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MIDTERM REPORT | 2024

CIVIL SOCIETY REPORT

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

(UPR) LEBANON

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ACRONYMS BBBY

• **ILO**: International Labour Organization

• **UNICEF**: The United Nations Children's Fund

• **UNRWA**: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

• **UNHCR**: The United Nations High commission for refugees

• **WHO**: World Health Organization

• **ESCWA**: The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia

• **UNFPA**: The United Nations Population Fund

• **IOM**: the International Organization for Migration

• **UNFCCC**: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

• **CEDAW**: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

• **MOIM**: The Ministry of interior and Municipalities

• **MOSA**: The Ministry of Social Affairs

• **SDCS**: The Ministry of Social Affairs Social Development Centers

• **MOPH**: The Ministry of Public Health

• **PHC**: The Primary Health Care Centers in Lebanon

• **MOL**: The Ministry of Labor

• **GDGS**: the General Directorate of the General Security

• **GGTL**: The General Confederation of Lebanese Workers

• **ESSN**: the Emergency Social Safety Net in Lebanon

• **NPPT**: The National Poverty Targeting Program

• **EOSI**: the End-of-Service-Indemnity system

• **GDP**: The Gross Domestic Product

• **CAS**: the Central Administration of Statistics

• **SMEB**: The Standard Minimum Expenditure Basket

• **LBP**: Lebanese Pound

• **LGBTQIA**: Stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), intersex, asexual, and others

• **MDWS**: Female Migrant Domestic Workers

•**NDCS**: The Nationally Determined Contributions

• **MOE**: The coordination of the Ministry of Environment

• **EDL**: Électricité du Liban

• **DRE**: The ratification of the Distributed Renewable Energy Law

• **ERA**: The Electricity Regulatory Authority

• **SUC**: The new Standard Unified Contract

• **SORAL**: The Syndicate of the Owners of Recruitment Agencies in Lebanon

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INTRODUCTION

Lebanon participated in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva in 2021 and presented its report before the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the third time. Lebanon has received several recommendations and it is supposed to submit its Med term report in 2024.

The UPR process is a key mechanism for human rights accountability, including the midterm report, which is a follow-up and monitoring tool to assess States' compliance with the recommendations received. Despite the lack of binding mechanisms, the report is crucial for determining the human rights status in the country.

Over 30 civil society organizations in Lebanon, including national and regional networks, have formed a coalition to prepare the civil society Mid-Term report, which addresses the following issues: civic and political rights, economic and social rights, women's rights, refugees' rights, Migrant workers, disabled persons' rights, and environmental rights.

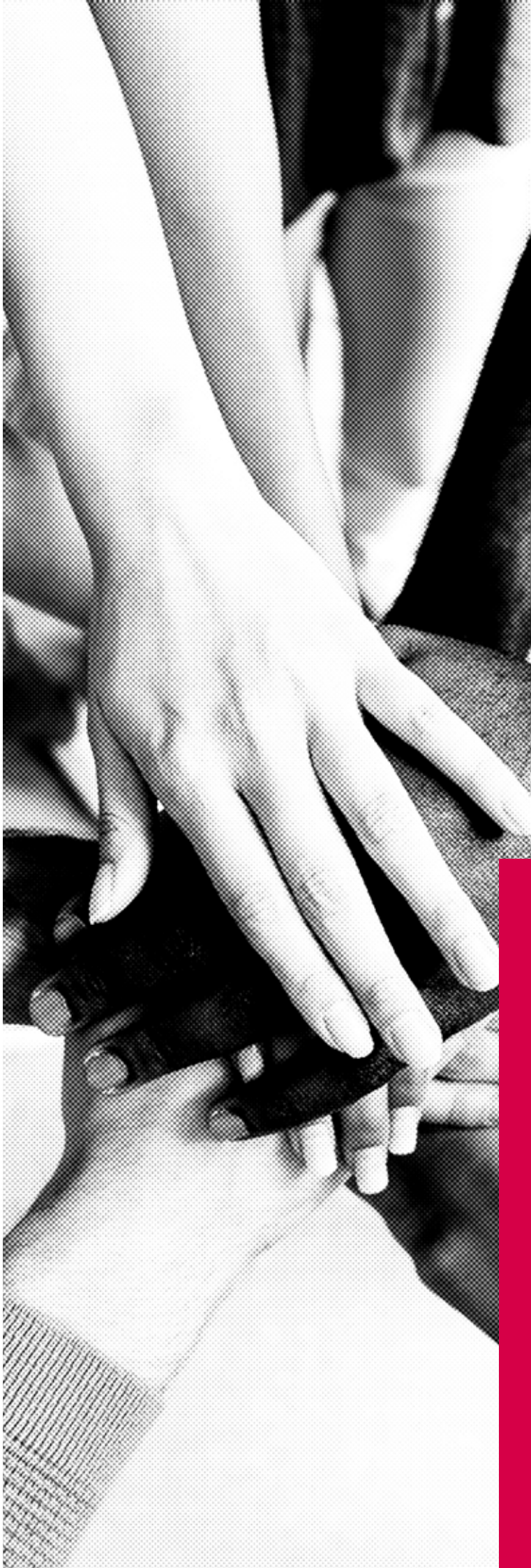
The report highlights the most prominent violations of human rights in Lebanon and presents the recommendations that should be taken into account. Thanks to the contribution of civil society, which is a key partner in enhancing human rights records and achieving sustainable development.
Focusing on the national context and aligning with the UPR mechanism, the report provides a unique platform for civil society organizations to address key issues and play a crucial role in shaping the collective future, andilt seeks to enhance discussions on critical challenges, address gaps in the national response, reaffirm commitments to human rights standards, and amplify the voice of civil society.

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A. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The violations of economic and social rights in Lebanon can be mainly related to the failure of economic and social policies adopted by successive governments in addressing national developmental challenges. The latter includes chronic unemployment, poverty, weakening productive sectors, increasing inequalities, geographic disparities and lack of social protection. The rentier economic approaches, weakly managed privatisation and overall economic liberalization policies favored by governments, coupled with weak regulatory infrastructure and capacities, have limited the ability of the state to respond to the needs and necessities of various citizens.

This section looks at the status of recommendations received on economic and social rights including the right to social protection, right to health, right to adequate standard of living, right to education, right to work and rights to water and sanitation.



RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Continue and intensify its efforts to extend comprehensive social protection to all sections of the population;

• Continue to work with relevant stakeholders to finalise a social protection plan, considering especially the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on those living in poverty.

• Consider improvement of the social protection system that would comprise all categories of people, targeting the most vulnerable;

• Increase financial support to families in situations of poverty, to reduce the institutionalisation of children;

• Amend the provisions of the Social Security Act to ensure equal access to the national social security fund; and

• Promote, as much as possible, measures targeting vulnerable groups, including, in particular, support for access to social security.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

The full enjoyment of the right to social protection in Lebanon is challenged given that the state still considers social protection to be a component of anti-poverty strategies and believes that social protection systems should be allocated almost exclusively to support the poor,\ at achieving social justice for all. In this context the main efforts remain on social safety net programs which are provided through cash transfers or in-kind assistance.

An effective social protection system with universal coverage is a human right indeed, with a series of impacts, starting with mitigating the effects of poverty, protecting from falling into poverty, enhancing human capacities, participation, and gender equality, bridging social and regional gaps, and contributing to economic and political stability.

However, measures adopted on social security remain limited in ensuring universal social protection. Below a few recent developments in this regard:

• In 2021, the Emergency Social Safety Net in Lebanon (ESSN) was launched with the support of the World Bank, to include 150 thousand Lebanese families in addition to families already covered by the previous program targeting the poorest of families (NPTP). These families represent about 20% of the total Lebanese households. The planned support includes cash transfers in US dollars (USD) up to a maximum of 125 USD every month (for a family of six members maximum), in addition to financial support for the eligible and beneficiary families to reduce school drop-outs, provided for each family having a child aged between 13 and 18 years. In March 2023, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) announced the extension of the program for six months.

• In December 2023, the Parliament of Lebanon enacted Law 319. The new legislation introduces a new pension scheme under the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), mandating enrollment in the new pension system for workers currently under the End-of-Service-Indemnity (EOSI) system and aged less than 49 years at the time of the law's enactment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) views this legislation as a significant change to the social security system, as it not only introduces a new pension scheme within the NSSF but also entails a comprehensive restructuring of the NSSF's governance and operational framework. While the law allows agricultural workers to enrol voluntarily in the new pension system, ongoing monitoring is necessary to assess its implementation. However, it is important to note that the approach remains focused and not universal in nature.

• Acknowledging the dire situation, a National Social Protection Strategy was commissioned by the government, and its development was led by UNICEF and the ILO in coordination with MoSA through a consultative process involving various actors, including civil society organisations. This National Social Protection Strategy was adopted in 2024.

Given that the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy requires time and resources, and in light of the collapse of the purchasing power of households in Lebanon amid multilevel crisis led for at least 75% of Lebanese households are unable to cover their basic needs and require financial assistance to bridge the gap between their income and their expenses. In this context, the selection of target groups in safety net programs, as well as financing of these programs is another concern. The limitations of the national poverty targeting programs have been documented by several reports including by UN Women. It is clear that these programs lack targeted social assistance programs for specific groups of vulnerable women, including female-headed households, single women with dependents, older women and women with disabilities. The database considered in these programs has not been updated to respond to recent increases in vulnerability. On the other hand, for financing these programs Lebanon got a $246 million loan from the World Bank. This decision adds to Lebanon's already substantial debt, which recently reached 170% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Consequently, citizens will bear the burden of repaying both the loan and its associated interest, as the government chose to fund the program through borrowing rather than utilising local financing sources, such as wealth taxes and taxes on high incomes.

Agricultural workers who work at a farm that has "nothing to do with trade and industry" have been explicitly excluded from the Lebanese Code of Labour since its enactment in 1946. The law includes only those workers employed in businesses engaged in farming and farming-related commercial activities. Similarly, only those workers and farmers in agricultural industries involved in trading or industrial activity were included in the Law of Social Security, adopted in 1963. Although article 10 of the same law provides for the inclusion of "all Lebanese wage earners, workers and employees, trainees and apprentices, working on Lebanese territory in an agricultural establishment" in a second implementation phase, this phase was to be implemented.

Moreover, according to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) law, in a third implementation phase, a special law would specify "the conditions for applying the social security system or some of its branches in a mandatory manner to people who have not yet been subject to its provisions in the first and second stages (such as unpaid workers, independent workers, employers...)". This law was never drafted.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to

• Adopt a new and comprehensive approach to poverty reduction reducing inequalities at various levels, enhancing national productive sectors for employment generation; revision of redistribution policies and adoption of social policies that put people's economic and social rights at the forefront;

• Shift from the concept of social protection networks, targeting programs and cash transfers to consider economic protection programs as a component in a broader development strategy aiming at achieving social justice and the realization of human rights;

• Assess the steps and reforms needed to implement efficient social protection policies, and strengthen support for Lebanon's National Social Protection Strategy as two necessary measures to alleviate the repercussions of the country's multiple crises and prevent instability.

• Foster a political and social dialogue for the devise of policy solutions that aim to extend social security to workers in agriculture that are currently legally excluded, to increase compliance of registration of the workers in agri-food enterprises that are already legally included in the coverage of the NSSF, and to explore provisional coverage of workers though alternative schemes during the transition towards the inclusion of this group in social insurance.

RIGHT TO HEALTH[1]

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Continue efforts to improve the quality of health and social services for older persons;

• Increase investment in health and education, and further guarantee people's right to health and education;

• Continue to adopt measures aimed at expanding the scope, availability and impact of health services at all levels, paying special attention to the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies;

• Continue to strengthen the measures aimed at providing health-care services to all segments of society;

• Strengthen the protection of the human rights of older persons, particularly in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic;

• Strengthen its health-care services, including through cooperation with international organizations, to ensure access to good quality health-care services, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic for all persons, including persons without insurance ;

• Enhance measures aimed at promoting the right to health and provide universal access to health care; and

• Expedite the process to achieve universal health coverage and ensure that all citizens, including migrants, benefit from this scheme.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

The absence of a universal social protection system or universal healthcare coverage is a significant barrier to attaining the right to health for all in Lebanon, as they contribute to unequal access to care and health outcomes among the population. In emergency situations, the cost of healthcare can be paramount for poorer households, especially considering that in 2022, 51% of residents in Lebanon did not have any type of health insurance coverage (Central Administration of Statistics 2022). Indeed, several vulnerable groups, such as retirees, the unemployed, agricultural workers, migrants, refugees, and those working informally, are not covered by available formal social protection schemes.

• Regarding non-citizens, Palestinian refugees can access healthcare services, partially covered through UNRWA and the Red Crescent Society (UNRWA 2023), and Syrian refugees through the national PHC network and 33 contracted hospitals across the country, or the MoSA Social Development Centers (SDCs), subsidized by the UNHCR. At the primary-care level, refugees pay a consultation fee depending on the service received, while at the secondary and tertiary care level, the UNHCR only provides partial coverage for life-saving emergencies or limb-saving cases. Some urgent, life-threatening conditions (such as cancers treatable by surgery) are considered on a case-by-case basis. Coverage is only available at select hospitals, the majority of which are governmental hospitals (UNHCR 2023). The implementation of partial subsidies for healthcare has imposed significant financial strains on refugee households. This, compounded by Lebanon's economic crisis, has led to exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses for outpatient care, hospitalizations, medications, and transportation.

• Refugees and migrant workers can receive care through international organizations and civil society organisations, with a small co-payment or free of charge, depending on the service available through partnerships between these organizations and the MoPH. For example, refugees and migrant workers can access healthcare services through MSF and ICRC, including medical consultations, medicines, sexual and reproductive health services, mental health services, etc. The latter services are also available to Lebanese.

• Migrant workers, and in particular women migrant domestic workers, face additional

challenges that hinder their enjoyment of their right to health. Their status as documented, freelancer, or undocumented migrants dictates their access to healthcare. In addition, migrant workers face various levels of discrimination, whether based on race, sex, or class, with an impact on their health (Fernandez 2018). Under the Kafala (or sponsorship) system, migrant domestic workers are at risk of exploitation and abuse. Their employers set their work contracts and conditions and can control their access to healthcare (Medecins sans Frontieres 2023). Live-in migrant domestic workers are often locked in the house, with their passports withheld from them—their situation can block them from accessing protection or support services. Moreover, the standard insurance scheme that they are provided with does not cover outpatient care, dental care, sexual and reproductive health, or mental healthcare (Mezher et al. 2017; Fernandez 2018).

