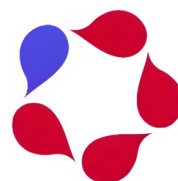


2024

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT Lebanon

Prepared By:



**Washington Center
For Human Rights**

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Executive Summary

In 2024, Lebanon's human rights situation is characterized by severe violations amid ongoing economic and political crises. The Lebanese authorities have intensified their suppression of freedoms, targeting journalists, activists, and critics through harassment, arbitrary arrests, and defamation laws. This crackdown particularly impacts those opposing government actions or supporting marginalized groups, including the LGBT community. Systematic discrimination against LGBT individuals persists, with proposed legislation threatening to criminalize same-sex relations, while authorities fail to protect these individuals from violence and harassment.

The situation for Syrian refugees in Lebanon is also dire, with reports of arbitrary arrests and summary deportations compounded by hostile government rhetoric that fosters a climate of fear. The Lebanese judicial system is plagued by delays and inefficiencies, with many detainees held in prolonged pre-trial detention and overcrowded prisons lacking adequate healthcare. The lack of accountability for past abuses, including those related to the 2020 Beirut port explosion, has further eroded public trust in the legal system.

Socio-economically, the ongoing crisis has severely impacted individuals' rights, with 86% of households struggling to afford basic necessities such as food and healthcare. Children's rights are under threat due to inadequate protection mechanisms and a lack of comprehensive policies, exacerbated by the socio-economic crisis, leaving many children vulnerable to neglect and abuse. Overall, Lebanon's human rights landscape in 2024 reflects a nation in crisis, with systemic violations across political, civil, and socio-economic domains, highlighting the urgent need for reforms and a renewed commitment to human rights standards.

Introduction

Introduction to the Annual Human Rights Report for Lebanon

The annual human rights report for Lebanon provides a comprehensive overview of the human rights landscape within the country, contextualized against global and regional trends. This introduction outlines the current state of human rights, the objectives of the report, and the methodology employed in its preparation.

Global and Regional Context

Globally, the human rights landscape has been increasingly challenged by rising authoritarianism, political instability, and socio-economic crises. In the Middle East, these issues are particularly pronounced, with many countries experiencing significant violations of civil liberties, including freedom of expression, assembly, and the right to a fair trial. Lebanon, situated at the crossroads of these regional dynamics, has faced its own unique challenges, exacerbated by ongoing political deadlock, economic collapse, and social unrest. The country has been marked by a history of sectarian conflict and external interventions, which have further complicated its human rights situation[1][5].

Objectives of the Report

The primary objective of the annual human rights report for Lebanon is to document and analyze the state of human rights within the country, providing a critical assessment of both progress and setbacks. This report aims to:

- Highlight key human rights violations affecting various groups, including marginalized communities and refugees.
- Examine the role of state and non-state actors in perpetuating or alleviating these violations.
- Offer recommendations for policy reforms and actions that can improve the human rights situation in Lebanon.

By raising awareness and fostering dialogue, the report seeks to contribute to a more informed civil society and encourage accountability among government institutions and other stakeholders[2][5].

Methodology

The methodology for data collection in the report is multi-faceted, employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Key components include:

Desk Research:

This involves a thorough review of existing literature, legal documents, government reports, and international human rights standards. By synthesizing information from various sources, the report aims to provide a well-rounded perspective on the human rights landscape in Lebanon.

Field Research:

Although limited by logistical constraints, efforts are made to incorporate insights from local human rights defenders, activists, and affected communities. This qualitative data is crucial for understanding the lived experiences of individuals facing human rights violations.

Collaboration with NGO:

The report often collaborates with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to gather firsthand accounts and statistical data, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the situation on the ground[1][2][4].

In conclusion, the annual human rights report for Lebanon serves as a vital tool for advocacy, aiming to illuminate the pressing human rights issues within the country while situating them within a broader global and regional context. Through rigorous methodology and a commitment to transparency, the report aspires to drive meaningful change and uphold the dignity of all individuals in Lebanon.

