



HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

13 - 19 NOVEMBER, 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

13 November 2023

US warns Israel against escalating Lebanon fighting

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin reportedly warned Israel against escalating its fight with Hezbollah, stressing the need to keep fighting contained in Gaza. Some in the US administration are concerned that Israel is trying to provoke Hezbollah and create a pretext for a broader war in Lebanon. Austin called his Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant sharing these concerns, adding that the tensions could develop into a regional war. He reportedly asked Gallant for clarification on Israeli strikes on Lebanon, with Gallant responding that “Hezbollah is playing with fire”. Although fighting has been mostly limited to the border region, there have been instances where Israel has broken the so-called ‘rules of engagement’ by bombing north of the Litani River.

Tuesday

14 November 2023

Israeli Strike in Lebanon an Apparent War Crime, says HRW

Human Rights Watch released a statement calling for an “unlawful Israeli strike on a family in a car” in Lebanon to be “investigated as an apparent war crime”. On November 5, 2023, 3 girls (14, 12, and 10 years old) and their grandmother were killed and their mother was wounded in an Israeli attack while traveling from south Lebanon to Beirut. HRW highlights Israel’s “reckless disregard for civilian life” and “failure to distinguish between combatants and civilians” in violation of the laws of war. Under the latter, all parties must do everything feasible to verify that targets are valid military objectives and must, in case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, consider that they are. Considering that “Israeli authorities have long failed to credibly investigate their own serious abuses”, HRW calls on Israel’s allies to push for accountability for unlawful acts committed by the Israeli military.

A month after Issam Abdallah’s death, journalists targeted again by Israeli shelling

Journalists in South Lebanon were once again targeted by Israeli shellings. In the Southern village of Yaroun, a group of about 30 journalists from MTV, al-Jadeed, NBN, Al-Jazeera, and Al-Akhbar was reporting on border tensions when 2 missiles exploded a few meters from them, slightly injuring one journalist from Al-Jazeera. The Lebanese Information Minister called this attack a “deliberate and direct targeting of journalists”. The journalists were close to their cars, clearly identifiable with “Press” on them. A surveillance drone was reportedly flying over them at the time of the shelling.

Wednesday
15 November 2023

Lebanon's struggling hospitals could collapse if war escalates, doctors fear

Caregivers fear hospitals are unable to handle a high number of injured in case cross-border tensions with Israel further increase. The economic crisis left hospitals barely able to cope in peacetime and with little support from the State. An escalating conflict on the southern border with Israel is pushing the healthcare sector into a new crisis. The director of the Marjayoun Hospital reported that they had "already had to treat 51 people wounded by explosions in the last month or so. [...] More than that and we'd be overwhelmed". Hospitals also face a shortage of workers, as 40% of Lebanon's doctors and 30% of the nurses have left the country. Caregivers also fear that hospitals could be targeted by Israeli shellings. An Israeli shell already hit a small hospital near the border last week but failed to explode.

Lebanon releases suspect in Irish peacekeeper killing

A man suspected of shooting and killing an Irish UN peacekeeper in South Lebanon has been released after a year in detention. On December 15, 2022, a soldier of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon was killed and 3 others were injured when their convoy came under fire in South Lebanon. One man was detained after being handed over to the authorities by Hezbollah, while other suspects have yet to be arrested. A military court ordered the release of the only man arrested, considering that "he may have opened fire...but there is no conclusive evidence proving he was the one who injured the Irish peacekeeper, causing his death". Lebanon's justice system has long been hampered by political interference, preventing the understanding of truth and the accountability of crimes, especially when linked to political parties. The convoy was attacked on its way from southern Lebanon to Beirut but apparently took a detour outside the UNIFIL. Initial reports said angry residents confronted the peacekeepers, but the indictment concluded that the shooting was a targeted attack.

Thursday
16 November 2023

The secret plan to "screw up" the investigation on Salameh's embezzlement

Former Central Bank governor Riad Salameh and his relatives, in particular Marianne Hoayek, have planned to pay more than EUR 20 million to "stop all Lebanese or French attack" against them and "screw up" the judicial files, French media Mediapart reveals. Marianne Hoayek wrote several notes in which she details corruption plans to replace judges, accelerate procedures, and discredit the files, eventually leading to "sabotage". Marianne Hoayek claimed that such notes never came into practice, which seems contradicted by the mention "paid till now" under some amounts. Mediapart also reveals that Riad Salameh intervened to prevent the transfer of a judicial file on him from France to Lebanon. Riad Salameh and Marianne Hoayek reportedly were helped by Wiam Wahhab, former Lebanese Minister of Environment.