• Similarly, members of the LGBTQ+ community also face significant barriers limiting their access to essential services, including healthcare in Lebanon, with negative repercussions on their sexual and mental health (Naal et al. 2020; Abboud et al. 2023). Members of the community, particularly transgender persons, face discrimination at health centers and are sometimes denied care (Lebanese Union for the Physically Handicapped. Members of the LGBTQ+ community, and particularly transgender persons, may avoid care due to the fear of discrimination and negative attitudes they face (Naal et al. 2020; Wright et al. 2017). Although a more recent study found that physician attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals have changed, some physicians still hold discriminatory beliefs toward the community (Naal et al. 2020). Refugee members of the LGBTQ+ community face an added layer of discrimination due to their refugee status (Abboud et al. 2023; Moussawi 2023). Furthermore, available insurance or social security schemes do not cover gender-affirming surgeries or hormone replacement therapy for transgender persons, the cost of which is often prohibitive (Helem 2020).

• In 2022, the MoPH, in partnership with the WHO, launched a National Health Strategy with a Vision 2030 for health (MoPH & WHO 2022a). The strategy acknowledges Lebanon's ongoing crises and the impact they have had on health and its determinants, and recognizes the importance of the determinants of health through its goal of "[Seeking an] intersectoral approach to address social determinants of health inequity, and promote the Health in All Policies concept." In line with this, the strategy highlights the need to "target regions with below average indicators" to promote population health, though the strategy mentions that this is not currently being done, nor is there a plan for achieving this goal yet. At first review of the Strategy implementation shows among 56 over 88 strategic objectives are with work initiated and no progress status.

• Building on the 2020-2016 strategy and previous MoPH efforts, this strategy also has as one of its main objectives the achievement of universal healthcare coverage. Though the strategy addresses fragmentation and the multiplicity of funding mechanisms as major challenges to the system, it does not aim to unify the six available social insurance funds as one of its objectives, rather proposing the development of a "unified essential benefits package."

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Reform the health system in order to establish a health policy that prioritises protection of the citizen in need of health services, preserves the right to adequate information in the health sector;

• Strengthen the regulatory role of the state in the health sector, define the role of the different public and private stakeholders, monitor their performance thus rooting out corruption and waste, and enhance the effectiveness of the administrations;

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Adopt a holistic approach in devising the post-COVID recovery plan in order to safeguard economic and social rights, with a particular focus on education;

• Enshrine the right to education for all, without discrimination, in the Constitution;

• Continue efforts to provide quality, equitable and inclusive education for all;

• Continue efforts to improve education in schools and not restrict access to education on the basis of nationality or immigration status;

• Continue efforts to ensure the provision of basic education, compulsory and free of charge for all ;

• Ensure the promotion and protection of all rights of the child, including to end all forms of violence, and ensuring access to affordable quality education for all children, especially for children in the most vulnerable situations; and

• Develop a national strategy on the education of children with disabilities.

The constant challenge for Lebanon is the lack of rights based government policies in the education sector in addition to the inadequate infrastructure, economic instability, weakness of the system and political unrest. These factors contribute to resource shortages, hindering the quality of education. Additionally, the influx of refugees further strains the system. These issues collectively hinder access, availability, and the quality of education, as well as curriculum development, posing significant obstacles to the overall advancement of the education sector.

Whereas inclusive education has been a key recommendation directed to Lebanon as UNHCR documents in 2022, 45% of 2 million school-aged children in Lebanon were out of school. Private schools affordability became a challenge only exacerbated by transportation and material costs. While the education crisis affects all children, previous data has shown that only 1% of those in public school are children with disabilities, who already had much more limited access to learning opportunities due to lack of reasonable accommodations.

Households with at least one child with disability across population groups report a more significant decrease in non-food expenditures on education due to financial constraints, leading to a higher likelihood of withdrawing children from school and involving them in income-generating activities. This trend is particularly more prevalent across displaced Syrian households where 11% of children in households with a child with disabilities are engaged in child labour, compared to 6% in households without a child with disabilities.

The quality of education has further dwindled due to unsafe and un-rehabilitated schools and the lack of essential facilities, such as updated classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and needed infrastructure for a quality learning environment. Moreover, lack of safe learning environments has become critical and should be urgently addressed, recalling the case of Maguy Mahmoud who was killed in her school in the Jabal Mohsen neighbourhood of Tripoli when the roof of her classroom caved in, also injuring another student.

Since the last UPR review and taking into consideration the impact of quarantine during COVID-19, the quality and accessibility of education have become crucial factors particularly for vulnerable groups including Palestinian refugees. A study conducted by Naba'a in March 2021 in six Palestinian refugee camps (Borj Al Chamali, Buss, Rachidieh, Ein El Hlwe, Naher Al Bared and Baddawi) revealed a loss of familiar learning environments due to quarantine measures. Significantly, 97% of households lacked access to technological devices. Students' comprehension is reduced as they are unable to engage with learning materials tailored to their preferred learning styles—be it auditory, spatial, visual, or

kinesthetic. Moreover, the economic crisis has heightened the rate of school dropout, with poor internet connectivity and electricity shortages compounding the issue. Financial constraints are identified as the primary reason for dropout, with 24% of parents citing the lack of internet access at home as a major hindrance to their children's consistent attendance in virtual learning classes.

In Lebanon, the unions that represent public education teachers (primary - vocational - secondary) continue their struggle to restore the rights and defend the dignity of teachers including with regard to their right to strike and fair wages and decent working conditions.[1] It is important to note that when children do attend school, they are sometimes left sitting in classrooms without teachers due to the educators' strikes.

Two years ago, the average salary for an untenured public school teacher in Lebanon was US$1,600 per month, which is currently equivalent to USD 90 as a result of currency depreciation. Paired with rising fuel prices, this salary is barely enough to cover transportation costs of the teachers commuting to schools,especially in rural areas where cars are a necessity.

In addition to better pay, many educators are advocating for improved health coverage and a transportation allowance to specifically address the problems they're facing. With the Lebanese lira losing nearly 90% of its value, public school teachers who are still paid in the local currency have become extremely vulnerable, as have teachers in private schools who are still largely paid in lira. The most affected amongst teachers are those paid by the hour, who in some cases have seen the value of their hourly wages fall from around USD 13 to only USD 1 per hour! [3] After deducting the cost of gas, the average-earning Lebanese teacher has only USD 3 a month to live on. This situation has forced about 66% of teachers to work a second job to cover their living expenses and two-thirds to borrow money to cover their basic needs. As a result, 20% of teachers were disciplined for absenteeism and denied the additional monthly allowance of USD 90 that is normally given to all public-school teachers. In light of these challenges, as many as 73% of teachers are planning to leave the education sector and three quarters are considering leaving Lebanon. It's also worth mentioning that 40% of teachers do not have a university degree or standardised qualifications, and 60%are contractual, requiring few formal qualifications.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to

• Increase national expenditure on education, enhance the quality of public education, developing a new unified curriculum, establishing and implementing quality-oriented strategies especially for public schools in rural areas and adapting the school environment to the basic needs of children and people with disabilities;

• Focus reform efforts on increasing and maintaining enrolment rates, reducing and reinserting dropouts, giving incentive premiums for teachers to serve in poor areas, establishing continuing education programs for teachers, and expanding maintenance of the existing educational infrastructure and updating curricula to meet the needs of the current situation in alignment with international standards.

• Ensure a fair employment process that grant the teachers their rights, in particular good salaries, and that ensure continuity in their work. Ensure that any National Education strategy aims at modernizing the education system and adopts a gender based approach;

RIGHT TO WORK

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON

• Tackle unemployment, especially among young people and women;

• Afford migrant workers full legal protections in line with Lebanon's international commitments on forced labour and discrimination;

• Extend the protection of labour rights to migrant domestic workers in order to guarantee respect for their rights;

• Implement and enforce the new Standard Unified Contract to protect migrant domestic worker rights, as a key step towards dismantling the work sponsorship system;

• Take specific measures to strengthen protection for domestic workers, including migrant women;

• Reform the sponsorship system for migrant workers, guaranteeing that the migratory situation of said workers does not depend on their employers, and promoting the use of a standard contract that includes protections for migrant domestic workers;

• Intensify efforts to expand labour law protection to domestic workers and provide access to effective legal remedies for migrant domestic workers; and

• Take rigorous measures to regulate domestic work, prohibit the exploitation of migrant domestic workers, investigate the information contained in the death reports of migrant domestic workers, according to which these deaths are due to unnatural causes, and prosecute and punish the authors, if applicable.

› STATUS OF PROGRESS

The crisis situation in Lebanon is evident when looking at the soaring unemployment rate. As documented by ILO, Lebanon's unemployment rate increased from 11.4% in 2019-2018 to 29.6% in January 2022, indicating that almost one-third of the active labour force was unemployed in January 2022. More women than men are unemployed, with the female unemployment rate standing at 32.7% in comparison to the male rate (28.4%), while the youth rate (47.8%) is almost twice the adult rate (25.6%).

Given the rentier economy in Lebanon, the lack of sustainable and decent job generation is evident. Employment policies remain inadequate to address the informal sector and its associated issues as well: the majority of non-citizens, particularly Palestinian and Syrian refugees continue to work informally and they face several barriers to obtaining a legal work permit (for example, prohibitive cost) or regarding the sectors in which they are allowed to work. Although a small number of Palestinian and Syrian refugees who have official work permits are expected to contribute to the NSSF, they do not benefit from its protections (including healthcare coverage) due to the principle of reciprocity, among other barriers.

With regard to right to work, states are obliged to ensure fair wages, equal pay for equal work, and equal remuneration for work of equal value. However, in light of the crisis and financial collapse, the demand has shifted. Instead of focusing on improving and increasing wages, the main concern now is to defend wages and compensate for the financial collapse and inflation. This situation has led to salaries in both the public and private sectors losing about 90% and 95% of their value, respectively. The minimum wage was increased in the private sector yet fell far short of compensating for the loss in salaries due to inflation. This had a negative impact on security contributions, which were not raised in proportion to the minimal increases in the minimum wage. This reduction consequently affects end-of-service compensation and other benefits in the security sector.

Also in the public sector, compensation was made for the collapse in salaries, as 6/3 times the salary was paid. However, salaries did not

recover their value, which remained below 20% of what it was before the collapse. This has had major implications on core sectors, including education. The actual value of the end-of-service compensation amounts decreased to 2.7% of their previous value due to the collapse of the currency price, as compensation is paid at a price of 15 thousand dollars while its market price is 89 thousand pounds.

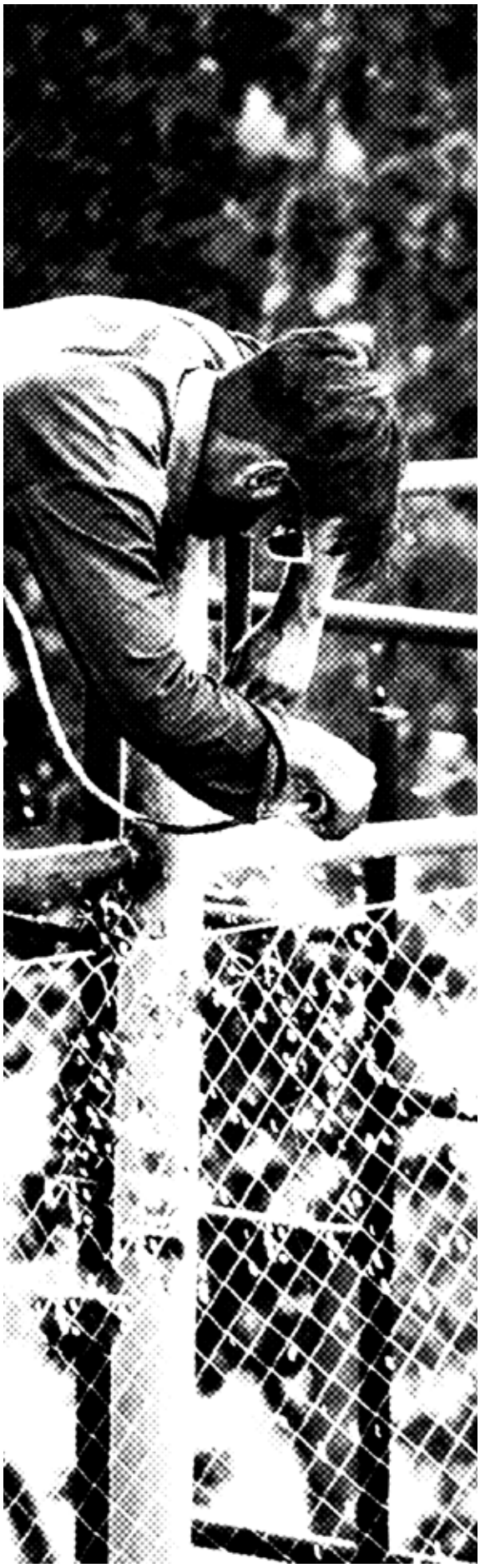
During the last review, the main focus of recommendations on the right to work was on migrant domestic workers given violations of the kafala system in Lebanon. (See the section below for the status of progress on the situation of migrant domestic workers.) Yet alongside migrant domestic workers and other marginalised groups including women, LGBTQ+ people, refugees continue to face discriminatory practices including abusive or nonexistent work contracts, unsafe workplace settings and culture, inequitable pay scales, discriminatory recruitment, and the absence of legally protected work guarantees.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Review trade and investment policies to support productive sectors at national level and ensure the adoption of a tax system that stimulates local productivity;

• Ensure employment with remuneration that enables workers and their families to enjoy an adequate standard of living as stipulated in article 7 (a) (ii) of the Covenant and Article 46 of the Labor Law;

• Abolish the requirement to obtain authorization to form a union, settle for a formal public notice like the Associations Law and liberate unions from the guardianship of the Ministry of Labor; and Ratify Agreement № 84 of the ILO relevant to freedom of association and union work.



RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation to all;

STATUS OF PROGRESS

Despite the fact that all population groups residing in Lebanon are increasingly facing dramatic challenges with accessing safe and sufficient quantities of water for drinking and domestic use, there was only one recommendation on the right to safe drinking water in Lebanon. As documented by UNCHR, the current economic breakdown has further undermined the poor Lebanese public water supply services, threatening the sector's financial viability and basic operability by sharply rising costs and lowering revenues.

The challenges regarding the water sector are further demonstrated by the recent cholera outbreak in Lebanon, with the first case confirmed on 5 October 2022. Inadequate supplies of safe water pose a huge risk to infants and young children, who are particularly vulnerable to water- and sanitation-related diseases, one of the leading causes of death for children under age 5 as UNICEF reports. The cholera outbreak has been linked to critical limitations in wastewater management and treatment, which has contributed to the contamination of surface and groundwater bodies with pollutants from household, agricultural, and industrial sewage. Wastewater treatment plants remain largely nonoperational under energy and cost restraints, and waste dumping from households, agriculture and industry remains unregulated.