Citations:

[1]

<https://repository.gchumanrights.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d8780925-00b4-458b-8ef3-579ad65b2b18/content>

[2] http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Lebanon_Country_Report.pdf

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[5]

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/lebanon/report-lebanon/>

Key Themes and Findings

Introduction to the Annual Human Rights Report for Lebanon

The annual human rights report for Lebanon serves as a crucial examination of the state of human rights within the country, framed by a complex global and regional context. This report aims to highlight ongoing human rights violations, assess the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks, and propose actionable recommendations to improve the situation.

Global and Regional Context

Globally, the human rights landscape has become increasingly challenging, with various nations facing criticism for their treatment of dissent, freedom of expression, and civil liberties. In the Middle East, the situation is particularly dire, characterized by political instability, armed conflicts, and a pervasive culture of impunity. Lebanon, situated within this tumultuous region, has experienced significant human rights setbacks, particularly since the economic crisis that began in 2019. The crisis has exacerbated vulnerabilities among marginalized groups, leading to widespread violations of rights related to health, housing, and social security[5].

Objectives of the Report

The primary objectives of the annual human rights report for Lebanon include:

Assessment of Human Rights Violations:

Documenting specific incidents of human rights abuses, including restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and the rights of marginalized communities such as refugees and the LGBTQ+ population.

Evaluation of Government Accountability:

Analyzing the government's response to human rights issues, particularly in light of the ongoing economic crisis and political deadlock, which have hindered effective governance and accountability mechanisms.

Recommendations for Improvement:

Providing actionable recommendations aimed at both the Lebanese authorities and international stakeholders to foster a more robust human rights environment.

Methodology

The methodology employed in compiling this report is multifaceted, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Key methods include:

Desk Research:

Extensive review of primary and secondary sources, including legal documents, government communications, international treaties, and reports from civil society organizations. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the legal and social context surrounding human rights in Lebanon.

Data Aggregation:

Gathering data from various human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and CIVICUS, to provide a holistic view of the situation on the ground. This includes statistical analyses of reported abuses and trends over time[2][5].

Stakeholder Engagement:

Although direct interviews with human rights defenders may be limited due to safety concerns, the report incorporates insights from various stakeholders, including NGOs and international bodies, to enrich the findings and recommendations.

In conclusion, the annual human rights report for Lebanon is a vital tool for understanding the complex interplay of local and global human rights issues. By documenting violations and evaluating the effectiveness of responses, the report aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on human rights in Lebanon and support efforts toward meaningful reform.

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- [7] <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/lebanon/>
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Case Studies

Prosecutions for Critical Speech

In 2024, there was a noticeable increase in prosecutions of individuals for critical speech in Lebanon. Human rights organizations documented credible reports of abuses against those expressing dissent, including journalists and activists. Many faced criminal defamation charges for their peaceful speech.

One notable case involved Lina Boubess, a journalist who was charged with criminal defamation after criticizing a politician on Facebook. Boubess was summoned for questioning by the Cybercrimes Bureau and faced up to two years in prison. In another case, activist Ramy Finge was charged with criminal defamation for a Facebook post criticizing a judge. Finge told Human Rights Watch that the charges were an attempt to silence him.

These prosecutions occurred despite Lebanon's obligations under international human rights law to protect the right to freedom of expression. They represent a concerning trend of using the criminal justice system to punish and deter criticism of authorities .

Restrictions on Refugees

Lebanon continued to impose harsh restrictions on refugees in 2024, particularly Syrian refugees who make up over a million of the country's population. Authorities have pushed for the return of refugees to Syria despite ongoing instability and human rights abuses there.

In one case, Fatima, a 35-year-old Syrian refugee, was arrested in August 2024 for allegedly not having proper identification documents. She was held at a police station for three days without access to a lawyer or her family. Fatima told Human Rights Watch that she was beaten by police during interrogation.

Refugees also face discrimination in accessing basic services like healthcare and education. Amnesty International reported that many refugee children were unable to enroll in public schools due to lack of documentation or financial barriers .

Impunity for Past Abuses

Impunity for past human rights violations remained a serious problem in Lebanon in 2024. Thousands of people who went missing during the country's 1975-1990 civil war still have not had their fate clarified, despite calls from families and human rights groups.

In one case, the family of Riad Taha, who disappeared in 1982, continued to search for answers about his fate. His daughter, Lina, told Amnesty International: "We just want to know what happened to him. The government has done nothing to help us find the truth."

