



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK

06 - 12 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.***

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## LEBANON

**Monday**

06 Feb 2023

### **Lebanon – Cabinet convenes as Lebanon enters fourth month without president**

The caretaker cabinet convened Monday for the third time as Lebanon entered a fourth month of presidential vacuum. The session, boycotted by the Free Patriotic Movement ministers, discussed aid to the education and health sectors, dubbed as "urgent" by caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati. At the beginning of the session, Mikati urged all ministers to attend the sessions, adding that Lebanon is facing many "problems and complications" that require solutions. "We have entered the fourth month without a president, and it has become necessary for the cabinet to convene regularly," Mikati said, calling the meetings a "national duty." Public school teachers have been on strike, demanding an adjustment of their LBP salaries as the Lebanese pound has lost more than 95% of its value.

### **Lebanon – CLDH releases a joint press release on the Global Day of CommemorAction for the Dead, Missing, and Forcefully Disappeared at Sea and the Borders**

On the occasion of the Global Day of CommemorAction for the Dead, Missing, and Forcefully Disappeared at Sea and the Borders, CLDH, alongside other local and international civil society organizations, called upon everyone to remember the tragedies of those who have died and went missing while attempting to cross seas and borders all over the world, particularly undocumented migrants who have suffered tragic fates while trying to leave Lebanon during the past few years. The undersigned organizations urged the Lebanese authorities and international community to take several vital measures, including conducting investigations into the boat sinking off the city of Tripoli on April 23, 2022, and into the allegations of forced return of Syrian refugees, as well as providing refugees with fast resettlement opportunities and looking into alternatives to prevent undocumented migration.

**Tuesday**

07 Feb 2023

### **Lebanon – Lebanon sends dozens of soldiers and rescuers to earthquake-hit Syria and Turkey**

The Lebanese Army is sending 15 engineers to Syria and 20 to Turkey to support rescue efforts in the two countries following the devastating earthquake that has killed more than 5,000 people and reduced thousands of buildings to rubble. The Lebanese Civil Defence, which carries out search and rescue operations as well as firefighting, is also sending units. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Red Crescent said it was sending teams to the two countries following requests for support from the Syrian and Turkish governments. Environment Minister Nasser Yassine said after a cabinet meeting that sending rescuers was "the minimum we can do". Ali Hamieh, the Lebanese Minister for Public Works and Transport, said "It is our duty to stand by Syria despite the difficult economic conditions we are going through". He also announced the waiving of taxes and fees for any humanitarian aid arriving at Lebanon's ports and airports.

### **Lebanon – [Lebanese banks close doors to customers to protest ruling](#)**

Lebanon's battered commercial banks closed their doors to customers in protest of a recent court ruling that forced one of the country's largest banks to pay out two of its depositors their trapped savings in cash. The Association of Banks in Lebanon, which lobbies for the banks, released a statement calling the action an "open-ended strike" and criticized the court ruling, claiming it was detrimental to all depositors because the banks cannot afford to pay out everyone else's savings in full. In an effort to avoid folding amid the ongoing crisis, banks had previously imposed informal capital controls, restricting cash withdrawals from accounts. Also, people with accounts in dollars are only allowed to withdraw small sums in Lebanese pounds, at an exchange rate far lower than that of the black market or the exchange rate used for buying and selling most goods. Last week, Lebanon's Court of Cassation overturned the verdict in a 2022 case in favor of Fransabank, sued by two depositors demanding their money in cash. The ruling overturned the previous verdict, which allowed the bank to pay them with a check. Cashing that check, however, would enable the depositors to retrieve their funds at a significant loss. It was the first legal decision of its kind since the crisis. The banks' association said Tuesday that "the crisis is not a crisis of one bank or even all the banks" but one that "affects the entire financial and banking system", including Lebanon's central bank.