Friday
17 November 2023

46,000 internally displaced in Lebanon, UN says

The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that 46,325 people were internally displaced in Lebanon as of November 14, following "armed confrontations" at the Southern border. The figure shows a new rise of 76% of the displacement documented, after a stabilization at the beginning of November. It is likely that the trends do not only reflect actual displacements, but that they are also impacted by IOM's methodology and ways of gathering data. Sour is the governorate hosting the most internally displaced people (IDP), with approximately 14,000 persons. 73% of IDPs fled the governorate of Nabatieh and 24% the South governorate. "64% of IDS are currently living with host families, while 27 have opted for rental housing", IOM reports. Only 2% live in collective shelter.

Lebanese Journalist Layal Alekhtiar wanted by military for interviewing Israeli army spokesperson

Layal Alekhtiar, a Lebanese journalist working for the Saudi channel al-Arabiya, announced on X that the Lebanese military prosecutor had issued a warrant for her search, allegedly after she interviewed Avichay Adraee, an Israeli army spokesperson. Lebanese citizens are legally forbidden from contacting Israelis. Alekhtiar claimed that the warrant was a “political persecution in the form of judicial oppression”, initiated at the behest of individuals “close to Hezbollah”. Following her interview, the journalist faced a wave of criticism, particularly for addressing the spokesperson as “estez” (mister). A group of journalists and former prisoners in Israel petitioned for a judicial inquiry against Alekhtiar with the military tribunal, resulting in the warrant. The Samir Kassir Foundation condemned the court’s actions, stating that “journalists can only be judged as such in front of the press tribunal”, not by a military institution.

State Shura nullifies Mawlawi’s decision regarding August 4 notifications

Following a ruling by Judge Fadi Elias, the State Shura Council annulled the decision of Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi, who refrained from notifying ministers and MPs accused in the Beirut Port explosion investigation of the dates of their hearings set by the judicial investigator, Judge Tarek Bitar. Elias instructed Mawlawi to carry out the notifications and charged the ministry all fees and costs. The study prepared by Judge Carl Irani, the advisor to the council, noted that Mawlawi’s decision “obstructs the course of justice and paralyzes the judiciary” stressing that “the minister’s discretionary authority should not be dispensed arbitrarily or maliciously, but must be exercised within the limits of the law.” In September 2021, Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi, who is also a judge, refused to notify Prime Minister Hassan Diab as well as former ministers Nohad Machnouk, Ghazi Zeaiter, and Ali Hassan Khalil to appear before Judge Tarek Bitar, thus protecting these defendants in the August 4 crime.

Beirut Bar’s recommendations to cease impunity in penal justice

The Beirut Bar published a report presenting the findings of a 2-year-long effort to find solutions to strategies used by the political ruling class to avoid any accountability and judicial procedures. The report is to be sent to the Parliament’s Commission of Administration and Justice. As part of abusive appeals, politicians often ask that judges are replaced. In the current law, when a person starts such a procedure, the judge must stop examining the judicial file, resulting in the investigation being paused, possibly for months or years. Beirut Bar recommends that this period is limited to 5 days, until a jurisdiction decides whether the request is serious or not. If the jurisdiction does not provide a decision, it would be considered to have refused the request, and the judge will be allowed to continue their action. The Bar recommends the same system for actions in State responsibility against judges’ decisions. Currently, starting such an action suspends all judicial work for an indefinite time, because it must be examined by the Court of Cassation, which lost its quorum 2 years ago. The Bar recommends that if the Court does not rule within 5 days, the judge would be allowed to continue their work.

Saturday and Sunday
18 and 19 November
2023

Israeli drone strikes aluminium plant in Nabatieh

An Israeli raid on Saturday targeted an aluminum factory near Nabatieh, about 15 kilometers north of the border between Israel and Lebanon, in a rare strike hitting relatively deep inside Lebanese territory. Two civilians were injured and taken to hospital. This strike is the first in the Nabatieh governorate since the 2006 war, marking a new step in the tensions between Israel and Hezbollah.



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