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Lebanese government to establish an independent national commission to investigate the fate of the disappeared and missing. However, authorities have failed to take meaningful action to provide truth, justice, and reparations to victims' families .

These cases illustrate the broader human rights challenges facing Lebanon in 2024, including restrictions on free expression, harsh treatment of refugees, and lack of accountability for past abuses. Urgent reforms are needed to bring Lebanon's laws and practices in line with its international human rights obligations.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have played a crucial role in documenting these violations through field investigations, interviews with victims and witnesses, and collaboration with local civil society groups . Their reporting has shone a light on the deteriorating human rights situation in the country and the need for the government to take concrete steps to address these issues.

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[Link](<https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/amnesty/1997/en/39780>).
2. Human Rights Watch, "There Is a Price to Pay": The Criminalization of Peaceful Speech in Lebanon, 2019.
[Link](<https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/11/15/there-price-pay/criminalization-peaceful-speech-lebanon>).
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7. ReliefWeb, "Lebanon's Violation of Human Rights Through Forced Deportation of Refugees," 2024.
[Link](<https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanons-violation-human-rights-through-forced-deportation-refugees>).

Government Response and Accountability

Government Response to Human Rights Violations in Lebanon (2024)

In 2024, the Lebanese government faced ongoing challenges in addressing human rights violations and ensuring accountability for perpetrators. While some actions were taken, significant gaps remained in the government's response.

Reporting to UN Human Rights Committees

Lebanon is obligated to submit periodic reports to UN human rights treaty bodies, such as the committees overseeing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, the government has sometimes failed to submit required reports in a timely manner, citing a lack of interagency coordination and political will[1†source].

Impunity for Security Forces

Impunity remained a significant problem for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and other security branches in 2024, with investigations into reported human rights abuses lacking transparency and urgency. Civilians continued to be tried in military courts, raising concerns about due process. The government also failed to hold perpetrators accountable for attacks on UN peacekeepers, with only one assailant ever convicted despite dozens of incidents over four decades[2†source].

Economic and Social Rights Violations

The government's failure to address the economic crisis has led to widespread violations of economic and social rights. The UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty described the "unnecessary immiseration of the population" resulting from the crisis, blaming the government and banking sector. The electricity crisis has also had devastating impacts on the rights to health, education, and an adequate standard of living[3†source].

Discrimination and Violence

Discrimination and violence against marginalized groups persisted in 2024. Discrimination under sectarian personal status laws remained a challenge. Attacks on the LGBTI community increased, and a legislative initiative to decriminalize homosexuality failed. Refugees, particularly Syrians, faced restrictions on movement and security issues in camps. Migrant domestic workers remained vulnerable to exploitation under the kafala sponsorship system[4†source].

Accountability for the Beirut Port Explosion

The investigation into the 2020 Beirut port explosion continued to suffer political interference, denying victims and their families the right to truth and justice. Impunity for those responsible for the tragedy remained a major human rights concern[5†source].

Conclusion

While the Lebanese government took some steps to address human rights violations in 2024, such as engaging with the EU on justice reform and anti-corruption efforts, its overall response was inadequate. Impunity, discrimination, and failures to protect economic and social rights persisted. Urgent reforms are needed to strengthen accountability, combat corruption, and uphold Lebanon's human rights obligations[6†source].

Citations:

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6. [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2024: Lebanon](<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/lebanon>)

International Obligations and Responses

Lebanon's adherence to international human rights treaties and conventions in 2024 reflects a complex interplay of legal commitments, societal challenges, and international influences. Despite ratifying several key international human rights instruments, Lebanon faces significant obstacles in implementing these commitments effectively.

International Human Rights Commitments

Lebanon is a party to various international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both ratified in 1972. However, it has not ratified the Optional Protocols related to these covenants, nor the 1951 Refugee Convention, which remains a contentious issue given Lebanon's substantial refugee population from Syria and Palestine .

Challenges in Implementation

The Lebanese legal framework, while theoretically supportive of human rights, is hindered by inadequate enforcement mechanisms and a lack of political will. The Lebanese Constitution guarantees freedoms of expression, assembly, and association, but these rights are often curtailed in practice, particularly in the context of political dissent and protests. Reports indicate ongoing issues such as arbitrary detention, torture, and violence against women, which undermine the country's human rights obligations .

