



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

15 - 21 MAY, 2023



**UNDEF**  
The United Nations  
Democracy Fund



**FNUD**  
Fonds des  
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pour la démocratie



***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**  
15 May 2023

### [Improving Health services for vulnerable people in Lebanon](#)

With funding from the government of Japan, UNOPS worked with Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health to strengthen health services and provide a reliable energy supply to several public hospitals. Lebanon has faced multiple socio-economic crises in recent years. A protracted financial crisis, compounded by COVID-19, the explosion at the Port of Beirut in August 2020 and the recent energy crisis have led to a sharp increase in extreme poverty and food insecurity and put millions of people out of work. The crises have significantly impacted the provision of basic services for vulnerable communities and people, with hospitals across the country experiencing shortages in medical equipment, supplies and power. To help combat the shortage of electricity, UNOPS worked with the government of Japan and Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health to provide a reliable energy supply to hospitals and improve energy efficiency.

**Tuesday**  
16 May 2023

### [CLDH meets with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#)

The Lebanese Center for Human Rights met with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression on May 12, 2023, amid the recent restrictions on lawyers' and journalists' freedom of expression. CLDH relayed the current climate of impunity and lack of accountability in Lebanon through the summoning of individuals for their criticism of religious and political figures as well as businesses. CLDH also highlighted the lack of access to individual complaint mechanisms as Lebanon has not accepted these under the Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 22 of the Convention against Torture. Despite Lebanon's obligations to freedom of expression in the constitution and international covenants, the Lebanese penal code which criminalizes defamation and slander is often used to limit freedoms and silence critics in the media and on online platforms.

**Wednesday**  
17 May 2023

### [Joint Open Letter to the UNHCR in Lebanon](#)

This open letter has been prepared in a coordinated effort by civil society and non-governmental organizations with the aim of calling on UNHCR to increase cooperation and transparency with local organizations to adequately respond to the alarming deportations of Syrian refugees from Lebanon to Syria. While Lebanon has hosted the largest number of refugees per capita since the armed conflict began in Syria, it has simultaneously and continuously failed to create a clear legal framework and policies for refugees, leaving them in constant insecurity. Consequently, they were left particularly vulnerable to ongoing abuses, acts of harassment from the local population, and violations of their basic human rights by state authorities. These violations were further exacerbated by several government decisions and decrees since 2015, including the government directive to UNHCR to stop the official registration of refugees. These decisions have compounded the vulnerability of refugees by complicating access to legal residency permits and limiting their freedom of movement, with repercussions on refugees' access to livelihoods, healthcare, education, justice, and other services.

**Thursday**  
18 May 2023

### [General Security confirms that it has enough passports to meet all requests](#)

Lebanon's General Directorate of General Security confirmed that it has enough passports to meet all requests at home and abroad and appealed to citizens to make way for those forced to obtain it while emphasizing that every Lebanese is eligible to have a passport. The General Directorate of General Security appealed to Lebanese citizens that the Directorate bore the responsibility of securing the rights of citizens and asked the citizens not to rush in front of the centers to obtain passports, except for those who are in dire need of it.

**Friday**  
19 May 2023

#### **Filmmaker Daniele Rugo delves into the secrecy around mass graves in Lebanon**

The new documentary from filmmaker Daniele Rugo, "The Soil and The Sea" could be taken as a companion piece to his last – "About A War" – in that both deal with the legacy and trauma of Lebanon's Civil War. While "About A War" featured conversations with fighters from all sides of that conflict, "The Soil and The Sea" examines the issue of the many (more than 100) mass graves that litter the country and, according to the synopsis, "unveils the violence lying beneath a garden, a school, a café, a hotel, and other unremarkable landscapes."

#### **CLDH releases a statement on the decision of the Syrian Embassy in Lebanon regarding passport applications**

On 13/05/2023, the Syrian Embassy in Lebanon made an announcement via its Facebook page, stating that it would temporarily suspend the acceptance of both standard and urgent passport applications starting from 15/05/2023 until further notice. This decision comes at a time when the General Directorate of General Security has imposed a deadline on Syrian refugees to regularize their status in Lebanon. CLDH strongly emphasizes the gravity of the Embassy's decision, as it hampers the ability of Syrian refugees to meet the imposed deadline set by the Lebanese State for settling their status. Consequently, this decision exposes them to potential detention and deportation once the settlement period has expired. It is crucial to acknowledge that Syrian refugees should not be held accountable for circumstances beyond their control, which makes this situation unjust for them. Moreover, the Embassy's decision reflects the policy of the Syrian regime and its lack of willingness to safeguard Syrian refugees in Lebanon. CLDH urges the General Directorate of General Security to make an exceptional allowance for expired passports and to take necessary measures to resolve the situation of Syrian refugees until this issue is resolved.

**Saturday and Sunday**  
20 and 21 May 2023

#### **Lebanese bathing suit row triggers women-led beach protest**

Lebanese activists protested Sunday at a beach in the coastal city of Sidon after a woman said she was harassed there over her allegedly indecent bathing suit, an AFP correspondent said. Defying a municipality ban on their demonstration, dozens of protesters, mostly women, gathered briefly in the Sunni Muslim-majority conservative city, the correspondent said. "We have all come to support women's right to be in public spaces, whether in a bikini or a burkini," said Diana Moukalled, a journalist and women's rights activist. "Public spaces don't just belong to certain people as a function of their beliefs, but to everyone. It's a constitutional right," she told AFP. In last week's incident, a group of conservative religious Muslims reportedly assailed a bather and her husband at the public beach in Sidon, accusing them of not respecting local norms due to the woman's attire. The incident sparked a wave of solidarity on social media, with some women posing in bathing suits with the hashtag #Sidon. Others instead praised the conservative intervention. The Sidon municipality on Saturday had banned both the women's protest and a planned counter-demonstration that had been called "in favour of modesty, virtue and against nudity".