Like in many other sectors, the private sector remains an alternative, yet its lack of public policies and services with a rights-based approach brings in challenges for affordability and accessibility for all. The average cost for 1,000 litres of trucked water reached 145,000 LBP in April 2022, an increase of almost 50% compared with the same month in 2021, and an almost sixfold increase compared with 2019. Trucked and private water supply is also largely unregulated, with the absence of monitoring and control on quality. In addition, most Lebanese households depend on bottled water for their drinking needs, in part because of concerns over the quality of tap water. In April 2022, the price of bottled water was three to five times what it was a year earlier. A family of five, drinking a total of 10 liters a day, would need to spend about LBP 6.5 million (USD 261) a year, in addition to the cost of water they use to meet their cooking and hygiene needs. Critically, the water crisis affects hospitals and other health centers, as well as schools.



Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Update and implement water sector legislation including Law 2000/221 organizing the water sector, amendments to the Water Code under Law 2020/192, and National Water Sector Strategy. Reforms and implementation should see the Ministry of Energy and Water and the central government empowering Regional Water Establishments (RWEs) through administrative autonomy, technical capacity and staffing in order to realize cost recovery objectives and reinvest in water service delivery.

• Empower municipalities and, in the long term, local water users associations, in the management and oversight over water resource provision and quality. Municipalities already play an interlocated role in water service delivery and are able to act as key negotiators in water management projects and mediators in water conflicts.

• Implement an updated tariff strategy driven by demand management, metering, billing and collecting. Tariff structure should not only take into account economic efficiency and cost recovery, but also fairness and equity among subscribers. Tariff restructuring should include dialogue with water users and a transitional phase in tariff payments. Revenue should be reinvested in the rehabilitation and expansion of water and wastewater networks

• Support the monitoring of water quality, through technical, financial and staffing capacities within RWEs. This should also be reflected in increasing public access to information and data on water supply and quality.



B. CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

This section looks at the status of recommendations received on Civil and Political rights including the right to independence of the judiciary, to access to justice, Right to life, liberty and security of persons, Right to identity , Freedom of Opinion, Expression and Belief in Lebanon, Freedom of Association, Respect the Principle of Periodic Elections and Reform Election Law, Right to Have a Private Life (LGBTIQ+ Rights in Lebanon), Missing and Enforced Disappearances.



INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Approve and implement laws to strengthen the independence of the judiciary in accordance with international standards.

• Guarantee the independence of the judiciary, in particular by adopting a law to this end, and fight against impunity, by completing an independent and credible investigation into the causes of and the assignment of responsibility in the explosion of 4 August 2020;

• Strengthen the rule of law, including by ensuring the independence of the judiciary;

• Continue efforts made to ensure the independence of the judiciary in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and

• Strengthen the independence of the judiciary and guarantee the right to fair trial by adopting laws to regulate the judiciary, and the administrative and financial powers, in line with international norms.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

The independence of the judiciary is a crucial need in Lebanon as it serves as a cornerstone to ensure fair trial and effective accountability. An independent judiciary is essential to counteract political interference and impartiality in both administrative and judicial judiciary.

REGARDING LEGISLATIVE REFORMS:

After five years of back-and-forth exchanges, the Administration and Justice Committee concluded on 2023/3/7 an amended version of the judicial judiciary draft law. Disappointingly, the version submitted fails to guarantee the principles of the independence of the judiciary, and neglects all recommendations given by the Venice Commission aiming to ensure that judicial independence is achieved. As for the independence of the administrative judiciary, there are currently two draft laws being discussed within the subcommittee of the administration and justice parliamentary committee, at a glacial pace entirely inconsistent with the urgency of this reform.

In March 2023, nine members of the Parliament introduced two draft laws that aim to amend article 751 of Lebanon's Code of Civil Procedure and article 52 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, both of which have been used to paralyze the investigation into the Beirut Port Blast Case and other investigations into financial crimes and allegations of fraud. Until now, the Parliament failed to initiate the discussion of these draft laws or to adopt any other provision to unblock the suspended judicial investigations.

On 19 December 2023, another subcommittee of the administration and justice parliamentary committee finalized reviewing a draft law on reforming the military court. While the draft law excludes trying civilians before the military court, gross violations of human rights such as torture and forced disappearance remain under its jurisdiction when committed by the military forces.

REGARDING MALPRACTICES:

Regarding the Port Blast Case, after the investigation was suspended for over a year due to dozens of disqualification and misjudging cases filed and the obstruction of these cases' examination via the shutdown of the General Assembly of the Court of Cassation, Judicial Council investigator Tarek Bitar issued a decision on 23 January 2023, with which he tried to take back control and overcome obstacles. Within hours he was met with the most ruthless coup against justice led by Cassation Public Prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat in which he took three unprecedented measures that led the Judicial Council investigator to defer the sessions for questioning the defendants until the charges against him were dropped.

On 22 February 2023, caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati sent a letter to several bodies asking them to take measures against judge Ghada Aoun for continuing her investigation into the

case of the 9 billion dollars smuggled abroad after 17 October 2019. Based on Mikati's letter, caretaker Minister of Interior Bassam Mawlawi sent another letter to the general directorates of State Security and Internal Security asking them not to aid or execute any order or decision issued by Aoun in any case. On 4 May 2023, Lebanon's Judicial Disciplinary Council issued a decision to fire Judge Ghada Aoun from the judiciary.

On 24 April 2023, caretaker Minister of Justice Henry Khoury issued two circulars rendering judges' freedom to express themselves, participate in seminars, and communicate with parties outside the judiciary contingent on prior permission. On 4 October 2023, the Judicial Inspection Authority interviewed members of the Lebanese Judges Association's board regarding a complaint that caretaker Minister of Justice filed against the association based on the media statements it had issued.

DYSFUNCTIONAL JUDICIARY DUE TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS:

Due to the financial crisis in Lebanon in 2019, judges and court clerks have been suffering from a dysfunctional work environment both materially and morally, the collapse of the purchasing power of their salaries, as for the unbearable conditions of their neglected workplaces. Such a situation is becoming a real threat to the right to access to justice as well as to the financial independence of judges.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Adopt and implement, within a reasonable timeframe, the two bills on the independence of the judicial judiciary and administrative judiciary by the Venice Commission's recommendations and international standards of judicial independence.

• Adopt and implement the two bills amending article 751 of the Code of Civil Procedure and Article 52 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to stop the practices obstructing justice in the port case and any other important cases, and more generally to take all measures necessary to unblock the investigations in the blast case and financial crimes.

• Adopt and implement the draft law regarding military court, to limit its jurisdiction to military cases, and to exclude its jurisdiction regarding the crimes committed by civilians or the gross violations of human rights.

• Ensure the freedom of expression of judges and lawyers as being a guarantee to their independence.

• Prioritize restoring a sound environment for judicial work and to implement a wage correction of the judges and clerks.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE/ TORTURE IN LEBANON

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Implement the anti-torture law and binding international treaties, including by operationalizing the national preventive mechanism;

• Step up its efforts to fully operationalize the national human rights institution and the committee for the prevention of torture, to combat impunity and ensure appropriate judicial procedures;

• Uphold the principle of nonrefoulement as per commitments under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

• Bring the anti-torture law into compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and ensure its full implementation;

• Fully implement the 2017 anti-torture law;

• Comply with domestic and international anti-torture obligations, including by increasing oversight and investigative capabilities;

• Continue the necessary steps to consistently implement the anti-torture law;

• Establish an independent complaints mechanism empowered to investigate acts of torture and ill-treatment; and

• Ensure that all reported acts of torture and ill-treatment against law enforcement officers are investigated promptly and impartially.
Status of Progress

CRIMINALIZATION OF TORTURE

On 20 October 2017, Law no. 65 on "Punishing Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment" was enacted by introducing amendments to the Penal Code, specifically to Article 401 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

However, Law 65 fails to comply with the standards established in the UN Convention against Torture – that Lebanon ratified in 2000 – and recommendations made during the 2nd and 3rd cycles of the UPR particularly related to the prohibition of torture & ill-treatment including cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and the Constitutional & legislative framework.

BELOW ARE THE LAW'S MOST SIGNIFICANT SHORTCOMINGS:

• It does not criminalize ill-treatment and it does not criminalize attempts;

• It is restricted to only cover acts committed "during the initial investigation, judicial investigation and trials";

• It continues to allow military courts jurisdiction in torture cases;

• It includes statutes of limitations between 10-3 years depending on the gravity of the crime;

• It fails to establish penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime; and

• It does not provide a procedure for providing reparations to victims.

Since Law No 2017-65 has not been implemented in practice and includes shortcomings, the International Community remains persistent in requesting the amendment of its provisions to better align them with the applicable conventions and international criteria. Therefore, Restart Center developed a draft law amending law 65 aiming at fixing the existing gaps to make it applicable

EFFECTIVE LEGAL SAFEGUARDS: ACCESS TO A LAWYER AND MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

A draft law on the amendment of Article 47 of Law 191 of the Lebanese Penal Code was developed and submitted to the Lebanese Parliamentary Committee of Administration and Justice in June 2020, and consequently adopted by the Lebanese Parliament in October

2020. This newly amended article provides detainees and criminal suspects with fundamental legal safeguards to prevent arbitrary detention torture and ill-treatment during the first period of arrest. The provision allows detainees at the very early stage of arrest to meet with his/her lawyer with full secrecy, prior to signing the proxy to benefit from pro bono representation, to have access to a sworn/non-sworn translator, to be consulted by a forensic doctor specialized in physical or mental health upon request, to have the right of medical care without any rejection.

Nevertheless, there are well-founded concerns that these improvements are not implemented in practice by the judicial police and the judicial system more broadly. Indeed, they are facing major challenges that are mainly shortcomings within the following:

• The Forensic Department at the Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for appointing forensic doctors by a decision from Judges, lacks a functional structure and financial resources. Additionally, forensic doctors are not well trained on several issues mainly on Human Rights, torture practices and Istanbul Protocol. And therefore, the assigned forensic doctors are not able to detect violations and ignore other aspects of documentation of torture and ill-treatment.

• The government is unable to install the CCTV system in all places of detention in Lebanon, as required by the newly amended Article 47 due to the shortage in financial resources.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Adopt the draft law on the amendment of the provisions of Law 65, to remedy the current shortcomings and better align them with the applicable conventions and international norms and standards.

• Call for effective implementation of law 65 after 4 years of its enactment to ensure redress according to the General Comment no 4 of the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT).

• Monitor the implementation of Article 47 of the Criminal Procedure Code to effectively guarantee continued access to a lawyer and legal representation during all stages of the criminal investigation and a prompt medical examination by the Istanbul Protocol without charge to the accused and to establish CCTVs in the investigation rooms.

• Ensure the effectiveness of the criminal legal aid system by financing prompt and free legal services for those who do not have sufficient means to pay for representation.

• Reform the forensic department at the Ministry of Justice to systematize the mandate of forensic doctors and their responsibilities towards the judicial system by international standards, build their capacities and improve their knowledge.



RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY & SECURITY OF PERSONS

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Lebanon has received several recommendations which are related to the abolition of the death penalty, however, all of them were noted and not supported.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

The death penalty remains a common provision used in cases provided for by the Lebanese Punishment Law and the Military Justice Law. However, there has been an unofficial moratorium on executions since 2004, and thus no executions have been carried out since then to date.

In 2020 and 2022, Lebanon voted in favor of the United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty, but Lebanon did not adopt the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which calls for the abolition of the death penalty.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Formally ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the abolition of the death penalty.

• Adoptan official moratorium on the death penalty.

• Strengthen fair trial guarantees and extend the deadlines for appealing criminal court decisions.

• Amend the Lebanese Penal Code and the Military Justice Code to abolish all provisions that stipulate the death penalty.

• Amend the Penal Implementation Law No. 2002/463 and its amendments, especially Article 4 thereof, which stipulates that a person sentenced to the death penalty shall benefit from a reduction, which will become an integrated, constructive, and applicable law by eliminating its incapacitating conditions.

• Integrate the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture into domestic Lebanese law.

RIGHT TO IDENTITY

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Take measures towards reducing and preventing statelessness (noted)

STATUS OF PROGRESS

Lebanon has not yet addressed the persistent problem of inconsistent procedures for civil documentation registration at the Personal Status Department in each governorate.[1] This issue causes various challenges, including unpredictable and inconsistent administrative fees and disparities in documents and procedures across different regions. For refugees, these challenges are frequently compounded by a shortage of essential documents due to loss, damage, or difficulties in obtaining replacements.[2] There is also a fear of being detained at various checkpoints, facing discrimination within public administrations, and having a limited understanding of the necessary procedures and required documents.[3]

Unregistered individuals are deprived of access to crucial services such as health care, education, and employment. Moreover, they encounter difficulties in moving freely and conducting basic transactions. Lebanon lacks any legal framework for stateless persons, and therefore any records of registration for the category of "stateless/unregistered". Consequently, these people are born, live, and die without having anything, or the official authorities, proving their presence on Lebanese territory. As a result, they do not enjoy any of their basic human rights. As for the second category of stateless people in Lebanon, known as "under consideration," it is a group that has a legal existence and enjoys some basic rights, the most important of which are legal existence and some civil, economic, and social rights. However, its features, history, and solutions are still subject to multiple interpretations. It has been "under study" for decades, as this problem is transmitted from one generation to another[4].

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Standardize the civil documentation registration procedures at different levels across various regions of Lebanon, including the fees and required documents, by actively monitoring and enforcing the unified application of the law

• Work towards amending the personal status law to reduce complexity, streamline civil documentation processes, and establish a civil uniform procedure applicable across all sects.

• Allocate sufficient funding to address logistical challenges faced by institutions involved in civil documentation processes

• Increase the financial resources allocated to the judiciary system, specifically for logistics and procurement, to expedite the processing of cases.



FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Respect, protect and fulfil fully the right to freedom of expression and association, and take action to protect journalists and activists, and to fully enable non-governmental organizations and civil society to conduct their activities freely and safely.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

Civic space for civil society continues to shrink, as authorities and security agencies increase their crackdown against civil society organisations, especially those among them providing services to Syrian refugees. The government now requires that associations get permission to enter refugee camps from governors and the Mosa. Authorities have also issued ad-hoc decisions demanding NGOs their internal data, data on their beneficiaries, etc. In addition, law enforcement officials, and even non-state actors, have used unauthorized and disproportionate force against protesters during anti-government demonstrations between 2019 and 2021.[8]

The latest UPR review of Lebanon did not include any recommendations on the collective bargaining and the right of all workers to form and join a trade union of their choice without fear yet several practices continue in Lebanon violating these right. For instance the latest media draft law, formulated by the Lebanese Parliament's Administration and Justice Committee, mandates the existence of only one media syndicate, constraining the rights of journalists and media workers to freely join and establish associations.[5]Public sector employees are restricted from forming unions as per the 1959 Public Sector Staff Regulation and are excluded from provisions of the general labor law.

The Ministry of Labor still does not recognize the workers' union formed by migrant workers in Lebanon, due to limitations imposed by the Lebanese Labor law and its denial of foreigners the right to elect or be elected as union representatives.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• mend Law Decree No. 112 issued in 1959 to allow civil servants to form associations.

