



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

29 MAY - 04 JUNE, 2023



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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
29 May 2023

Saudi abducted in Lebanon freed in 'special' army operation

Lebanese troops rescued a Saudi citizen kidnapped over the weekend in Beirut, the army said. The man reportedly had been held for ransom. A statement by the Lebanese military said that Mushari Al-Mutairi was released in a "special operation" along the Lebanon-Syria border, where the kidnapers had held him hostage. Al-Mutairi was kidnapped after midnight on Saturday in Beirut. Saudi TV station Al-Ekhabariya said that the kidnapers demanded a \$400,000 ransom for Al-Mutairi, who works for Saudia, the Kingdom's national airline. A security source told Arab News that Al-Mutairi was leaving a Beirut nightclub, Karizma, on the waterfront and was driving home in the Aramoun area when he was forced by five armed masked men inside their four-wheel drive. The kidnapers then headed toward the Bekaa Valley, to the town of Qasr on the Lebanese-Syrian border, where there are many illegal crossings and gangs smuggling people, goods, and prohibited items, the source said. Those who kidnapped Al-Mutairi in Beirut were separate from the group that held the Saudi in the border area, he added.

Tuesday
30 May 2023

Lebanese public workers on strike amid currency collapse

Lebanon's public administration workers started a two-week strike on Monday, calling for urgent action to address their devalued salaries and demand a transport allowance increase. Public sector employees are paid in the Lebanese pound, which has lost about 98 percent of its value since an economic meltdown began in 2019, resulting in the steep depreciation of salaries. "The whole of public administration in Lebanon is closed," Ibrahim Nahal, a member of the League of Public Administration Employees, told The National. Workers are demanding an increase in salaries to "live in dignity", a fair and just transportation stipend, and the return of healthcare coverage and social benefits so public workers "don't have to die at the entrance of hospitals", Mr. Nahal said. In April, Lebanon's caretaker cabinet raised public sector salaries and the nation's minimum wage in a bid to address growing discontent. The salaries of public sector workers were increased fourfold, but the increase was capped at 50 million Lebanese pounds (approximately \$530) a month. The cabinet also took steps to address the transportation issue, with costs often exceeding salaries. The measures were considered disappointing as they were not pegged to the dollar. A volatile exchange rate makes any increase in the local currency almost worthless.

Thursday
01 June 2023

At least 3 Syrian activists and defectors 'at risk of deportation' from Lebanon

At least three Syrian activists and defectors are currently being held by Lebanese authorities and are at risk of deportation to Syria, where rights groups fear they may be subject to arbitrary arrest and possibly torture. The three Syrians, whose names are being withheld for their safety, are wanted by the Syrian regime, Fadel Abdul Ghany, the founder of the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), told The New Arab. Abdul Ghany added that the three activists and defectors are among "dozens" of Syrian refugees arrested by Lebanese authorities in recent days. One of those held was initially arrested while attempting to renew his residency papers before being transferred to a detention center in Beirut and threatened with deportation. At least two of those held are registered refugees with UNHCR. The Syrian activists have been convicted of terrorism in Syrian courts, Tarek Shindeb, a lawyer familiar with their cases, told TNA. Many activists were charged with "terrorism" during the Syrian uprising for engaging in political dissent and disappeared into detention centers, where they faced "inhuman conditions."

Protesters object summoning of journalists before security agencies

Journalist Hayat Mirshad refused to appear before the Cybercrime Bureau for interrogation over a libel and slander complaint filed against her by theater director Joe Kodeih, who is accused of harassment. A protest in solidarity with Hayat was held at the Palace of Justice, objecting to the summoning of journalists before security agencies. Protestors also denounced the judiciary's implicit protection of harassers, as it prosecutes journalists and activists who defend survivors. Mirshad's attorney, Farouk al-Moghrabi, said she did not appear before the judicial police because it lacks the proper authority to hear journalists. Judge Zaher Hamadeh is expected to refer the case to the Publications Court or to proceed with it before the criminal court— which would be in violation of the law, given that the complaint relates to material posted on a website. Kodeih filed the complaint after the website Sharika wa Laken, which Mirshad is Editor in Chief of, published the testimonies of 18 women, including minors, documenting how Kodeih harassed them in 2020. The website also urged Monnot Theater to boycott the director.

Friday
02 June 2023

William Noun and Peter Bou Saab summoned for questioning

William Noun and Peter Bou Saab, whose relatives were killed in the Beirut port explosion, were summoned for questioning on charges of "vandalism," their lawyer confirmed. On Thursday, a dozen relatives of the blast victims demonstrated outside the Beirut courthouse and some of them, including Noun and Bou Saab, burned tires. Noun and Bou Saab are asked to appear at the Verdun police station on June 7. The summon was ordered by Judge Ziad Abi Haidar, the attorney general at the Beirut Court of Appeal.

Saturday and Sunday
03 and 04 June 2023

Gaddafi's Son on hunger strike in Lebanon, protesting detention without trial

A son of Libya's late leader Muammar Gaddafi, who has been held in Lebanon for more than seven years, began a hunger strike to protest his detention without trial, his lawyer said. Hannibal Gaddafi has been held in Lebanon since 2015 after he was kidnapped from neighboring Syria where he had been living as a political refugee. He was abducted by Lebanese militants demanding information about the fate of a Shiite cleric who went missing in Libya 45 years ago. Gaddafi was later taken by Lebanese authorities and has been held in a Beirut jail without trial. Attorney Paul Romanos said his client started the hunger strike Saturday morning and "he is serious and will continue with it until the end." Gaddafi issued a statement describing his conditions. "How can a political prisoner be held without a fair trial all these years?" Gadhafi wrote in his statement.