



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

27 March - 02 April, 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

**Monday**  
27 March 2023

### **Zainab Zaiter murdered by her husband in front of her three children**

On Saturday, Hasan Zaiter shot his wife, 26-year-old Zainab, in front of their three children – the oldest being 7. According to Sharika Wa Laken, a local feminist website, Hasan shot his wife in the face with around 10 bullets. Several reports are circulating about a possible motive. Some claim that Hasan, who reportedly suffers from a neurological disorder, was receiving anonymous calls alleging that his wife was cheating. Other reports claim that he saw pictures online of his wife without a hijab. The crime sent shockwaves across the country and revived calls to end the rampant violence against women in Lebanon. An online video showed the victim's brother opening his brother-in-law's cafe in a sign of goodwill. The brother is heard saying he is on good terms with his brother-in-law, who "washed off the shame" his sister caused the family. He said that if Hasan hadn't killed Zainab, he would have done it himself in order to preserve the family's honor. Local reports say police have issued a search warrant for Hasan, who fled the country after the killing, leaving his wife's bloody body on their bed. A source close to the family told the news website Al-Araby Al-Jadeed that Hasan is believed to have fled to Syria – or possibly Germany, where his brother lives – while his children remain in his hometown of Hadath Baalbeck in eastern Lebanon.

**Tuesday**  
28 March 2023

### **Woman sexually assaulted in Beirut waterfront as people walked by**

A young woman was injured and barely survived after being violently attacked and raped in Beirut waterfront, near Central District, while jogging on Tuesday evening. According to the victim, people drove by and walked past during the attack but nobody intervened. Additionally, there is no CCTV on that street. The Internal Security Forces later announced that the Information Division arrested a suspect and the investigation is underway under the supervision of the judiciary.

**Wednesday**  
29 March 2023

### **Experts emphasize the need to protect children in Lebanon from cyberbullying**

A conference held on Wednesday heard that internet abuse had become a threat to the safety of Lebanon's children. The conference, Protecting Children in the Digital Space, was held at the Beirut Bar Association. Speakers warned that child protection was not limited to protecting them from sexual exploitation and human trafficking alone, but "it goes beyond that and includes the phenomenon referred to as cyberbullying, which sometimes leads to suicide." A 2018 study conducted by Save the Children in Lebanon showed that children in the country were most exposed to physical bullying (41 percent), while 6 percent were victims of cyberbullying. Mayke Huijbregts, from UNICEF Lebanon, said: "The many global changes and increasing risks in light of COVID-19 forced children to learn online and they are now facing various kinds of risks, whether through viewing harmful contents in the form of pictures and videos or by sending and sharing their pictures that travel the world in seconds, making them victims of social media." Suha Ismail, head of the International Center for Human Justice, said: "Smartphones and video games, which have become a necessity for everyone, created many risks that could threaten the safety of children, subject them to extortion, kidnapping or addiction, while also affecting their physical and mental development."

Thursday  
30 March 2023

### Lebanon ranks #1 among ten countries hit hardest by food inflation

With domestic food price inflation remaining high worldwide, the latest information published by the World Bank for between the months of October 2022 and February 2023 shows high inflation in all low- and middle-income countries, including Lebanon, which ranks #1 in "Nominal food inflation," with 139 percent. In addition, Lebanon ranked #7 (15 percent) in "Real food inflation." According to a recent report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the index of international food commodity prices decreased for the 11th month in February 2023. The World Bank stressed that after the Russia-Ukraine war, the global food crisis was worsened by the increasing number of food trade restrictions put in place by many countries to increase domestic supply and reduce prices. Additionally, based on the Global Report on Food Crisis 2022 Mid-year Update, "up to 205 million people are expected to face acute food insecurity and to be in need of urgent assistance in 45 countries."

### Ambassador of Pakistan hands over 1.6 tons of medicine to patients in Lebanon

Ambassador of Pakistan to Lebanon, Salman Athar, handed over the donation of 1.6 tons of assorted medicines received from Pakistan for poor and needy patients in Lebanon to the Lebanese Minister of Public Health Dr. Firas Abiad during a press conference in Karintina Pharmaceutical Warehouse, Beirut. The Press Conference was attended by the representatives of all leading media houses of Lebanon. While speaking on the occasion, the Ambassador noted that the donation sent by Pakistan Pharmaceutical Association is a gift from the people of Pakistan for the needy and poor patients in Lebanon. He reiterated that the people of Pakistan stand with their Lebanese brethren during the current economic hardships. The Ambassador also shed light on the contribution of pharmaceutical sector in Pakistan and expressed the desire to promote cooperation between the businessmen of the two countries in the sector.

### Lebanon agrees to raise minimum wage in private sector to LBP 9 million

Caretaker Minister of Labor, Moustafa Bayram, stated that it was agreed in the Index Committee on Thursday to raise the minimum wage in the private sector to LBP 9 million, an increase of 4 and a half million. It also approved increasing the value of the daily transport allowance to LBP 250,000 for each day of attendance and doubling the ceiling for sickness and maternity. These increases will be subject to reviews according to fluctuations in the US dollar exchange rate. He also noted that the text of the temporary pension system's temporary draft is almost agreed upon by everyone and helps workers after the end of service as well as employers. Bayram said that the Index Committee meetings will remain open, stating, "we realize that the crisis weighs heavily on workers and employers [...] every time we try to reach proposals and outputs that are appropriate and realistic." He added, "we will carry these outputs quickly to the State Shura Council and then to the nearest session of the Council of Ministers, to approve them quickly, along with previous decrees." He stressed that what is approved by the Index Committee will be adopted as a kind of incentive regarding the demands of the public sector because employees have become in deplorable and difficult conditions.

