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Freedom in the World 2024 - Lebanon

PARTLY FREE

42

/ 100

Political Rights 13 / 40

Civil Liberties 29 / 60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

43 / 100 Partly Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)

Overview

Lebanon's political system ensures representation for its officially recognized religious communities, but limits competition and impedes the rise of cross-communal or civic parties. While residents enjoy some civil liberties and media pluralism, they also suffer from pervasive corruption and major weaknesses in the rule of law. Hezbollah, a Shiite political and militant group, maintains significant influence in the country. The country's large population of noncitizens, including refugees and migrant workers, remain subject to legal constraints and societal attitudes that severely restrict their access to employment, freedom of movement, and other fundamental rights.

Key Developments in 2023

- The caretaker government headed by Prime Minister Najib Mikati, in place since mid-2022, remained in office with limited powers during the year. The parliament also remained unable to agree on a new president, leaving the presidency vacant through year's end.
- Skirmishes between Hezbollah militants and the Israeli military along the Lebanese-Israeli border occurred sporadically during the year. Such clashes intensified in October, after Palestinian political and

militant group Hamas carried out a surprise attack on Israeli territory, causing tensions in the region to rise dramatically.

- Anti-LGBT+ rhetoric from religious leaders, politicians, and media personalities noticeably increased during the year. Assaults on LGBT+ and pro-LGBT+ individuals and establishments by religious extremists were also recorded during the year; in August, for example, a pro-LGBT+ bar in Beirut was attacked by members of Jnoud el Rab (Soldiers of God), a far-right Christian extremist group.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The president, who is elected to a six-year term by the parliament, appoints the prime minister after consulting with the parliament. The president and prime minister choose the cabinet, which holds most formal executive power. According to long-standing agreements on sectarian power-sharing, the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament must be a Shiite Muslim.

Following the May 2022 parliamentary elections, President Michel Aoun consulted with lawmakers and called on incumbent prime minister Najib Mikati to form a new government. However, no government was formed before Aoun's term expired that October. The parliament has since repeatedly failed to agree on a new president, leaving the office vacant through 2023. Mikati remained in office as caretaker prime minister at year's end.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because the parliament elected in 2022 failed to either fill the vacant presidency or install a prime minister and cabinet.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Members of the 128-seat National Assembly are elected for four-year terms using a system of multimember districts with sectarian quotas.

In the 2022 elections, a bloc led by Hezbollah and its allies—including Christian factions linked to President Aoun—lost its parliamentary majority, but it remained the largest grouping with a total of 61 seats. The Sunni-led Future Movement, which had long headed a rival bloc of Muslim and Christian factions, boycotted the elections, contributing to a number

of shifts in the makeup of the new assembly. The Lebanese Forces party, a Christian ally of the Future Movement, made significant gains at the expense of the Aoun-backed Free Patriotic Movement, and a group of independent candidates associated with the country's 2019 reformist protest movement captured 13 seats.

While the elections were conducted peacefully and were free and fair in many respects, vote buying was rampant, observers from the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections reported numerous procedural irregularities, and the electoral framework retained fundamental structural flaws associated with the sectarian political system. Turnout was 49 percent overall.

Municipal elections, initially scheduled for May 2022, have been postponed twice, including in April 2023, when the parliament voted to postpone the elections until May 2024.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Lebanon does not have an independent electoral commission; instead, the Interior Ministry oversees elections. Parliamentary seats are divided among major religious communities under a constitutional formula that does not reflect their current demographic weight. While seat allocations have been adjusted through political agreements to resolve major impasses over the years, there has been no official census in Lebanon since the 1930s, prior to independence. The electoral framework is inclusive and supports pluralism, but it is the product of bargaining among established leaders and tends to entrench the existing sectarian and communalist political system.

The 2017 electoral law introduced proportional representation and preferential voting, and improved opportunities for diaspora voting. However, the rules for redistricting and seat allocation still favored incumbent parties. The law sharply raised registration fees for candidates as well as spending caps for campaigns, while allowing private organizations and foundations to promote coalitions and candidates, effectively increasing the advantages of wealthier groups and individuals. As under past electoral laws, members of the military and citizens who had been naturalized for less than 10 years could not participate.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, 3 / 4

and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

Citizens are formally free to organize in different political groupings, and scores of parties compete in practice. While parties do rise and fall based on their performance and voters' preferences, most of Lebanon's political parties are vehicles for an established set of communal leaders who benefit from patronage networks, greater access to financing, and other advantages of incumbency.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 2 / 4

The elites who dominate Lebanese politics include traditional leaders, military veterans, former militia commanders, and wealthy businessmen. Under the country's power-sharing system, none of the parties they control consistently behave as opposition groups. Consolidation of power among political elites also hampers intraparty competition.