• Enable civil society organizations to fully conduct their activities freely and safely.

• Ensure that the new media law is amended in accordance with the protection of the rights of media professionals to freedom of association.

• Recognize the migrant workers' union.



FREEDOM OF OPINION, EXPRESSION AND BELIEF IN LEBANON

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Ensure adequate investigation into all attacks against journalists, media professionals, bloggers, and human rights defenders and ensure full implementation of the rule of law;

• Continue thoroughly investigating reports of violence, harassment, and intimidation of journalists, media professionals, bloggers, human rights defenders, and activists, and take appropriate measures;

• Protect the right of media professionals to freedom of expression;

• Take additional measures to further enhance the safety of journalists, and implement the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity;

• Uphold the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including by ending detention of people for expressing views critical of the government and ensuring security forces exercise restraint in response to protests;

• Ensure unimpeded access for all people in Lebanon to both local and foreign media, including during protests;

• Promote and uphold the right to freedom of expression, including press freedom, and to ensure that legislation and State practice are brought into line with article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

• Respect, protect and fulfil fully the right to freedom of expression and association, and take action to protect journalists and activists, and to fully enable non-governmental organizations and civil society to conduct their activities freely and safely;

• Ensure freedom of expression and assembly, and prevent violence against peaceful demonstrators;

• Take necessary steps to ensure the safety of journalists and peaceful protesters as a way of guaranteeing freedom of expression and assembly;

• Guarantee the freedom of expression and opinion and conduct investigations into attacks against journalists;

• Ensure that the new media law is amended by its international obligations; and

• Guarantee freedom of expression and opinion online and offline.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

Any description of the situation of media and cultural freedoms in Lebanon, in terms of challenges and violations in the period extending from the year 2021 until today, can only start from three basic events. The first is the assassination of writer Luqman Slim in 2021, the second is the relative victory of unconventional political options in the parliamentary elections in2022, and the third is the end of the era of President Michel Aoun and the country entering a state of presidential vacuum also in 2022. The frequency of assaults and beatings on journalists by members of armed militias or their supporters and other parties increased in 2021, reaching 33 out of 117 violations.

The strongest message was to silence mouths through for instance the assassination of the Lebanese writer Luqman Slim in February 2021, who was vocal in his opposition to "Hezbollah", which was the first to attack activists in the 17 October 2019 uprising.This adds to the Tayouneh clashes, which played an important role in militarizing public discourse in the Beirut Port case regarding the work of Judge Tariq Al-Bitar. All of these events were accompanied by the phenomenon of moral assassination on social networking sites, which affected both Tariq Al-Bitar and Luqman Slim before and after the assassination through betrayal and incitement.

In 2022, Lebanon recorded a significant decline, according to the Press Freedom Index issued by Reporters Without Borders, with journalists being exposed to physical attacks and threats by "ideological" electronic armies on social media sites. In light of these accelerating events against freedom of expression, the repressive path was judicial par excellence. Prison sentences and summonses of comedians multiplied over the content on social media sites, reaching the point of banning a student play that satirizes the Lebanese crises. This is conclusive evidence that authoritarian violations do not provide any intellectual production in Lebanon. As the economic crisis worsened in Lebanon, media institutions were greatly affected, resulting in the closure of newspapers due to scarcity of funding and the absence of economic models truly capable of addressing the economic crisis.

The latest media draft law, which was formulated by the Lebanese Parliament's Administration and Justice Committee, is poised to further deteriorate the right of freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Lebanon. Criminal penalties, increased fines, and prison sentences for insults and defamation are some of the measures being weaponized against Lebanese journalists and human rights activists to suppress their voices.[6]

Several violations have occured, indicating restrictions imposed in Lebanon despite recommendations calling for insuring freedom of expression. For instance On 10th July 2023, Judge Rosine Hojeili sentenced journalist Dima Sadek to a one-year prison term, deprivation of civil rights, and a fine of 110 million Lebanese pounds ($7,316) in a case filed by the Free Patriotic Movement. The charges against her included spreading false news, inciting sectarian and racist tensions and provoking conflicts between the sects. She was also charged with libel, defamation and insult, which are crimes specified in Lebanese penal law. Dima Sadek had previously faced criminal prosecution and investigation by the Central Criminal Investigations Office under the supervision of the Prosecutor General, based on a criminal complaint filed by the Free Patriotic Movement against her in February 2020. This complaint came in response to her sharing a widely circulated video of a sectarian nature featuring a young man from the Tripoli region being beaten by individuals claiming they belong to the Free Patriotic Movement in the Keserwan region. She commented on the incident using the following phrase: "Another attack by the party, hitting him on the head and throwing him into the sewers, telling him, 'Aoun is the crown on your head and Tripoli's head.'"

On 6th June 2023, the Anti-Cybercrime and Intellectual Property Bureau summoned journalists Rabih Farran and Rihab Daher, and also summoned journalist Pascale Abou Nader from the Elnashra website on 20th June 2023.

On 18th May 2023, Hayat Mirshad, journalist and editor-in-chief of online news outlet Sharika wa Laken and executive director of an NGO known as Fe-Male, was summoned by the Internal Security Forces' (ISF) Anti-Cybercrime and Intellectual Property Bureau due to a slander and defamation complaint filed against her by theatre director Joe Kodeih. The summons was issued in relation to the news outlet's call to boycott a play written and directed by Kodeih, in solidarity with women and girl survivors who came forward to expose Kodeih's sexual and physical harassment.

On 31st March 2023, the Cybercrimes Bureau summoned journalist Lara Bitar, editor-in-chief of The Public Source, based on a complaint filed by the Lebanese Forces after publishing an article on the toxic waste that threatens large areas in Lebanon. Bitar's case was later moved from the Cybercrime Bureau to the Publications Court.Lebanese activists, journalists, and comedians have been met with repression and arbitrary arrests by the Public Prosecutor.[7] Laws on defamation, slander, and criticism of public officials and symbols continue to be used arbitrarily to restrict the freedom of expression of those who denounce corruption and criticize powerful figures in Lebanon. Yet. most attacks against journalists and media workers in Lebanon have been so far unprosecuted.[9]

In 2022 and 2023, a crackdown on LGBTQIA+ assemblies significantly increased, with MoIM issuing a ban on events and assemblies and non-state actors assaulting LGBTQIA+ marches and events.

After the national currency lost its value incrementally against the US dollar, the salaries of workers in the media sector were affected, and they lost even their minimum recognized rights, especially medical care and insurance. In the year 2023, the unjust sentences against journalists continued, reaching the point of imprisonment and deprivation of civil rights, with a massive attack, whether by some Lebanese parties, spiritual leaders, or some pillars of power, against the LGBT community, in addition to ways to report security summons against them. Journalists are outside all legal frameworks, and can only be described as a form of repressive and intimidating practices in police states. The Beirut Bar Association Council also joined the policy of silencing mouths and against lawyers in particular to suppress their media appearances or domesticate them. Finally, the most dangerous type of violation stands out, which is Israel intentionally targeting journalists with artillery and missile shelling on the southern border and inside safe villages and committing a war crime against them that led to the killing of journalist Issam Abdullah, reporter Farah Omar, and photographer Rabih Maamari, and the injury of more than seven other journalists.



Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Ensure that the new media law is amended by the protection of the rights of media professionals to freedom of expression, and emphasize limiting the hearing of publishing crimes to the Publications Court, in addition to defining the tasks of the National Media Council, clarifying its powers, and holding periodic elections and appointments for its members

• Promote the active participation of human rights organizations, journalists, and other stakeholders in any legal reform affecting freedom of expression.

• Prevent violence against peaceful demonstrators and ensure that security forces exercise restraint in response to protests.

• Ensure adequate investigation into all attacks against activists, protestors, journalists, media professionals, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

• Take necessary steps to ensure the safety of LGBTQIA+ peaceful assemblies.

• Abolish the principle of prior censorship, and transfer the authority to review the presentation of cinematic, photographic, and theatrical works from the Lebanese General Security to the Ministry of Culture

• Review the legislation on defamation, libel, and slander and align them with international standards, and the right to critique all state institutions without exception should be established. The Public Prosecution should not have the authority to automatically initiate a lawsuit in such cases. Legislative texts granting the military judiciary the power to prosecute crimes related to expression and publication of information concerning the army and security institutions, or those that may tarnish their reputation, should also be revised.

RESPECT THE PRINCIPLE OF PERIODIC ELECTIONS AND REFORM ELECTION LAW

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON

• There is no specific recommendation which is related to the right to free and fair elections in

STATUS OF PROGRESS

In May 2022, when the Lebanese government organized parliamentary elections, it was portrayed as a democratic achievement, although it is a regular entitlement that should take place periodically, every four years. This overshadowed the postponement of another equally important democratic entitlement, which is municipal elections.

In 2023, the Lebanese parliament voted to extend the terms of local officials, paving the way to postpone municipal elections for up to a year, until May 2024, for the second time. This decision was made under the pretext that the government would not be able to secure the needed funding in time for polling. It also coincided with legislators in the deeply divided parliament being unable to reach a settlement to end a presidential vacuum that started in October 2022.

Lebanon's municipal elections were initially scheduled for May 2022 but were postponed for a year because they coincided with parliamentary elections. The government used this as an excuse to delay the municipal elections, treating them as of secondary importance, despite all elections holding the same constitutional and democratic significance.

The two postponements in 2022 and 2023 highlight the government's consistent disregard for the constitution, the law, and the rights of the people to choose their representatives at the local level. The financial shortage, cited as a pretext for prolonging the election delay, is not valid, especially in light of the repeated allocation of funds by the cabinet for numerous unrelated matters, such as medicine and gas.

Furthermore, the obstruction of one democratic path, namely the election of a president, should not impede other democratic paths, particularly local elections. Officials are using the presidential vacuum as an excuse not to hold elections, even though municipal elections took place in 2016 despite the presidential vacuum back then.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Conduct the municipal elections in May 2024 without any further postponement.

• Add an article to the constitution that prevents the amendment of the electoral law one year before any elections.

• Prepare all electoral centers and stations to accommodate citizens with disabilities.

• Prevent delegates from accompanying voters inside the isolated voting box, to avoid disclosure of ballot secrecy.

• Strictly prevent the use of public resources and places for electoral purposes.

RIGHT TO HAVE A PRIVATE LIFE (LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS IN LEBANON)

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Fight against harassment and intimidation of journalists, lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and intersex persons and human rights defenders, and ensure strict respect for the right to peaceful protest .

STATUS OF PROGRESS

Most of the relevant recommendations were not supported. However, one recommendation was supported by Lebanon.

Despite Lebanon's legal advancements, the state has yet to effectively address the issue, resulting in ongoing violations against LGBTIQ+ individuals, evident in both governmental practices and societal reactions. The presence of Article 534 significantly disrupts the daily lives of LGBTIQ+ individuals, empowering extremist groups, religious leaders, and even government officials to take severe actions against them. Fearing discrimination and arrest based on their sexual orientation, LGBTIQ+ individuals are hesitant to report crimes or seek justice, noting that if convicted, they may endure a five-year waiting period to petition for expungement from their criminal record.

In the relentless pursuit of repealing Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code, Proud Lebanon, in collaboration with certain members of the Lebanese Parliament, submitted a bill last July. The initiative garnered attention, prompting lawmakers, ministers, and religious figures to vehemently oppose it. As a counterattack, two anti-LGBTIQ+ laws were proposed by Minister Mortada and MP Ashraf Rifi that not only aimed at increasing penalties for advocating or supporting LGBTIQ+ rights, but also criminalizing discussions about homosexuality.
In June 2022, the former Interior Minister, Bassam Mawlawi, issued a decree at the request of religious authorities, banning all gatherings organized or potentially organized by LGBTIQ+ individuals. This led to the cancellation of events related to Pride Month and subjected some establishments to social media intimidation and security raids. The minister's decision provided legal, security, and societal cover for the targeting of LGBTIQ+ individuals and supportive spaces. Some religious figures condemned homosexuality, contributing to increased societal and security pressures on this community.

Following legal challenges, the Lebanese State Shura Council (The State Administrative Judiciary Council) suspended in November 2023 the ban on LGBTIQ+ events. However, Mawlawi issued a second directive prohibiting any conference or gathering promoting homosexuality due to alleged security concerns. In December 2023, legal activists filed another appeal against Mawlawi's directive before the Shura Council.

The government's failure to act on these recommendations allowed for continued incitement against this community. Notably, extremist groups, like "Soldiers of the Lord," threatened and attacked LGBTIQ+ individuals, contributing to a climate of fear. The official and unofficial suppression of freedom of expression included the deliberate neglect of law enforcement duties and physical attacks by extremist groups. In a particularly concerning incident, a nightclub frequented by LGBTIQ+ individuals was attacked by "Soldiers of the Lord". Despite pleas for intervention, security forces claimed inability and cited negligence in protecting personal rights and freedoms. The film "Barbie," produced in 2023, faced censorship by the Minister of Culture M. Mortada, further restricting the representation of LGBTIQ+ themes in media.

The hostile environment towards the LGBTIQ+ community extended to the Beirut Bar Association, where the head of the syndicate (back in 2023, Nader Gaspard) personally endorsed and sponsored the signing of an anti-LGBTIQ book organized within the association. The sequence of these incidents prompted human rights alliances in Lebanon to

arrange a protest addressing the increasing rights violations. Originally intended as a march against human rights abuses and oppressions, it was downsized to a stationary demonstration in response to threats received . Despite heightened security measures, aggressive individuals were able to assault protesters without any assurance of state protection for the demonstrators, leading law enforcement to relocate them for their safety. The worsening human rights situation in Lebanon is a major cause for concern, characterized by targeted attacks, suppression, and a hostile atmosphere towards LGBTIQ+ individuals and their supporters.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Repeal Article 534 of the Penal Code to eliminate the criminalization of consensual same-sex relationships, aligning with international standards.

• Explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in national legislation

• Ensure the actual enjoyment of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly for LGBTIQ+ individuals by amending laws .

• Provide comprehensive training to law enforcement personnel to fulfill their duties impartially, preventing negligence in protecting personal rights and freedoms, and ensuring swift response to attacks or threats against LGBTIQ+ individuals and their supporters.

• Overturn ministerial or administrative directives ban on gatherings organized by LGBTIQ+ individuals, ensuring that security concerns do not unjustly curtail the rights of this community to peacefully assemble and express themselves.

• Take decisive action to combat extremist groups like "Soldiers of the Lord," responsible for threatening and attacking LGBTIQ+ individuals, ensuring their activities are monitored and countered effectively to prevent further harm.

• Encourage diverse and inclusive media representation by rejecting censorship of LGBTIQ+ themes.