### **Lebanon – [Lebanon rejects civil marriages, puts children at risk](#)**

Couples in Lebanon who married in online civil services are facing unintended – and unfair – consequences. The first Lebanese couple, Khalil Rizkallah and Nada Nehme, were married using the Utah online marriage process in November 2021, and by May 2022, Lebanon's Interior Ministry had registered their marriage. Following in their virtual footsteps, dozens of other Lebanese couples married online, including couples who said Lebanese authorities assured them their weddings would be officially recognized. In September, Rizkallah and Nehme learned the General Directorate of Personal Status had de-registered their marriage with no advance notice. In October, their first child was born. But Lebanon requires parents to provide a marriage certificate for their child's birth to be officially registered. The Interior Ministry has also refused to register the remote marriages of other Lebanese couples, some of whom are expecting children. Unregistered children in Lebanon may be at risk of exploitation, and could face hurdles to attending school, and, later, opening a bank account, getting a job, or marrying. A cumbersome procedure exists to register children of unmarried parents, but the child will be registered only under the father's name, leaving no legal connection to the mother. They may still face social stigma as "illegitimate" as well as restrictions on rights, including inheritance.

### **Lebanon – [Lebanese ministers head to Syria after earthquake](#)**

A high-level delegation of ministers from Lebanon arrived in Damascus on Wednesday to assess how Beirut can assist neighboring Syria following the earthquake in Turkey that has killed about 10,000 people. Thousands remain missing and many buildings in Syria and Turkey have been reduced to rubble. The ministerial delegation was led by Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib and Public Works and Transport Minister Ali Hamieh, the latter designated by the Lebanese cabinet as the main point of contact between Lebanon and Syria over relief efforts. Social Affairs Minister Hector Hajjar and officials from the Lebanese Health Ministry were also part of the team. Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said he decided to form the latest delegation as an expression of support for Syria, and Hamieh had earlier waived taxes and fees for any Syrian-bound humanitarian aid arriving at Lebanon's ports and airports.

**Wednesday**  
08 Feb 2023

Thursday  
09 Feb 2023

#### **Lebanon – [Government must address medication shortages and healthcare crisis](#)**

More than a year after the Lebanese government removed subsidies on most medications, short-sighted policies and a lack of adequate social safety nets have left people unable to access or afford vital and life-saving medication, said Amnesty International. The government has also failed to fulfill its commitments to support Primary Health Care Centres (PHCCs), which provide free and low-cost medication and have been facing high demand. Amnesty International explains how the ongoing economic crisis in Lebanon, coupled with an underwhelming government response, has placed enormous strains on an already fragile health sector. With the Lebanese lira rapidly losing its value and the depletion of the Central Bank's foreign currency reserves, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) announced on 9 November 2021 the lifting of foreign exchange subsidies on all medications except those treating cancer and some other chronic diseases with immediate effect. As a result of the lifting of subsidies, the prices of most medicines rose exponentially.

#### **Lebanon – [Russia to send free wheat and petroleum to Lebanon](#)**

In light of the grave economic crisis afflicting Lebanon, Russia is coordinating the technical aspects of the supply of wheat and oil goods to Beirut, according to Alexander Rudakov, the Russian ambassador to Lebanon. The ambassador stated that the Russian leadership has agreed to provide free wheat and oil derivatives at the request of the Lebanese government. "At this stage, the technical coordination of the transfer of these products is underway," Rudakov said. The envoy stated, that in 2022, approximately 714 tons of Russian sunflower oil were given to Lebanon. In November, Lebanon's acting Minister of Public Works and Transport, Ali Hamieh, informed Sputnik that Russia will provide Lebanon with 25,000 tons of wheat and 10,000 tons of petroleum at no cost.

#### **Lebanon – [A Tool With Many Roots: Torture During Preliminary Investigations in Lebanon](#)**

"Do you believe that your answers aligned with what the interrogator wanted to hear?", victims of torture were asked by the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH). The answer was "yes", according to recent research which was done by the center. However, victims explained that none of them were telling the truth; they just wanted the torture to stop. In Lebanon, torture is still a tool for interrogating, thus hindering actual access to the truth. Although the legal framework has progressed in this regard, human rights organizations such as the CLDH still have to document its systemic use and through these efforts, perpetrators are one step closer to being held accountable – for the first time ever – after torturing detainee Bashar Abdel Saoud, who was arrested in August 2022, reportedly due to suspicion of belonging to ISIS and died under custody. Today, many victims of torture in Lebanon do not come forward due to cultural and political obstacles in prevention and accountability, and they believe that holding charges against the government's actions in front of a politically affiliated judicial system will never lead to justice. Consequently, many survivors of torture remain unprotected. The Lebanese law seems inadequate to do victims justice amid political complications and benefits. Meanwhile, some officers still believe that torture is a tool rather than a crime, while different layers of the system benefit from this twisted interpretation as they choose to do little to nothing about it, especially when it feeds into the authorities' acceptance of torture.