### EU grants €60 mn. in humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable in Lebanon

On a visit to Lebanon on Thursday, Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič announced €60 million in humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable people in the country, including Syrian refugees and Lebanese people in need. The Commissioner is visiting EU-funded humanitarian projects and meeting humanitarian partners on the ground as well as the Lebanese authorities. "The new EU humanitarian package announced today will provide life-saving humanitarian aid such as food assistance, cash support, education and health services for those who need it the most. It will also help prepare for disasters and provide emergency response," the statement said. The European Commission added that all EU humanitarian assistance is provided based on needs, regardless of status or nationality. "The assistance is delivered via NGOs, U.N. agencies and international organizations. The new funding brings EU humanitarian funding for Lebanon since 2011 to almost €860 million," the European Commission said.

**Friday**

31 March 2023

### **Retired military personnel and public sector employees protest against salary cuts**

Amid the significant depreciation of the dollar exchange rate in Lebanon, several retired military personnel and Public Sector employees held a protest in Riad El-Solh square on Thursday against the decision to decrease their salaries in light of the significant depreciation of the dollar exchange rate. One of the retired military personnel told LBCI, "our pension is not enough to buy a loaf of bread and a gas canister." Protesters chanted slogans demanding that the government take immediate action to address the issue and ensure that their salaries are not affected by the dollar exchange rate fluctuation.

### **Famine threatens thousands of prisoners in Lebanon**

The current economic situation is significantly affecting Lebanon's prisoners, who have reached the point of famine due to the Lebanese state's inability to pay the dues of merchants and contractors who supply food to the security forces responsible for managing prisons. This is in addition to the delay in the trials of prisoners as a result of the retreat practiced by judges, the absence of medical supplies, and the lack of hygiene in prisons. Recent fears have grown, with contractors announcing that they will stop delivering foodstuffs as of April 4, 2023, after debts owed to them by the state have accumulated. According to Asharq al-Awsat, a security source admitted that this development is worrying, especially since the contracts concluded with contractors expire on April 4, and they do not wish to renew it, adding that the law does not oblige them to continue. The source also revealed that meetings have begun between the security forces and the Ministry of Finance to address this crisis, and an attempt to collect an advance for the contractors to cover part of their debts was initiated, adding that some contributions from associations and NGOs may temporarily alleviate the crisis.

### **Head of the Beirut Bar Association Nader Kaspar questions victims of domestic violence**

Head of the Beirut Bar Association Nader Kaspar questioned victims of domestic violence and adopted the abusers' narrative. He asked "What prevents a family member from bullying the other by claiming that they were beaten, kicked or pushed? What prevents them from stabbing themselves or hitting their own heads against the wall, then saying they were abused?" Kaspar's statements were made as part of a symposium organized by the BBA's Personal Status Modernization committee, titled "The Problem of Domestic Violence Between Reality and the Law." He also expressed concern that some family members' abuse claims are unjust, as they could be used as part of a "scheme." The BBA council under Kaspar, who was elected in November 2022, amended the lawyers' Code of Ethics in mid-March to oblige lawyers to obtain permission from Kaspar prior to making any media appearance, in an attempt to silence activist lawyers who oppose the authorities.

**Saturday and Sunday**

01 and 02 March 2023

### **CLDH releases a statement on the summoning of press institutions: The Public Source and Megaphone**

The Lebanese Center for Human Rights denounces the summoning of journalists Lara Bitar from The Public Source and Jean Kassir, one of the owners of Megaphone news site, on 30/3/2023. According to Megaphone, the public prosecutor issued the summons against Jean after his name appeared in a publication titled "Lebanon ruled by fugitives from justice". CLDH highlights that freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Constitution and must be respected. Journalists must be allowed to work without any legal or security pressures. We emphasize that summoning citizens on the street and blocking their way is not compatible with legal frameworks. CLDH calls on the security and judicial forces to apply the laws in order to protect journalistic work. The judiciary must protect freedom of expression in accordance with article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution, article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is included in the preamble of the Lebanese Constitution, article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, signed by Lebanon in 1972, as well as the Arab Charter on Human Rights by the Arab League which was adopted on 23/5/2004 and ratified by Lebanon on 8/5/2011. The charter stipulates freedom of expression, especially in article 32.

### **Ogero union ends strike amid concerns for national security**

The Executive Council of the Ogero Union announced the suspension of the strike starting Saturday, following repeated strikes that led to Lebanon's isolation from its surroundings and a complete outage of internet and communication due to the strike. The Council justified the end of the strike as a preventive measure to protect national security after the Telecommunications Minister called for a Cabinet meeting to discuss the situation in Ogero. The Telecommunications Minister had previously agreed with the Caretaker Prime Minister to hand over Ogero's facility to the army to manage if the employees' strike continued. Furthermore, the mobile companies, Alfa and Touch, worked on Saturday to refill diesel fuel to several Ogero's centrals to avoid a complete shutdown of telecommunication and internet services.