Despite the new electoral system introduced in 2017, the political parties and alliances that prevailed before the reform have largely maintained their positions. They have not only benefited from advantages under laws they shaped, but also used intimidation, social pressure, and propaganda to marginalize new political forces. In the 2022 parliamentary elections, however, independent candidates associated with the country's 2019 reformist protest movement won 13 seats after campaigning against the established parties, which they held responsible for decades of corruption and mismanagement that culminated in the current economic crisis.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means? 1 / 4

A variety of forces that are not democratically accountable—including entrenched patronage networks, religious institutions, the heavily armed militias of sectarian factions such as Hezbollah, and competing foreign powers—use a combination of financial incentives and intimidation to exert influence on Lebanese voters and political figures. The 2022 elections featured credible allegations of corruption, widespread vote buying, and analyses pointing to the role of establishment parties' patronage networks in mobilizing or incentivizing voters. Independent candidates were reportedly harassed or physically threatened by supporters of the dominant political parties in their districts.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Lebanon officially recognizes 18 religious communities, and the political system ensures that nearly all of these groups are represented, though not according to their actual shares of the population. Individuals who are not, or do not wish to be, affiliated with the recognized groups are effectively excluded. Citizens with disabilities do not have adequate access to polling places or alternative voting systems. Moreover, the country's large refugee population, including residents of Palestinian refugee camps and Syrians who fled their country's civil war, are not eligible to acquire citizenship and have no political rights.

Women formally have the same political rights as men. In practice, women remain marginalized due to religious restrictions, institutionalized inequality, hidden legal obstacles, political culture, and societal discrimination. The 2022 elections continued a pattern of gradual increases in women's participation: 155 women registered as candidates, 118 ultimately ran, and eight were elected to serve in the parliament, up from six in 2018. Women candidates were far less likely than men to receive media coverage during the campaign, and they were reportedly more likely to be the targets of violent speech on social media.

LGBT+ people have little political representation. However, more politicians and parties have expressed support for LGBT+ rights in recent years; nearly 100 parliamentary candidates in 2018 publicly called for the decriminalization of same-sex sexual relations.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

When the government can develop policies, they tend to be the result of negotiation among the country's dominant political figures, regardless of formal titles and positions. The legislature generally facilitates these policies rather than serving as an independent institutional check on the government. The government's authority is also limited in practice by the power of autonomous militant groups like Hezbollah and foreign states with interests in Lebanon.

Over the past decade, the country has experienced recurring episodes of political deadlock regarding elections, government formation, and the selection of a president, disrupting ordinary executive functions. The government assumed caretaker status after the May 2022 parliamentary elections, and the presidency has remained vacant since the expiration of Aoun's term that October.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Political and bureaucratic corruption is widespread, and patronage networks generally operate unchecked. Anticorruption laws are loosely enforced, in part because institutions such as the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) lack adequate funding and regulatory support. When law enforcement bodies do act, the cases tend to be selective or politicized. Chronic corruption has affected state-owned companies and utilities, contributing to poor service delivery and routine electricity blackouts.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Political leaders and government officials often operate behind closed doors, outside of state institutions, and with little regard for formal procedures. State expenditures remain irregular, with few mechanisms for effective oversight. Although civil society groups have some ability to influence pending policies or legislation, and may along with the media discuss proposals that have been made public, their influence is often contingent on participation in opaque processes. The National Assembly approved an access to information law in 2017, but it is not fully implemented, and government documents remain difficult to obtain in practice.

In the aftermath of a devastating 2020 explosion in the port of Beirut, caused by dangerous chemicals stored for years in a warehouse, the state responded in opaque and arbitrary ways, withholding information and employing special emergency powers intermittently or selectively. Several former cabinet ministers were initially charged with criminal negligence in the case, but the investigation has been repeatedly stalled and obstructed. In January 2023, Prosecutor General Ghassan Oweidat, who himself had previously been subject to charges in the case, filed charges against the judge presiding over the investigation and released all suspects being held in relation to the case.

Since 2019, the country has been suffering through one of the worst economic crises in world history, with a precipitous currency collapse underscoring concerns about transparency at the central bank and accountability for years of mismanagement that led to the crisis. Riad Salameh, who became the central bank governor in 1993, was eventually charged with illegal enrichment and money laundering by a Lebanese judge in March 2022. Salameh has also come under investigation for financial crimes in several European countries, and in May 2023, authorities in both France and Germany issued warrants for his arrest on numerous corruption-related charges. Salameh, who has denied any wrongdoing, ultimately left office in July.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Press freedom is constitutionally guaranteed but inconsistently upheld. While the country's media are among the most open and diverse in the region, nearly all outlets depend on the patronage of political parties, wealthy individuals, or foreign powers, and consequently practice some degree of self-censorship. Books, movies, plays, and other artistic works are subject to censorship, especially when the content involves politics, religion, sex, or Israel, and the artists deemed controversial by the government or major religious groups face official interference. It is a criminal offense to criticize or defame the president or security services. Authorities sometimes use such laws to harass and detain journalists, and those detained are often forced to sign pledges to refrain from writing content viewed as defamatory by the government.

In November 2022, the Samir Kassir Foundation, a Lebanese rights group, reported that more than 800 violations against journalists were recorded between 2016 and 2022, including the harassment and arbitrary detention of journalists. In July 2023, a journalist was fined and sentenced to one year in prison for criticizing the Aoun-backed Free Patriotic Movement on social media.