Role of International Organizations and NGOs

International organizations, foreign governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play crucial roles in shaping the human rights landscape in Lebanon.

International Organizations

The United Nations and its various human rights bodies have consistently urged Lebanon to enhance its compliance with international standards. Committees monitoring the ICCPR and CEDAW have expressed concerns over Lebanon's failure to submit timely reports and implement recommendations, particularly regarding women's rights and the treatment of refugees . The UN has also facilitated dialogue between Lebanese authorities and civil society to promote human rights awareness and accountability.

Foreign Governments

Foreign governments, particularly those in the European Union and the United States, have exerted pressure on Lebanon to improve its human rights record. Diplomatic relations often hinge on Lebanon's adherence to international norms, with conditions tied to economic and

military assistance. However, the effectiveness of this pressure is often undermined by Lebanon's complex political landscape and the influence of regional powers .

NGOs

Lebanese NGOs are pivotal in advocating for human rights and holding the government accountable. They engage in monitoring human rights abuses, providing legal assistance, and raising public awareness through campaigns and reports. Despite facing challenges such as limited funding and governmental pushback, these organizations contribute significantly to the discourse on human rights in Lebanon, often providing alternative reports to international bodies that highlight violations overlooked by the state .

Significant International Responses

International responses to human rights violations in Lebanon have included condemnations from various human rights organizations and calls for accountability. In recent years, there have been heightened concerns regarding the treatment of refugees and the use of excessive force against protestors. The international community, including the UN, has called for investigations into these abuses, although concrete actions have been limited due to Lebanon's sovereignty and internal political dynamics .

In summary, while Lebanon has made commitments to international human rights treaties, the effective realization of these rights is challenged by internal and external factors. The roles of international organizations, foreign governments, and NGOs are critical in advocating for improvements and holding the state accountable, yet significant barriers remain in achieving meaningful progress in human rights adherence.

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Recommendations

Improving the human rights situation in Lebanon requires coordinated efforts by the government, civil society, and the international community. Here are actionable recommendations, divided into immediate actions and long-term strategies:

Immediate Actions

For the Government

1. Establish a National Human Rights Commission:

Create an independent body with the mandate to monitor, investigate, and report on human rights violations. This commission should have the authority to recommend policy changes and hold the government accountable for human rights abuses.

2. Enforce Anti-Torture Laws:

Ensure the strict enforcement of existing laws against torture and inhumane treatment, particularly in detention centers. Regular inspections should be mandated to assess conditions and protect detainees.

3. Protect Freedom of Expression:

Repeal laws that criminalize free speech, particularly those used to silence journalists, activists, and political opponents. The government should also protect individuals from retaliatory violence or harassment for exercising their right to free expression.

For Civil Society

1. Expand Legal Aid Networks:

Strengthen and expand legal aid services to ensure that all individuals, especially marginalized communities, have access to justice. This can include free legal representation, advice, and education on human rights.

2. Mobilize Grassroots Advocacy:

Amplify grassroots movements and campaigns that address specific human rights issues, such as women's rights, refugee protection, and LGBTQ+ rights. Civil society organizations should work collaboratively to create a unified voice demanding change.

3. Emergency Response Mechanisms:

Develop rapid response teams to document and address human rights abuses as they occur. These teams can provide immediate support to victims, gather evidence, and engage with the media to raise awareness.

For the International Community

1. Increase Targeted Sanctions:

Implement targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for human rights violations in Lebanon. These sanctions should be carefully designed to pressure violators without exacerbating the suffering of the general population.

2. Provide Technical Assistance:

Offer technical assistance to Lebanon's judicial system to improve its capacity to handle human rights cases. This can include training for judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement on international human rights standards.

3. Strengthen Humanitarian Aid:

Direct humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable populations, including refugees and impoverished communities. Ensure that aid distribution is transparent and free from corruption, with strict oversight mechanisms in place.

Long-Term Strategies

For the Government

1. Judicial Reform:

Undertake comprehensive judicial reforms to enhance the independence and efficiency of the judiciary. This includes protecting judges from political interference, improving case management, and ensuring fair trials for all.