MISSING AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Continue efforts to address the problem of missing and forcibly disappeared persons;

• Investigate unresolved cases of disappeared and missing persons that occurred during the civil war; and

• Continue making an effort to investigate open cases of missing persons.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

Despite the establishment of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, tasked with investigating cases of missing and involuntarily disappeared individuals, locating and exhuming mass graves, facilitating a tracing process, and establishing reparation mechanisms for victims and their families, there has been limited progress in this regard.

Although the Commission has outlined a clear strategy for its operations, it has not received the essential resources from the government to fulfill its mandate, including the required financial and logistical support.

Lebanon has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to date, despite the Council of Ministers' approval of it and the referral of a draft law in this regard to the House of Representatives in 2007.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Ensure that the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared is equipped with the essential resources needed to effectively fulfill its mandate.

• Conduct comprehensive, prompt, and transparent investigations into reported cases of enforced disappearances, taking necessary actions to search for and locate disappeared persons or their remains.

• Implement appropriate measures to safeguard potential mass graves, preserving crucial information that may be vital for any future truth-seeking processes.



C.WOMEN'S RIGHTS



DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Continue to introduce law reforms where applicable and implement programs to ensure gender equality;

• Further strengthen national laws to prevent gender-based exploitation and discrimination.

• Increase its efforts in curbing discrimination against women and children;

• Continue its efforts to achieve an equitable representation of women in the public and political spheres, including in legislative and executive bodies;

• Continue to implement legislation to empower women in decision-making and create economic independence;

• Continue strengthening women's rights in the participation of political and public life;

• Continue progress in increasing the participation of women in public life, including in elected government positions, the judiciary and the armed services;

• Ensure greater inclusion of women in the various public administration structures and update the laws that support them;

• Take additional measures to put an end to forced marriages of women and girls;

• Enhance measures to protect women and children from all forms of violence, including domestic violence;

• Reform its current domestic violence law in line with international standards;

• Strengthen the efforts aimed at combating violence against women;

• Take practical steps to implement the laws on violence against women and domestic violence, and raise awareness among the wider public;

• Take measures to effectively combat domestic violence against women, in particular migrant domestic workers; and

• Adopt the draft law criminalizing sexual harassment and develop a national action plan to prevent sexual harassment both within and outside the workplace.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

In the last two years, resistance and backlash against gender equality in Lebanon, perpetrated by State actors and the community (including non-state actors and the wider population), have become more rampant and evident. Unprecedented statements by government officials and prominent representatives de-prioritizing the importance of women's and girls' rights have been openly expressed without any consideration for their obligations under international human rights declarations and treaties to which the Lebanese State is committed. In March 2023, one minister questioned whether improving women's political participation and addressing early marriage should be the top priority and de-prioritized them by suggesting they will not "solve the crisis". Civil society organisations working towards progressing the gender equality agenda in the country have been among the main targets of this backlash. CSOs working with marginalized groups have also faced different types and forms of backlash, with varying intensities.

The legislative policy of the Lebanese state affirms that the state continues to resist an anti-violence approach against women and rejects recognizing that there is specificity in the nature of violence against women which requires special measures to protect them. This is achieved through laws specifically designed to safeguard women and criminalize violence perpetrated against them. These laws have been always fought by the patriarchal parliament and the state, hence opposing the creation of any law

either protective of women or that can help women regain their power in a society where personal status laws are prevailing, giving full power to men. Undoubtedly, women's protection will remain deficient within the framework of personal status laws that grant absolute authority within the family to men and impose obedience on women. These laws discriminate against women and among women, especially in custody, alimony, marriage, and divorce conditions.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The patriarchal legislative approach for the Lebanese state was translated in the year 2014 when the law "protection of women and other family members from family violence" number 293 was endorsed, following a six-year campaign led by a coalition of feminists' organizations and the civil society. This effort aimed at advocating for a legislation dedicated to the strict protection of women from family violence, which is tragically leading to women's killings within the family, particularly at the hands of their spouses.

Unfortunately, numerous elements from the proposed law were removed after its submission and subsequent discussions in the parliament. On top of that, the state of Lebanon through its parliament considered that the violence inflicted on women within families is not different from the violence that affects all family members, both men and women. This perspective led the parliament to pass the law protecting women and all family members from family violence in 2014, contrary to the demands of the feminists' organizations, which advocated for the law to focus solely on the protection of women.

Intensive advocacy efforts were initiated to reinstate the eliminated provisions essential for achieving the goals of this law, particularly in safeguarding women from family violence.

On 30 December 2020, the General Assembly of the Lebanese Parliament approved the Law No. 2020/204 that was then published in the Official Gazette on 7 January 2021.With the enactment of this law, some amendments providing more protection for women were implemented. However, the patriarchal legislative mindset still prevailing in the parliament to this day, continues to resist the allocation of specific protections for women. Their argument is that protection should encompass all family members, including men. However, this position negatively impacts the protection of women, particularly in a patriarchal society where men wield significant control as granted by personal status laws.

It is important to note that the adjustments applied through the law number 204 were the following:

• Expansion of the family circle for it to include the ex-husband by adding the following sentence: "occurring during or because of marriage".

• Implementing the protection order by the Public Prosecution.

• Increasing the severity of the penalty for violating the protection order. Anyone who violates the protection order shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of up to one year and by a fine of up to two times the minimum wage or one of these two penalties.

• The reliance on specialization in family violence complaints at each stage of the trial. Therefore, the law states in its article 4 the following: "in addition to a family attorney general, there is a family Investigating Judge and a family Criminal Court Single Judge.

• The submission of a protection request by a minor without the need for her guardian.

• The criminalization of moral/psychological and economic violence and allocation of a penalty to the perpetrator.

• Partial amendment of the child protection request with the victim has been made. Previously, under Law number 204, children involved de facto in the restraining order referred

to those children who fell under the age of legal custody as per the provisions of personal status laws. However, with the enactment of the new law, children automatically included in the protection order are those aged 13 and below.

Despite the progress achieved through legal amendments, there remains a substantial journey ahead. Presently, we continue to advocate for the inclusion and implementation of provisions that have not yet been added.In fact, the state of Lebanon has never acknowledged the injustice and violence faced by women.

Consequently, it does not favor the establishment of laws exclusively for women but consistently seeks to integrate them with others in the society as if their reality resembles that of others by having the same rights. This is indeed very far from the truth. Therefore, after examining the conditions of women and their exposure to various forms of increasing and diverse types of violence, and after observing the inadequacy of existing legislation to meet the required needs in terms of prevention, pursuit, protection, criminalization, and provision of necessary services, as well as compensation for the harm suffered by the victims, a comprehensive legislation addressing violence against women was a necessity to achieve these objectives. The draft law has been finalized and will be made available to all political parties for endorsement and signature as a preliminary step before its submission to the parliament.

This law is expected to contribute to changing the reality of women in Lebanon because, for the first time, it is specifically dedicated to them. It will help alleviate the injustices faced by women and enshrined in several provisions of different Lebanese laws that the Lebanese state, through its parliament, seems indifferent to amending.

It is very important to note that sometimes, the general situation in Lebanon may obstruct the application of the law number 293. In reality, the conditions in Lebanon, especially the economic crisis, have negatively affected the protection of women, and the matter was translated as follows:

- Reduction in incarceration/arrest decisions.

- Reduction in the effectiveness of the compulsion fine.

- Consideration of the economic situation of the perpetrator.

- Increase in the cost of court fees.

The obstruction of the application of this law was further exacerbated by the judges' strike, which was declared on the night of 16 August 2022, with work commencing on the morning of 17 August.

For the first time, the strike involved the majority of judges and lasted until approximately the end of the year. During this period, no protection orders were issued by the judges, and there was no implementation of rulings, including those issued before the strike, such as custody or visitation rights with the child. Additionally, no complaints were received during this time.

Manifestly, the repercussions were detrimental, leading to irreparable damages. It resulted in a state of total chaos, particularly impacting women and reinforcing the notion of impunity among criminals. This was exacerbated by the obstruction of the application of judicial rulings previously issued in cases of family violence.
On another note, throughout 2023, there were ongoing training sessions for internal security forces aroundthe following subjects: terminology of violence and power, causes of violence,ts types and effects, effective communication techniques and challenges. The local legal framework for family violence was also addressed along with the Role of Internal Security Forces in dealing with Victims of Family Violence. The training was crucial for the better understanding of the law and its various amendments. What distinguished these training from past ones was the presence of females' internal security forces beside males as a result of the integration of female personnel to respond to the hotline for family violence (1745). This step is pivotal and is expected to significantly enhance the well-being and safety of women.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

• Family violence is often rooted in the prevailing religious personal status laws. Lebanon is a country recognizing 18 different religious sects for which there are 15 different laws having one thing in common: being discriminatory against women and undermining their rights on so many levels such as custody, divorce and inheritance. These laws are the main obstacle to equality within the family and the reason behind violence against women. Besides that, these laws provide significant power to men, placing them at the top of the family hierarchy and fostering the belief that they are solely responsible for every female member in the family. Religious personal status laws have consistently played a role in reinforcing patriarchal norms and masculinity in the society, placing women in positions inferior to men, expected to follow their decisions in a subordinate manner compared to the authority that men often hold. In response to these challenges, KAFA has embarked on an extensive and segmented campaign, building upon various initiatives. As a result, a unified personal status law has been drafted. The draft law was signed by nine members of the parliament representing various political parties and groups following many meetings, discussions and advocacy efforts. This support will be fundamental in the parliamentary deliberations that are supposed to happen after KAFA submitted the legislative proposal to the parliament on 14 December 2022 (reference number of the law 2022/1272). This law is likely to result in a multitude of advantages such as ensuring equality among all citizens in terms of rights and duties within the family. The draft law stipulates that all Lebanese citizens would stand before the same court, which is the civil court, while ensuring that the law will be applied equally to all individuals. Its endorsement will abolish sectarian pluralism in personal status laws and promote the concept of citizenship while preserving freedom of belief along with setting a unified minimum age for marriage and prohibiting the marriage of minors. One of the main changes in this law is the replacement of paternal authority with parental authority, creating a real partnership within the family. It is very important to note that the unified personal status law is different from all previous proposals for a civil marriage, and this law indeed affirms that women are equal to men, and are not under their guardianship. It does so by granting women an individual section in the records, signifying that they, too, can head their own families and have the independence to detach from any man in their lives whenever they choose to. This is what the state denies to women, under the pretext that the Lebanese system cannot afford to grant them an individual section. However, it is both feasible and possible, as evidenced in the situation of single mothers.

• Lebanon adopted the National Action Plan to Prevent and Mitigate Child Marriage in Lebanon (2025-2020) prepared by the Ministry of Social Affairs, with technical support from UNICEF and which is a multisectoral strategy that includes prevention and mitigation interventions to achieve a 60% reduction in child marriage in Lebanon by 2025. However, Parliament continues to debate a proposal to set a unified minimum age for marriage across all sects.

• The penal code is still one of the main discrimination areas against women. Articles 489-487 of the Criminal Code, as amended by Article 3 of Law No. 2014/293, criminalize adultery between a man and a woman. Under article 541 of the Criminal Code, abortion is a criminal offence and both women who undergo them and individuals who perform them are subject to severe penalties. While there is no explicit exception to the criminalization of abortion in the Criminal Code, women may benefit from "attenuating circumstances" (article 545). Under article 522 of the Penal Code, prosecution was dropped against a perpetrator of the crime of rape and adultery if he married the victim. This article was removed in 2017. Yet despite this amendment, exoneration from punishment remains for anyone perpetrating other specific crimes whose circumstances fall within Articles 505 or 518 of the aforementioned law if he marries his victim. Marital rape is not criminalized. However, the definition of rape explicitly excludes sexual intercourse under coercion within the context of marriage under

Articles 503 and 504 of the Penal Code of 1943, and Law 293 criminalizes harm resulting from marital relationships by coercion.

• Article 523 of the Penal Code criminalizes anyone who exploits or facilitates sex. Articles 526 and 527 of the Penal Code prohibit forced prostitution and using the 'prostitution' of others to make a living. Despite prostitution being legally prohibited in Lebanon, an average of 3,000 women are recruited to Lebanon each year through the Artist Visa Scheme as "entertainers in super night clubs" to be sexually exploited in the country. Operated by the General Directorate of the General Security (GDGS), the 6-month so-called Artist Visa scheme systematically puts migrant women under debt and restriction of movement that is formalized in a tripartite contract between the Artist, the night club owner, and the GDGS.

• In December 2020, parliament passed law 205 criminalizing sexual harassment, which provided important protections by making sexual harassment a crime and outlining whistleblower protections. The law contains whistleblower protections and prohibits discrimination, abuse, or disciplinary measures against people who report harassment or testify about the abuse. However, several concerns may be raised that could diminish the law's effectiveness for protecting harassment victims, especially in the workplace, due to many obstacles in the administration of the Lebanese criminal system that impede women's access to justice for sexual and gender-based violence. These concerns include a lack of effective gender-sensitive investigations, the lack of competence by people carrying them out, and of resources, and discriminatory policies, practices, and gender stereotypes held by judicial officials. Although Article 3 of the new law notes that steps should be taken to protect the victim and witnesses during investigation and prosecution, the article remains vague. The law also does not set out the legal framework through which survivors can seek a remedy through the civil courts.

• In Lebanon, gender equality in politics stands at only 0.01% and the country has never had a female head of state.Civil society organizations demand a 30 percent women quota in parliament seats, which, until now, the parliament has failed to adopt. Lebanon lacks a law prohibiting or punishing political violence against women. Neither the Penal Code, the Protection from Domestic Violence Law, the Election Law, nor any other law addresses the political violence that women face in Lebanon.

• Although women in Lebanon can head enterprises and hold management positions in both the private and governmental sectors, their economic representation remains low compared to men. Lebanese women are twice as likely as men to be unemployed, receive lower pay and profit, and work in inhumane conditions. A publication on women's economic participation conducted by ESCWA highlights the care economy as a main concern. Discrimination against women in economics is indeed covered by laws. Although the 1965 decree on the Lebanese Labor Code calls for equality for men and women who perform the same job, women still face discrimination in the field of labor and social security laws.

• The Lebanese media still subjects women to commoditization and stereotyping. The commoditization of women and turning their bodies into means for material gain has become exaggerated, as the majority of ads adopt stereotypical images of women: either the image of beautiful, sexy, and slim women satisfied with only their reproductive role or the image of a weak and submissive women facing all forms of violence without daring to speak about it.

• Despite the existence of plans and strategies, there is a gap in Lebanon related to the absence of any formal budgetary commitments stipulated by government entities to implement legislation, strategies, and plans that address violence against women and girls. The government did not commit to providing the budget or allocating funding to implement relevant programs or activities. In addition, the

law in Lebanon does not yet stipulate that data and statistics disaggregated by gender must be provided.

