



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

20 - 26 February, 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.***

***The articles shared in this brief are the liability of their respective news outlets and do not reflect the views of CLDH.***



## LEBANON

**Tuesday**  
21 Feb 2023

### **Lebanon – Middle East, North Africa: Digital Targeting of LGBT People**

In a recent report, Human Rights Watch shows how security forces in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Iraq are hiding behind fake digital identities to prosecute members of the LGBTQ+ society and arrest them based on conversations they have with the gender minorities. The organization documents 20 cases of entrapment on the dating application for homosexuals, Grindr, and other social media platforms. This poses new threats to LGBTQ+ individuals in the virtual world and is considered a human rights violation to international conventions signed by these countries. The arrested gender minorities are being prosecuted under allegations of unlawful sex, inciting debauchery, debauchery, cyber crimes, and prostitution. Numbers show that 22% of cases were not charged, but they were kept under arrest in pretrial detention, with one case being kept for 52 days at a police station. Moreover, five other individuals were convicted with imprisonment ranging from one to three years. The detainees reported facing several human rights violations such as denied access to a lawyer, having their phones confiscated, undergoing sexual assault, and being forced to sign coerced confession statements. They also reported being treated worse than detainees with charges not-relating to having a same-sex sexual intercourse. For instance, they were denied food and water, medical services, and family and legal representation as well as having suffered from physical, verbal, and sexual assault.

**Wednesday**  
22 Feb 2023

### **Lebanon – Five protestors in the Beirut Blast case called for interrogation**

The General Security called on five protestors for interrogation on February 22 in Verdun branch under accusations of vandalizing and breaking in the Ministry of Justice and assaulting members of the security body during protests that took place on the 26th of last January. The protest is part of a long series of confrontations between the families of the deceased in the Beirut blast and security forces, triggered by the Public Prosecutor Ghassan Ouaidat's unlawful decision to free people accused in the Beirut port explosion case. The protestors were freed on the same day, yet concerns continue to arise regarding the constant violations of the freedom of expression in Lebanon and the political interventions to stall the Beirut blast investigation.

### **Lebanon – Pakistani worker dead, five injured in Lebanon factory fire**

A Pakistani worker died and five others were injured in a fire that broke out on Tuesday afternoon in the Concord household appliances factory in the town of Naameh in the Mount Lebanon, state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported. The Pakistani worker died from severe burns he sustained in the fire after he was transferred to a nearby hospital where five others are being treated. According to reports, the fire in the five-storey Lematic Concord Factory is believed to be caused by a short circuit. Residents living in homes near the Concord plant were evacuated because the factory contains combustible and explosive materials.

Thursday  
23 Feb 2023

**Lebanon – [CLDH releases a statement on the letter sent by the Prime Minister to the Minister of Interior](#)**

Prime Minister Najib Mikati issued an letter to the Minister of Interior to prevent Judge Ghada Aoun from prosecuting banks. The Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) condemns the letter sent by the Prime Minister to the Minister of Interior, seeing that it contradicts the principle of the separation of powers enshrined in the Lebanese Constitution. According to the law, appealing a judicial decision must be made before the competent authorities specified in article 344 up to article 354 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, i.e. the Judicial Inspection Commission. Especially that according to article 371 of the Penal Code, any official who directly or indirectly uses their authority or influence to impede or delay the execution of a judicial decision, judicial order, or any order issued by a competent authority can be sentenced to three months to two years in prison. Moreover, Article 399 of the same Code sentences any official responsible for the search for or prosecution of crimes to one month to three years imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 to 200,000 LBP if they neglect or defer news of an offense in connection with their work.

**Lebanon – [British company Savaro ltd. linked to August 4<sup>th</sup> explosion by British High Court of Justice](#)**

Over two years after the Beirut port explosion, and while justice continues to be delayed in Lebanon, the British High Court of Justice names the first company to be related to the Beirut port explosion and declares it liable to compensate for the families of the victims. The Beirut Bar Association has confirmed the ruling and is currently awaiting the court's ruling to determine the amount to be paid by the company to the victims' families. Although this step is crucial in the case's investigation process, it remains insufficient as it has not been accompanied by investigations by the Lebanese judiciary to hold accountable parties and personalities related to the contract held with Savaro ltd.

**Lebanon – [Beirut municipality wants to displace a homeless woman](#)**

After being injured by the Beirut blast, Wadiha Al Hayek resided in a shop she worked in before being kicked out despite the fact that she paid rent. As a result, she has been living under the Mar Mikhael bridge for the past two weeks due to the high rent cost in Beirut compared to the salaries paid and in light of the continuous devaluation of the Lebanese Lira. Wadiha is one of the numerous homeless people in Lebanon whose situation raises questions about the housing policies that have been followed by the government for decades. It is worthy to note that many landlords in Beirut and several areas of Lebanon started refusing to rent their properties after the economic collapse because of the local currency's instability and the increasing cost of house maintenance. This renders it difficult for people in rural and far areas to enjoy opportunities and rights in a highly centralized country.

Friday  
24 Feb 2023

**Lebanon – [Passports to be issued without appointments as of March 6<sup>th</sup>](#)**

The General Security (GS) announced that appointments on its website will be cancelled after Lebanon's two-year passport crisis. Citizens will now be able to receive their passports within 25 days of application submission at a GS center, after previously having to wait a year after appointment booking on the GS website. The website will be closed and applications cancelled, thus allowing thousands of Lebanese to obtain their passports easier and faster and to enjoy their right to travel and commute. However, the website will continue to accept urgent passport applications to issue the travel documents within a maximum time frame of five days.

**Saturday and Sunday**  
25 and 26 Feb 2023

**Lebanon – [Lebanon central bank governor faces new fraud, embezzlement charges](#)**

After an 18-month investigation, the Lebanese Judiciary authority charged Riad Saleme, his assistant, and Raja Saleme with illicit enrichment, embezzlement, fraud, and money laundering. The probe of whether or not Saleme and his brother Raja embezzled more than \$300 million from Lebanon's Central Bank is being investigated by at least 5 European countries, as per the judiciary authorities in Lebanon. In a written response, Saleme dismissed accusations of illicit enrichment, considering them an attempt to scapegoat him for Lebanon's financial collapse. He also claimed that he will seek judicial procedures, stating that "one is innocent till proven guilty by a court of law." As the Central Bank's governors' six-year term ends in July, no other figure has been delegated to take on his responsibilities, and Lebanese politicians have claimed that he is "hard to replace." During his three decades as governor, Saleme succeeded in building strong ties with Lebanese politicians, which threatens the cooperation of local judges with European authorities' investigations.

**Lebanon – [Body of Sheikh Ahmad Rifai found in Akkar](#)**

The body of a Sunni clerk from Akkar, Northern Lebanon, has been found tied-up and shot several times to death near Nahr Al Bared on Sunday, according to a statement published by the international security forces. The clerk, who was allegedly killed due to a family dispute, was a fierce opponent of Hezbollah and its armed forces, which led some news outlets to blame the latter for the incident. The ISF confirmed that all the people who took part in the incident were arrested, including the mayor of Karkaf, his son, and five other family members of the deceased who kidnapped, killed, then buried the clerk.