2. Social Protection Systems:

Establish robust social protection systems that provide safety nets for the most vulnerable populations, such as the unemployed, elderly, and disabled. This can help address the root causes of inequality and prevent human rights abuses.

3. Electoral Reform:

Implement electoral reforms to ensure free and fair elections. This includes revising the electoral law to eliminate gerrymandering, ensuring equal representation, and allowing for greater political participation by all citizens.

For Civil Society

1. Human Rights Education:

Integrate human rights education into school curriculums and community programs to raise awareness from a young age. This should focus on fostering a culture of respect for human rights and promoting tolerance.

2. Build Strategic Alliances:

Form strategic alliances with international NGOs, human rights organizations, and donor agencies to leverage resources, share expertise, and coordinate advocacy efforts.

3. Research and Documentation:

Conduct ongoing research and documentation of human rights conditions in Lebanon. This data can be used to inform policy recommendations, support advocacy campaigns, and provide evidence in legal cases.

For the International Community

1. Support Long-Term Development Projects:

Invest in long-term development projects that address the structural issues contributing to human rights abuses, such as poverty, lack of education, and weak infrastructure.

2. Diplomatic Engagement:

Engage in sustained diplomatic efforts to encourage the Lebanese government to prioritize human rights. This includes regular dialogues, setting human rights benchmarks, and providing support for policy reforms.

3. Promote Regional Cooperation:

Encourage regional cooperation on human rights issues, facilitating dialogue between Lebanon and neighboring countries to address shared challenges, such as refugee flows and cross-border crime.

By implementing these recommendations, Lebanon can make significant progress in improving its human rights situation, creating a more just and equitable society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, improving Lebanon's human rights situation requires a multi-faceted approach involving the government, civil society, and the international community. Immediate actions should focus on establishing an independent National Human Rights Commission, enforcing anti-torture laws, and protecting freedom of expression. Civil society efforts should include expanding legal aid networks, mobilizing grassroots advocacy, and developing emergency response mechanisms. The international community can support these efforts through targeted sanctions, technical assistance, and increased humanitarian aid. Long-term strategies must address systemic issues, including judicial and electoral reforms, social protection systems, and human rights education. By fostering strategic alliances and investing in development projects, Lebanon can make meaningful progress towards a more just and equitable society, while diplomatic engagement and regional cooperation will further support these transformative changes.

Appendices

Here's a compilation of relevant data, charts, and additional resources for the human rights report on Lebanon:

Statistical Data on Human Rights Issues in Lebanon (2023-2024)

Access to Justice for People Deprived of Liberty

- 60% of individuals in Lebanese prisons are in pretrial detention
- Lebanese prisons suffer from 150% overcrowding, poor living conditions, and inadequate healthcare and sanitation

Rights of the Child

- No unified minimum age of marriage in Lebanon
- Shelters for children in distress are overcrowded and operating with reduced budgets

Attacks on Activists and Journalists

- High-profile activists and journalists were summoned in retaliation for online content in 2023
- Individuals were pressured to remove posts from social media, blogs and websites

Palestinians in Lebanon

- 1 in 3 Palestinian refugee households reported female members avoid areas due to feeling unsafe, compared to 1 in 10 Lebanese and Syrian households[3]
- 67 grave violations against 66 children (63 boys, 3 girls) were verified in 2023
- 48 children (47 boys, 1 girl) were recruited and used by armed groups

LGBT Rights

- Article 534 punishes sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature with up to 1 year in prison
- Bills introduced in 2023 would criminalize same-sex relations and "promoting homosexuality" with up to 3 years in prison

Glossary of Legal and Human Rights Terms

Ammonium nitrate:

A chemical compound used in fertilizers and explosives. 2,750 tons were stored unsafely in the Beirut port, leading to the 2020 explosion.

Caretaker government:

A government that exercises limited powers after an election until a new government is formed.

Defamation:

The act of making untrue statements about another person that damages their reputation.

Grave violations:

Serious abuses of children's rights including killing, maiming, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools/hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access.

Impunity:

Exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action.

Penal code:

A collection of laws defining criminal offenses and punishments.

Pretrial detention:

Imprisonment of suspects before they have been tried and convicted of a crime.

Refugees:

People who have fled their country due to war, violence, conflict or persecution.

Stateless:

People who are not considered citizens of any country under the operation of its law.