• Although the services provided by women's organizations are crucial, the response system is inconsistent, which impedes the protection of women. The issue of access to justice appears to be a major challenge within the problem of poor consistency of the response system. Public awareness of laws related to family or domestic violence in Lebanon is generally low. The level of trust in religious courts varies. Many believe that they do not reach fair results. The public's opinions about formal legal courts are also divided. Lebanese women exposed to domestic violence are not able to fully rely on Law 293 due, in most cases, to economic factors. In the same context, women refugees are facing similar challenges, and many are not clear on the pathways for formal and informal justice available to them specifically. Despite that free legal aid is available to women without sufficient means, we note the lack of gender-sensitive investigations, prosecutions, and evidence-gathering procedures, and reports of judicial gender bias, which jeopardize women's access to justice and effective remedies, in particular in cases of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence against women. Moreover, women migrant domestic workers face barriers to justice when seeking to report abuses.

• In Lebanon, Women groups who are more vulnerable are subject to exacerbated discrimination. Lebanon hosts approximately 174,000 Palestinian refugees, and they continue to face restrictions, including on their right to work and own property. Additionally, there are nearly 900,000 registered Syrian refugees, and the government estimates another 500,000 live in the country informally. Most refugee women have taken on increased responsibilities within the household, in providing for their families and/or making financial decisions.

• Women and girls with disabilities encounter persisting challenges due to discrimination, marginalization, social exclusion, stigmatization and recurrent failure to ensure their social inclusion and effective participation in public life.

• In the same context, UNFPA confirms that Lebanon is going through a demographic shift as the number of persons aged 60+ is expected to more than double between 2050 - 2020 from about 765,000 (11.2 % of the total population) to 1.7 million (27.1%). The number and proportion of older and younger persons aged 24-15, over the same period, will decrease by about a third[20].

• In addition to this, transgender women in Lebanon face systemic violence and discrimination in accessing basic services, including employment, health care, and housing.



Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Amend the Lebanese nationality law, particularly article (1) thereof to become a Lebanese national is who's "born to a Lebanese father or mother".

• Endorse a unified personal status law.

• Endorse a comprehensive law for the protection of women against violence.

• Strengthen support services for women victims of gender-based violence to match demand, including by ensuring a sufficient number of adequate shelters, and allocating sufficient funding to ensure their sustainability.

• Amend Law No. 205 to include key protections and to consider ratifying the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

• Adopt the draft law regarding the annulment of article (518) and the amendment of articles (505) to (519).

• Adopt a law to prohibit child marriage and setting the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for women and men, in line with international standards, and eliminate the harmful practice of child marriage within refugees.

• Strengthen the gender responsiveness and gender sensitivity of the justice system, including by increasing the number of women in the judiciary and providing systematic capacity-building opportunities to judges, prosecutors, police officers, lawyers, and forensic experts on women's rights and gender-sensitive investigation methods.

• Ensure that adequate resources are allocated to implement women's national action plans and strategies.
• Adopt the draft laws introducing a minimum quota for the inclusion of women as candidates on political parties' electoral lists for parliamentary and municipal elections, adding sanctions for non-compliance.

• Expedite the adoption of a comprehensive strategy, with a budget and results-based objectives, aimed at eliminating discriminatory stereotypes on the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in the society.

D. MIGRANTS WORKERS



PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Adopt further measures to combat human trafficking, and ensure the protection of the rights of victims, as well as the rights of migrant workers;

• Expedite the process to achieve universal health coverage and ensure that all citizens, including migrants, benefit from this scheme;

• Continue efforts to improve education in schools and not restrict access to education on the basis of nationality or immigration status;

• Take measures to effectively combat domestic violence against women, in particular migrant domestic workers;

• Afford migrant workers full legal protections in line with Lebanon's international commitments on forced labor and discrimination;

• Extend the protection of labor rights to migrant domestic workers to guarantee respect for their rights

• Implement and enforce the new Standard Unified Contract to protect migrant domestic worker rights, as a key step towards dismantling the work sponsorship system;

• Make specific measures to strengthen protection for domestic workers, including migrant women;

• Combat discrimination against migrant workers and refugees;

• Reform the sponsorship system for migrant workers, guaranteeing that the migratory situation of said workers does not depend on their employers, and promoting the use of a standard contract that includes protections for migrant domestic workers ;

• Take necessary measures to ensure that effective protection against discrimination in all aspects of their employment is provided to all migrant domestic workers;

• Intensify efforts to expand labor law protection to domestic workers and provide access to effective legal remedies for migrant domestic workers;

• Continue efforts to further improve the well-being of female migrant workers, including through strengthening social protection measures for them;

• Take rigorous measures to regulate domestic work, prohibit the exploitation of migrant domestic workers, investigate the information contained in the death reports of migrant domestic workers, according to which these deaths are due to unnatural causes, and prosecute and punish the authors, if applicable;

• Abolish the kafala system about migrant workers; and

• Abolish the kafala (sponsorship) system and introduce a modern legal framework for migrant workers by International Labor Organization standards.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

Lebanon is still not a signatory to the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

In 2023, the most recent report published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated the presence of 160,768 migrant workers in Lebanon, most of whom were women.Female Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) in Lebanon are still classified in a separate category from all other migrant workers, excluding them from the labor law. Different violations against MDWs continue, with rare to no monitoring efforts i.e. non-payment of wages, long working hours, confiscation of passports, psychological, physical and sexual

abuse, as well as abuses by agencies through their new ways of operation post the economic crisis.

Although the national minimum wage increased in Lebanon between 2021 and 2023, there has been no specified minimum wage and no monitoring on the received wages of MDWs during this period. Migrant workers are still coming to Lebanon for less than 100 $/month, in addition to employers' attempts to make the salaries in LBP on the employment contract.

Due to the current multilayered crisis, MDWs are in a more dangerous socio-economic and legal situation, which further increases the risks of trafficking. According to IOM's recent assessment, 22% of respondents, the majority being women, reported accepting degrading, exploitative, dangerous, or illegal work to ensure their basic food needs were met. Between 2020 and 2021 alone, IOM identified 367 female victims of trafficking in Lebanon and ARM identified over 50 cases, though this does not reflect the actual numbers of trafficking in the country. More prevalent trafficking trends have shown throughout this period, and no measures have been taken by the state to combat it, especially while looking at the high numbers of workers coming from Sierra Leone and Kenya, two nationalities that have reported increasing accounts of human trafficking.

The Kafala system by its very nature exposes Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon to increased risks of human trafficking and forced labor, as it links the residency of the worker to their employer. There have been no actual changes in the Kafala system in the period under review, thus no effective protection against discrimination in all aspects of MDWs' employment. The Kafala system is still in place, with no alternative legal framework introduced.
The only attempt for policy reform during the period under review was the new Standard Unified Contract (SUC) adopted by the MoL in 2020, which was appealed by SORAL shortly after. The SUC would have granted MDWs the minimum basic employment rights such as a minimum wage and the right to quit the job unconditionally after providing a month's notice, as well as acknowledging a worker's freedom of movement. However, there was no reinforcement mechanism put in place to ensure the implementation of these changes, therefore employers can still breach the contract without any consequence or accountability. In 2022, a new SUC was leaked from the MoL, and the conditions in that draft contract granted workers even fewer rights. It had no mention of minimum wage, the right for the worker to leave the residence on days off, keep their passport in their possession, or any conditions to ensure a safe working environment. Additionally, the draft proposed that workers could terminate the contract with 1 month's notice, but would be required to reimburse recruitment fees, while employers could terminate the contract with the same notice period. However, limited information is available on this matter. Although this draft did not pass, it serves as an indication of the Lebanese state's approach towards granting migrant domestic workers more rights. Consequently, the SUC issued in 2009 remains in effect to this day.

LIFE-THREATENING DISCRIMINATION

MDWs continue to face discrimination in accessing healthcare in Lebanon. Even though health insurance is a prerequisite for renewing or obtaining a work permit, there are significant exceptions to the coverage. In addition to that, the insurance packages that workers get only cover a small chunk of the secondary healthcare cost, which even got worse after the economic crisis. Additionally, insurance does not cover mental health illnesses (neither acute nor chronic conditions), so a migrant with a severe or chronic mental health illness is encouraged to travel back to her country of origin post-treatment.

On another note, MDWs are also deprived of their basic right to sexual and reproductive health. The "no pregnancy policy" still in place by the MoL does not guarantee workers maternity leave and pushes them into irregularity. Therefore, an MDW who gets pregnant is forced to get an abortion or faces

deportation. There is a blatant disregard for the presence of migrant children in Lebanon. Currently, there are no laws that specifically protect MDWs and their children, and the child's residency status continues to be dependent on that of the mother. Few services are targeted towards the children of migrants, and legally, MDW mothers cannot travel with their children without the consent of the father, regardless of whether he is abusive or not. As a result, mothers are often advised to falsify the birth certificate to remove the father's name in order to travel without needing his consent. Women MWs who have children in Lebanon often find themselves unable to register the children, which limits their access to education or other public services. In spite of the fact that it is illegal to refuse education for stateless children i.e. MWs' children, it is very common within migrant communities that children are refused education for being undocumented. In some instances, children are not accepted to register for the school year, and if they're registered, they are exempted from participating in official or end-of-school year exams. This translates into the increase in the number of drop-out migrant children at early stages of education, forcing them into child labor. For children attending school, no measures have been taken against the discrimination and bullying faced within the school premises in their day-to-day lives.

NO JUSTICE FOR MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS

Evidence suggests that MDWs are more likely to be criminalized than their perpetrators, and justice for MDWs in cases of abuse, violence, and death remains distant from reality. Despite efforts by the state to grant female MDWs the right to press criminal charges and for judicial authorities to issue quick verdicts in such cases, the lived experiences of migrants do not reflect these intentions. Tragically, at least two MDWs die every week in Lebanon, often without proper investigation, and these deaths are oftenlabeled as suicide.

Moreover, victims of domestic violence still cannot report any abuse-related incidents should they be undocumented due to the constant risk of detention and deportation. However, the majority of workers experience these frequent abuses and are often unable to obtain proof or access government reporting mechanisms, as all cases related to MDWs are still followed by the General Security Office, which gives the worker's administrative status precedence over social considerations. According to recent research called "Traumatized For Life", interviews with 913 migrant domestic workers indicated that 68% of MDWs survived at least one incident of sexual harassment during their stay in Lebanon: 70% have been harassed by the employer, 40% have been harassed by friends or family members of the employer, 30-25% have been maltreated by the employer, 60% have been victims of sexual harassment by taxi drivers and 15% by government employees i.e. police officers.

MIGRANT POLITICAL ORGANIZING IS CRIMINALIZED

MDWs are still deprived of their right to political participation and establishing their own unions. The state continues to deport and target migrant women for engaging in community organizing and in activism. As witnessed on many occasions, migrant activists were illegally detained and forcefully deported back to their countries of origin, even with valid residency permits and/or UNHCR refugee status. For instance, NM, a Kenyan domestic worker and activist, was arrested on false accusations by the GSO, for which she has been acquitted. However, she remained detained beyond the legal limit by the GSO who had actively tried to deport her on the grounds of her expired residency. NM committed no crime and paid a price no one should pay for her activism in Lebanon to protect Kenyan workers. Circumstantial evidence suggested that her arrest initially had to do with her activism during the protests earlier in 2022 against the Kenyan Honorary Consulate.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Abolish Article 7 of the Labor Law, which excludes MDWs and other workers from the provisions of the Lebanese Labor Law, and ensure that the full scope of rights and protections are granted to all workers.

• Replace the kafala system with just immigration and residency systems that decouple the work permit from the residence permit.

• Create a standardized, transparent, and accessible state mechanism for MDWs to terminate their contracts legally without the need for their sponsor's permission, and allow for a grace period during which the worker can search for new employment without violating the conditions of her legal residency.

• Officially consider any household which is a workplace for any contracted employee as a public space that falls within the jurisdiction of the MoL inspectorate and thereby subject to investigation by the inspectorate upon suspicion of exploitation or abuse.

• Conduct proper investigations of the frequent abuses and deaths of MDWs, provide remedies for the victims, and ensure accountability for the perpetrators.

• Ensure that MDW activists are granted protection as Human Rights Defenders.

• Compile comprehensive data on the situation of MDWs in Lebanon, and include them in national services and emergency assistance programs supporting women.

• Monitor and put an end to the unethical recruitment practices used to bring MDWs into the country, resulting in numerous cases of human trafficking.

• Ratify the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (C189), concerning decent work for domestic workers.



E. SYRIAN REFUGEES



SYRIAN REFUGEES

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Combat discrimination against migrant workers and refugees

• Allow refugees legal residence and freedom of movement.

• Strengthen the protection of rights and freedom of refugees, including by respecting nonrefoulement obligations

STATUS OF PROGRESS

The handling of refugees by the Lebanese government lacks a cohesive strategy to manage their presence effectively within the country. Both national and local government authorities persist in propagating a narrative that unfairly blames Syrian refugees for a majority of local issues, thereby fueling a dangerous surge in hate speech directed against them. This toxic rhetoric has significantly worsened social tensions between the local population and refugees, often leading to violent confrontations. Compounding the challenges, registration with UNHCR has remained suspended since 2015, leaving many refugees without essential documentation or legal recognition. Vital processes such as marriage and birth registrations, as well as obtaining legal residency permits, continue to be plagued by unacceptable delays and inefficiencies for Syrian refugees. Despite international calls for humanitarian support, Lebanese political figures and public officials persist in advocating for the return and repatriation of Syrian refugees, further complicating efforts to address the ongoing crisis with compassion and practical solutions.

THE SECURITY SITUATION:

Syrian refugees in Lebanon face several human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, long pretrial detention, forced deportation, mistreatment, and miserable prison conditions. Security agencies in Lebanon have carried out discriminatory raids on Syrian refugees' households across different neighborhoods in Lebanon, resulting in their arbitrary arrest and even deportation. This poses a significant risk to those sought by security agencies in Syria, draft evaders, or army deserters. Discriminatory and arbitrary measures by many municipalities across the country continue to be enforced against refugees. These include forced evictions, confiscation of documents, wage caps, and curfews that restrict their freedom of movement.

• **Arbitrary arrest:** The Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) documented 281 cases of arbitrary arrests in 2022 and 1080 in 2023 against Syrian refugees in Lebanon. These arrests often occured e without arrest warrants or trialsl. Syrian refugees were arrested on a variety of grounds, including lack of legal residency, irregular entry and movement withinLebanon, suspicion of terrorism, irregular immigration, and minor misdemeanours.

• **Long pretrial detention:** Syrian refugees are frequently subjected to prolonged pretrial detention, sometimes lasting for years.. This extended detention period may lead to a deterioration in their health and psychological condition. Additionally, it may also lead to the deprivation of their basic rights, such as the right to education and work.

• **Forced deportation:** In some cases, Syrian refugees are handed over to Syrian authorities, who may arrest, torture, or prosecute them. The Access Center for Human Rights documented 154 cases of forced deportation in 2022, while the number increased to 763 cases in 2023. These deportations often occur without trial or any legal guarantees.