Friday  
10 Feb 2023

#### **Lebanon – [Syrian refugees in Lebanon mourn relatives lost in quake](#)**

Syrian refugees in the Lebanese town of Arsal have set up a special meeting point to accept condolences for the loss of relatives who died in the earthquake that struck Syria and neighboring Turkiye. The town's refugee community lost at least 72 relatives in the quake, according to the latest count they received on Friday. Among the victims were some who had sought refuge in Arsal and spent years in its camps before recently returning and settling in the town of Jenderes, near Aleppo. "The disaster is overwhelming; every day we learn of new deaths," said Abu Fayrouz, a Syrian refugee in Arsal. Fayrouz told Arab News, "I lost my daughter and her two sons. Half of our families were displaced from the countryside of Homs and the countryside of Qusayr. Some fled to Lebanon 11 years ago and some moved north to the countryside of Aleppo." Most of the victims were from the Bakkar, Sattouf, Radwan, Al-Abed, and Yassin families, he said. "We keep receiving pictures so we can identify the bodies. Our phone galleries are filled with photos of corpses."

**Lebanon – [First Shipment of 33,000 tons of Wheat Helps Rebuild Lebanon's Stock and Ensure Access to Affordable Bread](#)**

A first shipment of 33,000 tons of wheat, financed under the Lebanon Wheat Supply Emergency Project, has arrived at the Port of Beirut and started being discharged. The shipment - equivalent to about one month-worth of Arabic bread consumption in the country - will help rebuild Lebanon's wheat stock and secure affordable bread for poor and vulnerable households. This first shipment will be followed by several additional shipments of varying sizes over the following months, to ensure the continuity of wheat supply and maintain access to affordable bread throughout the project's lifespan. Approved in May 2022, in response to the global market disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine, the US \$150 million project aims to ensure the availability of wheat in Lebanon. Lebanon imports nearly 80% of the wheat it consumes, and, historically, the quasi totality of these imports have come from Ukraine and Russia (respectively 80% and 16% in 2020).

**Lebanon – [Rejected suitor bombs, burns house of woman's family as revenge](#)**

A Lebanese man, after being rejected by the family of a woman he proposed to marry, took revenge by bombing their family home and setting it on fire on Friday night, according to local media reports. The grenades thrown at the house caused a fire that burned two cars in the courtyard of the house, which is located in the south of Lebanon. The fire was put out by civil defense authorities and family members in the village intervened to prevent the conflict from escalating further. No injuries or deaths were recorded as a result of the blaze, but Lebanese authorities have launched an investigation into the matter. The same man, who is yet to be identified, kidnapped the woman he proposed to a day before the attack and returned her to her family's home as part of a settlement that stipulated he should officially be granted her hand in marriage.

**Lebanon – [Cash-strapped Lebanon appeals for Arab support](#)**

Lebanese Minister of Economy Amin Salam on Sunday called for Arab support to cash-strapped Lebanon amid a crippling economic crisis. "Lebanon is groaning under a series of crises that have cascaded over the past decade, and it is still, to date, in a dead end. It requires your support in the first place," Salam said at a conference at the headquarters of the Cairo-based Arab League. "Lebanon also launched an appeal to its Arab brothers to extend a helping hand to it, in light of an unprecedented economic and financial crisis in its history," he said, calling on the Arab countries to overcome differences. "Lebanon especially feels this suffering, and it has not yet recovered from the effects of the August 4, 2020 explosion that destroyed half of the city of Beirut."