

The minimum should be **raised to 14 years**, and **detention should be prohibited for anyone under 14**.

This aligns Lebanon with **global child justice standards** and helps shift the system from punishment to rehabilitation.



## Apply Alternative Measures Instead of Detention

Detention should always be the **last resort**.

Judges should first consider **alternative measures** such as:

- Community service,
- Counseling or rehabilitation programs,
- Family or social supervision.



## Guarantee Legal Protection from the Start

Every child should have access to a **lawyer** from the very first stage of investigation not only during trial.

The absence of a lawyer during interrogation can lead to intimidation, or violations of due process.



## Improve Detention Conditions

All detention centers for minors must be:

- Separate from adult prisons,
- Supervised by the Ministry of Justice – Juvenile Department as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs, in accordance with the child's best interest
- Adequately resourced with healthcare, education, and psychosocial support.



## Institutional Oversight and Specialized Support

Establish a **monitoring and accountability system** for social workers and detention facilities.

Each center should have:

- Full-time trained social specialists,
- Regular evaluations by the Juvenile Department,
- Specialized prosecutors and judges for child cases.



## Legal Reform and Oversight

Amend Law **422/2002** to:

Explicitly define the penalty of nullity (invalidity) for investigations held without a social worker or lawyer.

Remove vague exceptions such as “extraordinary circumstances” that undermine child protection laws.



<sup>1</sup> **Source:** Consortium for Street Children. (2020, November). Lebanon Status Offences. Retrieved from <https://www.streetchildren.org/legal-atlas/map/lebanon/status-offences/are-children-criminalised-for-vagrancy-loitering-truancy-or-similar-activities/>

<sup>2</sup> **Source:** UNODC. (2003, December). JUVENILE JUSTICE INITIATIVES IN LEBANON. Retrieved from <https://css.unodc.org/pdf/crime/forum/forum3.pdf#page=108>

<sup>3</sup> **Source:** L'Orient Today. (2025, May 29). Lebanon's first rehabilitation center for minors opens its doors in Baabda. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1462202/lebanons-first-rehabilitation-center-for-minors-opens-its-doors-in-baabda.html>

<sup>4</sup> **Source:** L'Orient Le Jour. (2025, January 3). Two teenagers killed, and one man seriously injured in a large fire at a gas station in Wadi Khaled. Retrieved from <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1441976/deux-adolescents-tues-et-un-homme-grievement-blesse-dans-un-grand-incendie-dans-une-station-service-de-wadi-khaled.html>

<sup>5</sup> **Source:** Arab News Japan. (2025, April 21). Southern Lebanon blast kills army officer, soldiers, mother, and child. Retrieved from [https://www.arabnews.jp/en/middle-east/article\\_145739/](https://www.arabnews.jp/en/middle-east/article_145739/)

<sup>6</sup> **Source:** This is Beirut. (2025, April 30). Infant's Death at Keserwan Nursery Sparks Official Closure and Investigation. Retrieved from <https://thisisbeirut.com.lb/articles/1314252/infants-death-at-keserwan-nursery-sparks-official-closure-and-investigation>

<sup>7</sup> **Source:** I'm Lebanon. (2025, January 13). In Halba... he drugged his minor son and tried to harass him! Retrieved from <https://www.imlebanon.org/2025/01/13/isf-halba-2/>

<sup>8</sup> **Source:** MTV. (2025, March 27). Watch: 49-Year-Old Man Harasses 6-Year-Old Girl. Retrieved from <https://www.mtv.com.lb/en/News/Local/1560067/watch--49-year-old-man-harasses-6-year-old-girl> and L'Orient Today (2025, March 27) General Security agent arrested for allegedly molesting six-year-old Syrian girl. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1453593/general-security-agent-arrested-for-allegedly-molesting-six-year-old-syrian-girl.html>

<sup>9</sup> **Source:** NNA. (2025, February 5). Child succumbs to injuries from Israeli drone attack in south Lebanon. Retrieved from <https://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/justice-law/757141/child-succumbs-to-injuries-from-israeli-drone-atta#:~:text=NNA%20%2D%20Seven%2Dyear%2Dold,drone%20on%20January%2029%2C%202025.>

-L'Orient Today. (2025, February 7). 4 killed in explosion of Israeli booby-trapped furniture in Tayr Harfa, airstrike south of Saida. Retrieved from <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1446981/4-killed-in-explosion-of-israeli-booby-trapped-furniture-in-tayr-harfa-airstrike-south-of-saida.html>

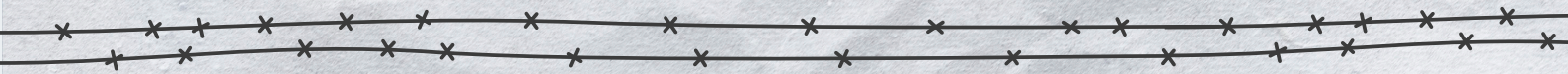
-L'Orient Today. (2025, February 17). Houla residents detained by Israeli army escape. <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1448122/six-civilians-held-in-houla-israel-refuses-to-allow-army-and-unifil-to-evacuate-them.html>

-Naharnet. (2025, February 26). 16-year-old Lea joins children killed in Israeli ceasefire violations. Retrieved from <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/311256-16-year-old-lea-joins-children-killed-in-israeli-ceasefire-violations>

<sup>10</sup> **Source:** UNICEF. (2025, February 28). Decline in children's mental health, nutrition and education after the war in Lebanon: UNICEF. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/decline-childrens-mental-health-nutrition-and-education-after-war-lebanon-unicef>

The Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) produced this factsheet with financial support from the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The contents of this factsheet are the sole responsibility of CLDH and do not necessarily reflect the views of OMCT.





**OMCT**  
SOS-Torture Network



 [www.alefliban.org](http://www.alefliban.org)  
 ALEFLiban



 [www.cldh-lebanon.org](http://www.cldh-lebanon.org)  
 cldh.ngo  cldh.ngo