• **Mistreatment:** Syrian refugees detained in Lebanese prisons are exposed to many forms of mistreatment, including torture, physical abuse, and sexual assault. The Access Center for Human Rights documented 106 cases of ill-treatment and torture in Lebanese prisons in 2022. Shockingly, this number soared to 1,289 cases in 2023, highlighting the alarming increase in such abuses.

OBSTACLES TO THE LEGAL RESIDENCY OF SYRIAN REFUGEES:

Syrian refugees in Lebanon face many obstacles to obtaining legal residency, which exposes them to danger and persecution. The most prominent of these hurdles are:

• **Harsh residency laws:** In 2015, the Lebanese authorities imposed harsh residency laws, including the sponsorship system for Syrian refugees, requiring them to secure a sponsor and pay exorbitant fees. These laws have deprived most Syrian refugees from obtaining legal residency.

• **Lack of an official mechanism to settle the situation:** Lebanon lacks an official mechanism to address the status of Syrian refugees, forcing many to enter Lebanon irregularly. Consequently, they are denied access to basic services, such as education and health care, and are at risk of forcible deportation.

• **Consequences of lacking legal residency:** The inability to secure regular residency status results leads to many adverse consequences for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. These include the withholding of official documents, susceptibility to arrest and forced deportation, exposure to exploitation and violations, and deprivation of basic services.

VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION, AND DISCRIMINATION:

Syrian refugees are exposed to the constant threat of violence, exploitation, and discrimination. They are also particularly vulnerable to armed groups, especially in border areas. The spectrum of violence against Syrian refugees encompass verbal threats, physical attacks, theft, and sexual exploitation. This violence has made refugees feel fearful, anxious, and insecure. During the year 2022, ACHR documented 11 cases of sexual violence against local refugees, while it documented two cases in 2023.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Syrian refugees in Lebanon encounter significant obstacles in accessing education, resulting in low enrollment rates among school-age children. .According to a United Nations assessment [24], only 53% of children between the ages of 3 to 17 reported enrollment for the 2022-2021 academic year. This is due to several factors, including the lack of adequate schools, high tuition fees, and the need to work to support their families. Moreover, Syrian children in Lebanon face additional educational challenges, such as the language barrier, as they struggle with the Lebanese curriculum. Furthermore, they are sometimes subjected to discrimination in Lebanese schools."

Syrian refugees in Lebanon face difficulties in obtaining healthcare, as it is estimated that the majority of them do not have access to basic medical services. These challenges arise from inadequate healthcare infrastructure, high medical costs, and the necessity for refugees to work to support their families. Consequently, Syrian refugees in Lebanon face higher health risks than the local population



Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Resume UNHCR registration and end arbitrary measures that hinder refugees from obtaining legal documentation.

• Respect the principle of non-refoulement in line with Lebanon's commitments under the UNCAT and establish a pre-deportation adjudication mechanism within the judicial system to ensure due process for refugees.

• Guarantee the protection of communities from violence perpetrated by both the Lebanese host and the Syrian refugee communities.

• Enhance coordination and information sharing among the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), to prevent collective punishment and discrimination based on nationality.
• Stop arbitrary arrests of Syrian refugees.

• Reduce the duration of pretrial detention for Syrian refugees.

• Cease the forced deportation of Syrian refugees.

• Consider accession to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Additional Protocol.

• Review residency laws to make them more suitable for Syrian refugees.

• Simplify procedures for obtaining legal residency ensuring transparency and accessibility.

• Establish an official mechanism to settle the status of Syrian refugees, guaranteeing their basic rights.

• Increase the number of public schools to accommodate all Syrian refugee children.

• Provide financial support to Syrian families, to cover the costs of education for their children.

• Provide alternative educational programs, such as distance education and non-formal education for Syrian children unable to attend school.

• Expand health coverage to include all Syrian refugees, and reduce fees for health services provided to them.

F. PALESTINIAN REFUGEES



PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Intensify efforts to promote the human rights situation of Palestinian refugees.

• Combat discrimination against migrant workers and refugees.

• Consider ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and implementing the necessary policies and legislative framework to protect the rights of children with disabilities, with particular regard to children living in poverty, in particular children of Palestinian and Syrian refugees.

• Allow refugees legal residence and freedom of movement.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

The economic and social conditions of Palestinian refugees continued to deteriorate amid the complex crises afflicting the country. The decline in UNRWA's services due to the financial blockade in the previous years, compounded with the freezing of funding allocations by the United States and other countries, has exacerbated their plight. UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini has warned of the dire financial situation, underscoring the threat to its future viability in a letter to the President of the United Nations General Assembly dated February 2024 ,22.

Despite the concerted efforts of the local and international community, as well as the Joint Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, to improve the civil, economic, and social conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, little progress has been made. . Lebanon failed to fulfill its promises to the international community and the Human Rights Council throughout three sessions from 2010 to 2020.

Until 2024, there has been no discernible progress made in improving the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. An objective examination of the policies pursued by the state and successive governments over decades reveals a pattern of arbitrary exclusion, marginalization, and forced migration of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon. The emergence of perilous journeys, often resulting in loss of life, serves as stark evidence of the lack of advancement in addressing the plight of Palestinian refugees in the country.

For decades, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been consistently denied their most fundamental human rights including the right to legal recognition, employment , education, health, freedom of movement, residence, and travel, adequate housing, and property ownership. This deprivation underscores a concerning trend: the increase of recruitment efforts by extremist groups, targeting young individuals and exploiting their grievances to perpetuate violent acts. Furthermore, during periods of armed conflict and warfare, instances of human trafficking and irregular migration intensify, exacerbating the risks faced by refugees and leading to a proliferation of perilous journeys resulting in loss of life.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, enduring their refugee status for more than 75 years, continue to face severe human rights violations . These include Right to work; property ownership ; discrimination against women and the threats to Illegal migration and human trafficking. While some steps have been taken to address the right to work through partial amendments to Labor Law No. 2010/129 and Social Security Law No. 2010/128, these measures remain insufficient.

Palestinian camps and refugees in Lebanon suffer from poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, poor housing and living conditions, and inadequate infrastructure. Lebanon has relied on administrative and organizational measures, notably the "intrusive non-retention policy," to reduce the number of Palestinian refugees without addressing underlying systemic issues or fulfilling promises to improve human rights conditions.

Over the past 75 years, Lebanon has evaded its responsibility to create a clear legal framework guaranteeing the enjoyment of human rights for Palestinian refugees. This lack of progress underscores the persistent challenges faced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the urgent need for substantive action to address their plight.

The Lebanese Labor Law fails to account for the unique circumstances of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon for over 75 years. Instead, they are still subjected to regulations governing foreign workers, despite their long-term presence in the country. Despite amendments to the Labor and Social Security Law in 2010, the working conditions for Palestinian refugees have not improved significantly. Moreover, the implementation of these laws remains subject to the discretion of ministers, resulting in a lack of clear guidelines. This ambiguity has restricted employment opportunities for Palestinian refugees, pushing many to accept jobs in challenging conditions with low wages and without legal protections.

Palestinian refugees are still deprived from working in liberal professions that necessitate union membership, as the regulations governing these professions prioritise Lebanese nationality. While the amended Labor Law (2010/129) exempted Palestinian refugees from reciprocity requirements, the failure to update laws and regulations within professional unions to align with the amended labor laws prevents refugees from accessing union membership and practising these professions. It's worth noting that exceptions are permitted by Free Professions Unions if deemed necessary or desired. At the same time, Palestinian refugees who are employed face significant limitations in accessing full social security rights. Although Social Security Law 2010/128 was amended to remove the reciprocity requirement under Article 9, Palestinian refugees are still not granted the right to health insurance and family benefits, particularly maternity benefits. Despite being required to contribute the same fees (23.5% of their salary) as Lebanese workers, Palestinian refugees registered under social security only receive end-of-service compensation, equivalent to just 8.5% of their salary. As a result, they are compelled to seek private health insurance, placing additional financial burdens on them and their employers. This situation restricts their employment options, forcing many refugees into precarious jobs with low wages and no legal protection.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are deprived of the economic protections guaranteed by relevant international conventions and agreements. This was recently underscored by their exclusion from banking facilities approved by the Lebanese government. In June 2020, they were denied access to the limited amount of dollars. despite substantial monthly inflows of funds through channels such as UNRWA, the PLO, Palestinian factions, and international and local organizations operating in the Palestinian sector in addition to individual financial transfers from immigrant refugees to their families in Lebanon, which contribute significantly to the economy. in addition to external individual financial transfers from immigrant refugees and/or workers to their families in Lebanon.

Regarding human trafficking and the exploitation of vulnerability, there has been no discernible improvement, but rather an increase in the number of perilous journeys observed between 2020 and 2024. This escalation can be attributed to the absence of legal protection and accountability in Lebanon, compounded by the persistence of the non-retention policy. This policy inadvertently incentivizes human traffickers to exploit the vulnerability of Palestinian refugees for profit.

Additionally, disabled Palestinian refugees do not enjoy the same rights as their Lebanese counterparts, despite the provisions of Law 2000/220, which does not explicitly exclude them from these rights. The law refers to "disabled persons" without specifying nationality, yet the national mechanism discriminates against disabled Palestinian refugees by denying them access to services and privileges stipulated in the law.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• The Lebanese state must seriously prosecute human traffickers and amend Law 2011/164 to protect victims of human trafficking of the four categories of Palestinian refugees without discrimination, especially children and womenAdditionally, criminal liability should be removed from victims in accordance with international standards in this field.

• Lebanon should withdraw reservations from international agreements, join other relevant agreements, and abolish all discriminatory legislation. Moreover, Lebanon should put an end to all intrusive exclusionary policies and practices that directly or indirectly affect the enjoyment of human rights for Palestinian refugees..

• Palestinian refugees in Lebanon should be granted full human rights, particularly civil, economic, and social rights. The Lebanese government should facilitate and formalize procedures regarding the right to work and access to social security for Palestinian refugees, ensuring their inclusion and equal treatment under the law.



G. RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:• Consider ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

• Develop a national strategy on education of children with disabilities.

• Further strengthen support to caregivers of children with disabilities.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

The lack of adequate, up to date and disaggregated data on the people with disabilities in Lebanon is a significant issue. To date there is no comprehensive survey of persons with disabilities available in Lebanon.
According to the report "Living with disabilities in Lebanon: a snapshot assessment of basic needs, social protection and employment gaps" by the ILO, based on data from the 19-2018 Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS), individuals with mild disabilities make up approximately 12.7% of Lebanon's total population, while those with severe disabilities make up 4.4%. This suggests an estimated 169,000 individuals with severe disabilities, with a combined total of around 650,000 individuals having either mild or severe disabilities. In 2023, approximately 120,000 Lebanese citizens obtained a personal disability card, representing about 2% of the total population. These figures imply that the current definition of disability in Lebanon does not encompass all forms of disabilities.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

The Lebanese Parliament ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on April 2022 ,12, without reservations, in accordance with Law No. 2022/291. It was subsequently published in the Official Gazette on April 2022 ,14. The Parliament then referred the Convention to the Lebanese government, which issued the decree aimed at concluding this agreement and its associated Protocol under No. 42 on February ,6 2023, rendering the agreement binding.
Despite the conclusion of the agreement, its full implementation has yet to be achieved, indicating a need for political will and commitment in practice. For instance, during the adoption of Law 2020/171 on April 2020 ,19, the term "persons with additional/special needs" was still used instead of the term "persons with disabilities.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

The "National Health Sector Strategy - Vision 2030," issued by the Ministry of Public Health, fails to adequately address the healthcare needs of persons with disabilities, relegating them to a mere mention within the "Health Awareness and Disease Reduction" section. This oversight blurs the distinction between infectious diseases and disabilities.

During the reporting period, two significant setbacks have been observed concerning the right to health of persons with disabilities. Firstly, during the Covid-19 epidemic, the Ministry of Public Health neglected the needs of people with disabilities, failing to prioritize them for vaccine distribution or provide suitable facilities for vaccination, PCR testing, or temporary shelter for potentially infected individuals. Furthermore, there was a lack of effective awareness campaigns targeting this demographic.

Secondly, following the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020, many individuals with disabilities received initial emergency treatment but were subsequently neglected by the Ministry, leading to dire consequences. Tragically, four individuals lost their lives due to the neglect of their files. Many others continue to require ongoing treatment, yet their cases remain unresolved, with their files being managed by the Union. This highlights a systemic failure to address the healthcare needs of persons with disabilities in Lebanon.

RIGHT TO WORK

The provisions outlined in Law 2000/220, mandating the implementation of a 3 percent quota for employing persons with disabilities in both public and private sectors, have not been enforced. The public sector has failed to fulfill its employment obligations, while the private sector has only made minimal commitments through civil initiatives. Alarmingly, the unemployment rate among persons with disabilities surpasses 83 percent. Available data indicates that only 11,321 individuals with disabilities have declared employment, with a mere 1,071 of them securing positions in the public sector.[30]

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The state has not adopted a complete and productive strategy for educational integration, despite claims that there is a plan in place [31]. This plan channels resources from donor associations and organizations into various educational initiatives. However, it falls short in several aspects. Firstly, it fails to address the issue comprehensively, as it does not encompass all types of disabilities across all regions. Secondly, there is no specific timeline for its implementation, with progress dependent on the availability of funds for civil society projects.The current situation highlights a lack of comprehensive statistics and rigorous studies regarding persons with disabilities. This includes data on their population, the nature of their disabilities, the accessibility of schools in their vicinity, and the distribution of needs based on specific disabilities. Additionally, there is a noticeable shortage of engineering equipment and methodological adaptations in educational institutions. Furthermore, vocational rehabilitation and training opportunities for persons with disabilities are inadequate, particularly within vocational and technical educational institutions catering to individuals with the four main types of disabilities[32].

In the current curriculum, there is a lack of suitable adaptations to accommodate the needs of disabled learners, along with a scarcity of associated resources and alternative communication methods such as Braille. Furthermore, the curriculum has remained unchanged since 1997, resulting in disabled learners being deprived of opportunities for integration into educational institutions, except in rare instances. In such cases, parents often face significant financial burdens to enroll their children in educational institutions that adhere to an inclusion policy aligned with their vision.[33]

POLITICAL RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The most recent parliamentary elections in 2022 marked a notable advancement, largely due to the efforts of the Haqqi campaign, which scaled back its demands and focused on making voting more accessible. This included ensuring that polling stations were located on the ground floor, providing operational elevators where necessary, and introducing ballot pens in the courtyard areas of the centers. Preceding the elections, an extensive awareness campaign significantly influenced relevant ministries, particularly the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The Ministry of Interior's collaboration with the Union and its consistent communication with its administration played a pivotal role in overcoming obstacles that could have hindered disabled voters from participating in the elections during the two-month lead-up. This collaboration has also positively impacted the approach of the ministry's departments towards disability issues, fostering a more supportive environment.

On the ground, observations revealed that members of the Internal Security Forces, responsible for safeguarding polling centers, facilitated the passage and independent arrival of disabled voters by 90 percent. Furthermore, they greatly assisted the entry of companions of disabled individuals by 97 percent, a significant increase from 72 percent in 2018.

While these developments are commendable, it is essential for the relevant ministries to continue fulfilling their responsibilities. The campaign

continues to advocate for the adoption of a unified ballot card, the implementation of the Braille method (for which a model was presented by the Lebanese Union for Physically Disabled Persons to the Ministry of Interior), and the provision of clarifications tailored to mentally disabled persons, deaf persons, and individuals with visual impairments. This includes the use of accessible materials such as posters with easy-to-understand instructions, images, videos, or information to empower these individuals to make informed, independent choices.

Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Implement a national strategy to align local legislation, such as Law 2000/220, with international agreements, ensuring comprehensive integration of people with disabilities based on the social model. This involves issuing necessary laws and decrees to uphold their rights.

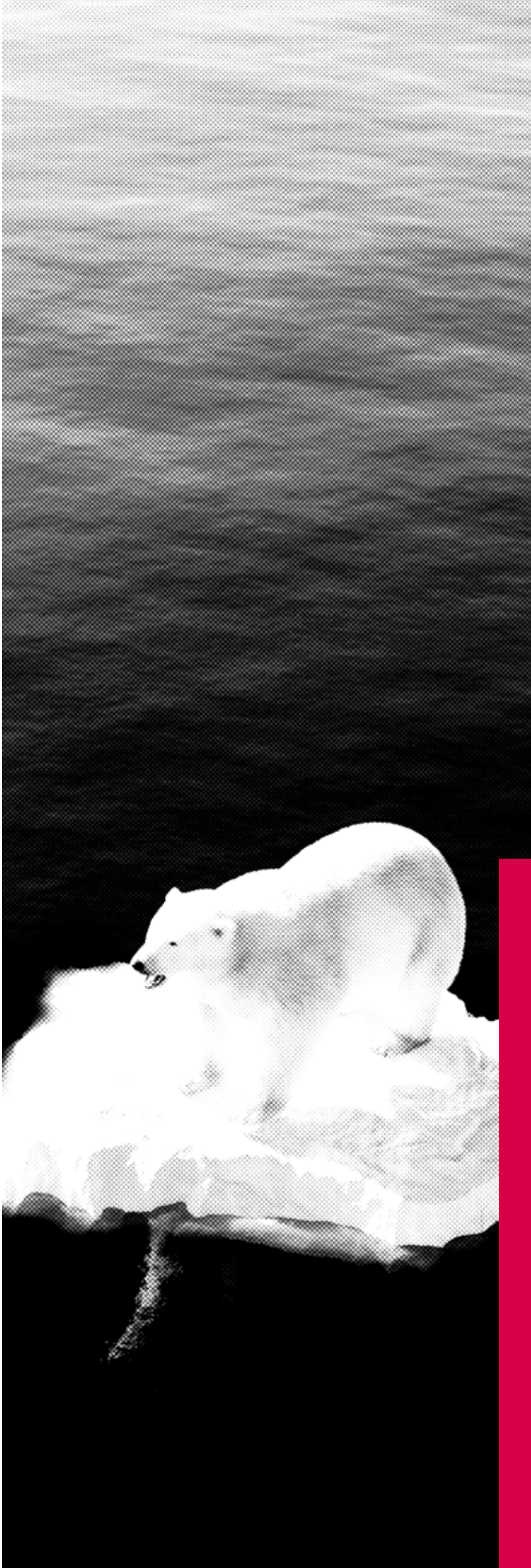
• Embed inclusion and diversity standards within Lebanese ministries, encompassing equipment and infrastructure adaptation, training initiatives, commitment to employment quotas for persons with disabilities, and inclusive project implementation.

• Enforce the commitment of international partner organizations of the Lebanese state, United Nations agencies, and donors to integrate inclusion standards that uphold the rights of persons with disabilities into all programs and projects carried out in collaboration with the Lebanese state.

• Revise educational curricula across basic, secondary, university, vocational, and technical education levels, adopting an inclusive approach and ensuring accessibility for learners with hearing, visual, and mental disabilities.



H. CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT



HUMAN RIGHTS & CLIMATE CHANGE

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY LEBANON:

• Intensify efforts to develop and strengthen the necessary legislative frameworks, address cross-sectoral environmental challenges, including climate change adaptation and mitigation frameworks, and ensure that women, children, persons with disabilities and indigenous and local communities are meaningfully engaged in this implementation.

STATUS OF PROGRESS

No major legislation or national strategy in Lebanon directly addresses climate change. While only responsible for around 0.06% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Lebanon is among the countries with the lowest readiness to face climate change. This stems from an increasingly high exposure to climate risks and a limited capacity to prepare for, respond and adapt to these risks. Climate vulnerability in Lebanon is characterized by the impacts of increased temperatures, decreased rainfall, and the increase in frequency of droughts, floods, fires and storms, which pose a threat to aging infrastructure, diminishing natural resources, and the health and livelihoods of the population. These impacts raise great social concerns in the absence of a rights-based framework to increase the country and population's adaptive capacity. Overlapping crises have had resounding impacts on vulnerable groups that are likely to continue to bear the greater social, economic and health impacts of climate change. Meanwhile, the crises have hindered overall public service delivery and constrained the state's capacity for climate policy making, and shifted its focus on mitigation and cost recovery.

MITIGATION:

The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), required under the Paris Agreement and under the coordination of the Ministry of Environment (MoE), remain the only official instrument organizing national climate policy priorities. An inter-ministerial NDC committee, chaired by MoE, was formed in 2017 to oversee and coordinate the country's climate change policies and commitments. However the committee is yet to be institutionalized due to inadequate staffing, unbalanced technical capacities between ministries, and high levels of staff absenteeism as result of the crises. The NDCs outline national mitigation and adaptation priorities, putting forward in its latest update in 2020 an unconditional target of 20% emissions reduction by 2030. Despite making ambitious climate commitments, Lebanon has not yet developed a systematic, long-term strategy for integrating climate change considerations into its policies and processes. Climate change considerations have been absent in discussions on public finances and investments, despite efforts by MoE and international development agencies to mainstream climate-sensitive policy and align mitigation and adaptation targets with Lebanon's economic recovery efforts within a green economic framework. This is reflected in the failure of the Government's 2022 "Lebanon Financial and Economic Reform Policies" to address critical environmental and climate challenges, leaving out recommended stimulus programs to promote climate-responsive recovery and reforms in agriculture, transport, tourism and industrial sectors, and approaches to expand the scope of green investments.

According to Lebanon's fourth national communication to the UNFCCC, the energy sector is the largest contributor to emissions and air quality deterioration, especially with the increased prevalence of highly polluting private diesel generators to compensate for shortages of public electricity supply by Électricité du Liban (EDL). Steps have been taken in the energy sector to increase the share of renewable energy (RE) generation (mainly solar energy) to 30% of the total energy mix by 2030. This includes the ratification of the Distributed Renewable Energy Law (DRE) in December 2023 under law No. 2023/318. The DRE law sets the regulatory framework for decentralized RE production, including the introduction of various types of net metering, peer-to-peer power exchanges using EDL's public grid, municipal level private energy

production and private sector engagement in production. While DRE law is a step forward in decarbonizing and attracting green investment in the Lebanese energy sector, it remains predicated on the formation of a Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA) tasked with authorization and regulation of RE production and exchange. The ERA has not been formalized since its establishment under Law No. 462 of 2002. Without the formation of the ERA, and without updated standardization and certification systems, end-of-life management and disposal mechanisms for RE technologies, the energy sector may struggle to meet its mitigation targets.

Lebanon's transport sector contributes up to 23% of Lebanon's emissions. Emissions concentrated within the dominant use of privately owned gasoline powered passenger vehicles, in the absence of an organized and efficient public transport system. Mitigation efforts in the sector have taken the form of incentive programs to encourage the use of less-polluting vehicles. These include the 2022 amendment of the Budget Law (Law 10) exempting fully electric vehicles from custom fees and reducing duties and taxes by 70% for hybrid vehicles within three years of the enactment of the law. However, these incentive programs remain disjointed and mitigation measures for the transport sector are greatly hindered by the lack of planning, legal frameworks or implementation and financing mechanisms for a greener and more reliable public transport system.

The same is true for the solid waste sector. The continued open dumping and burning of solid waste contributes greatly to Lebanon's emissions and poses a great threat to public and environmental health. Despite the ratification of Law 2018/80 on integrated solid waste management and the Lebanon Solid Waste Roadmap for 2026-2023, legislation specifying the procedures, conditions, standards and specifications regarding waste management is still absent. This includes a freeze on the appointment of a National Solid Waste Management Authority and a National Solid Waste Management Information System to organize the sector's activity.

ADAPTATION:

Lebanon falls short on its adaptation efforts, with an absence of an overarching national climate change adaptation policy, strategy, or action plan. MoE began a national dialogue for the development of Lebanon's National Adaptation Plan in 2017, but it has yet to materialize. Adaptation priorities set out in Lebanon's NDCs in 2020 focus on recommendations for initiatives in climate-smart agriculture, sustainable water and irrigation practices, sustainable landscape, forest and biodiversity management and restoration, and building resilience in the health sector, infrastructure and coastal zones. These recommendations are echoed and represented across sector-specific strategies including the Ministry of Agriculture's 2025-2020 Strategy, the National Water Sector Strategy, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Strategy for Forest Fire Management, and the National Health and Environment Strategy 2021-2016. However, they do not represent actionable plans and do not highlight responsibilities and mechanisms for achieving adaptation needs.

Without a climate adaptation framework, it is projected that annual water availability would drop up to 9% and up to 50% in dry seasons by 2040. The National Water Sector Strategy, despite its 2020 update highlighting climate change impacts and recommending adaptation measures, remains inactionable and unimplemented. The water sector in Lebanon suffers from long-term institutional, administrative and financial dysfunction, owing to complex legal frameworks and fragmented responsibilities producing a lack of coordination and absence of accountability and transparency. The focus of the sector's central and regional administration remains greatly focused on cost recovery, hindering institutional and administrative reform and limiting technical and infrastructural capacities needed to ensure adequate access and supply while accounting for, and conserving, water resources. The failure

to meet water demand, especially at household and agricultural levels, has opened up space for private and informal water supply economies to grow, increasing costs on users and widening the gap in access. This also poses a critical threat to the availability and quality of groundwater resources, against poor oversight and regulation of well drilling and water pumping. The lack of access to data and information related to water resources and their quality also greatly hinder public participation in decision making in the sector.

In the face of increased exposure to climate risks, the state's ability to coordinate and respond to disasters is greatly limited. Despite the establishment of a Disaster Risk Management Unit at the Prime Minister's Office, the unit has not received any funding from the Lebanese Government and remains without a clear strategy, command structure, or a communication and coordination protocol. Disaster management responsibilities are fragmented and overlapping across public offices, distributed between the Ministries of Environment, Public Works and Transport, Interior and Municipalities, and Social Affairs. In January 2024, flooding and storm surges affected more than 3100 individuals and resulted in 4 deaths in displaced Syrian communities in the North, in addition to blocking and damaging major transport infrastructure across the coast and Beirut. The response to these floods, in the absence of a national disaster management mechanism, saw ministries unable to assign or coordinate responsibility and unable to address infrastructural issues exacerbating the impacts of the storm.

Disaster risk management projects in Lebanon are also seen to be exclusionary, limiting local community participation and overlooking socio-cultural aspects of disasters. Overall, most policies and strategies related to climate change and included in Lebanon's NDC do not thoroughly address socio-cultural dimensions, including gender. Based on the assessment included in the 4th National Communication, gender integration is missing from water, energy and biodiversity policies, with greater integration in agriculture and forestry projects. While the NDCs do recognize gendered aspects of climate change impacts, and Standard Operating Procedures for gender sensitive policy making have been developed at the ministerial level, women's participation in decision making, and community involvement at large, is still limited.



Taking into consideration the lack of progress Lebanon is called to:

• Prioritize the development of the National Adaptation Plan, incorporating rights-based approaches to meet pressing and projected vulnerabilities at the socioeconomic level, in addition to building resilience of natural and urban environments and infrastructure. The development process should include a national dialogue not merely between ministries and public offices, but also with communities particularly vulnerable to climate risks including women and people with disabilities, youth groups, unions and agricultural cooperatives, and civil society organizations. In the short term, adaptation initiatives recommended within sector-specific strategies must be transformed into implementable and actionable plans with clear responsibility and coordination mechanisms.

• Formalize and collate climate policies and strategies into comprehensive climate legislation and regulatory frameworks extended not only to energy, waste, water, agriculture and land reforms, but also within public finances, investments and procurement. Overarching climate legislation should additionally be accompanied, in the short term, by legislative reforms in relevant sectors including reforms in the Water Code (and the implementation of amendments to the Code under Law 2020/192) and updating land and forest laws. This should also include the implementation of the National Strategy for Integrated Solid Waste Management and the formation of the National Authority for Solid Waste Management and updating the Litani Pollution Prevention Framework under Law 2016/63.

• Intensify efforts to form the ERA to expedite the transition to renewable energy production and secure investments and cost recovery to revitalize the energy sector. Recovery in the sector should aim to increase technical and administrative capacities and staffing to ensure proper service delivery and coordination in mitigation and adaptation within and beyond the energy sector.

• Formalize and institutionalize disaster preparedness, reduction and recovery plans and strengthen the role of the DRM Unit in coordinating binding national disaster management strategies.

• Increase public access to environmental data and information, including the strengthening of early warning systems and the decimation of information relevant to climate and natural hazards. Risk profiles, including flood, fire, and erosion, should be streamlined into planning of urban, infrastructural and land management projects.

• Expand public engagement in climate policy planning beyond awareness campaigns and ensure transparent and equal participation in public consultations, especially for vulnerable groups including women, youth, people with disabilities and local communities.

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[29] يعتبر الملف الصحي أحد جوانب المعاناة المستمرة لجرحى انفجار مرفأ بيروت، وقد انعكست آثار الانفجار على مختلف جوانب حياة الجرحى، وتضاعف الإهمال والتمييز تجاههم، خاصة على المستوى الاقتصادي والمعيشي وفي ملف حق الوصول والأماكن المجهزة.

[30] على سبيل المثال، كشفت تقارير مشروع الإغاثة التابع لبرنامج الطوارئ، الذي نفذه "اتحاد المقعدين اللبنانيين" (الاتحاد اللبناني للأشخاص المعوقين حركيًا) صيف 2006، الذي يمكن من إيواء 1500 أسرة نازحة من الجنوب شرط أن يكون أحد أفرادها معوقًا، أن نحو 82 من النازحين المعوقين لم يحصلوا على بطاقة المعوق الشخصية.

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