Since October, heightened tensions along Lebanon's border with Israel have endangered media personnel in the area. In mid-October, Israeli military strikes in Lebanon killed one journalist and injured six others. Another Israeli military strike in November killed three Lebanon-based journalists.

Authorities have failed to protect the media from violence or intimidation by members of political, religious, and other influential groups. Both security forces and supporters of political parties have attacked reporters covering protests, and several journalists have experienced harassment and threats of violence online.

Despite the legal and practical obstacles, many journalists have been able to report on sensitive topics such as state corruption, elite malfeasance, and the behavior of armed factions like Hezbollah. However, the financial viability of their work has been threatened by the economic collapse.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

The constitution protects freedom of conscience, and the state does not typically interfere with the practice or expression of religious faith or nonbelief. While blasphemy is a criminal offense, enforcement varies and is generally lax. Individuals may face societal pressure to express faith or

allegiance to a confessional community. Leaders and members of different communities discourage proselytizing by other groups.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Academic freedom is generally unimpaired. Individuals are mostly free to select subjects for research and disseminate their findings. However, various laws and customary standards—including restrictions on defamation, blasphemy, and work or opinions related to Israel—limit debate on certain issues. The state does not engage in extensive political indoctrination through education, though religious and other nonstate entities do seek to reinforce communal identities and perspectives.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Private discussion and public expression of personal views on political and other controversial topics have been increasingly inhibited in recent years. Repressive laws that criminalize defamation or otherwise restrict speech remain on the books, and individuals sometimes face police questioning, arrests, short detentions, or fines if they criticize the government, the military, foreign heads of state, or other powerful entities. Noncitizens, including refugees and migrant workers, have fewer legal protections and may be especially reluctant to engage in speech that could draw the attention of the security services.

Lebanese authorities regularly monitor social media and electronic communications—including those of prominent individuals such as politicians, dissidents, and journalists, as well as LGBT+ people. Security personnel have reportedly infiltrated the social media groups of activists and protesters in recent years.

Authorities also fail to protect people from nonstate actors, such as political parties or militant groups and their supporters, that may monitor and punish them for expressing critical opinions. Since the outbreak of mass protests against corruption and governance failures in 2019, journalists, activists, and outspoken social media users have faced physical attacks and online threats or harassment by such powerful groups.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The authorities generally respect the right to assemble, which is protected under the constitution, and people routinely gather without permits or coordination with security services in practice. Demonstrators have been

able to protest in recent years against government dysfunction and the financial crisis, but the events have often featured violence by authorities, political parties, militia groups, and civilian participants, and, most recently, summoning by the judicial police.

Demonstrations held during 2023 were generally allowed to proceed peacefully. However, in September, peaceful protesters—gathered in Beirut to condemn restrictions on fundamental human rights—were violently attacked by dozens of men on motorcycles. The assailants, who were reportedly linked to religious extremist groups, shouted anti-LGBT+ slurs and physically attacked protesters. Despite their heavy presence, police and security forces largely failed to protect demonstrators; in some cases, members of the security forces harassed and assaulted demonstrators and reporters on the scene. Human rights groups have called on Lebanese authorities to investigate the attack.

Noncitizens, LGBT+ people, and other marginalized groups face greater restrictions on their freedom to assemble in practice. For example, in 2022, the interior minister issued an order to prevent LGBT+ Pride gatherings that “promote homosexuality,” despite rulings by the country’s top administrative court that such actions constituted an infringement on freedom of expression.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? 3 / 4

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) tend to operate freely in Lebanon, though they must comply with the Law on Associations—which has been modified but not comprehensively overhauled since its enactment in 1909—and other applicable laws relating to labor, finance, and immigration. NGOs must also register with the Interior Ministry, which may oblige them to undergo an approval process and can investigate a group’s founders and staff. NGOs sometimes face bureaucratic obstruction or intimidation by security services, depending on their mission or initiatives. Groups that target or are led and staffed by Syrian refugees are susceptible to scrutiny and interference. In January 2023, Lebanese security forces arrested Samuel Tesfaye, an Ethiopian-born migrant rights activist who had lived in Lebanon for 13 years, for allegedly violating arbitrary residency conditions. Tesfaye was deported in February and issued a three-year ban on returning to Lebanon; other migrant activists have also reportedly been targeted by the government in recent years.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Individuals may establish, join, and leave trade unions and other professional organizations. However, the Labor Ministry has broad authority over the formation of unions, union elections, and the administrative dissolution of unions. The state regulates collective bargaining and strikes. In March 2023, employees at the state-run telecommunications company went on strike to ask for increased pay; the following week, the caretaker minister of telecommunications threatened to hand over the company to the army if the strike continued. Ultimately, the minister did not follow through on his threat.

Public employees, agricultural workers, and household workers are not protected by the labor code and have no legal right to organize, though they have formed unrecognized representative organizations. While noncitizen legal residents may join unions under the law, migrant workers have fewer union rights, and large numbers of refugees lack legal status or the right to work.

Many unions are linked to established political parties and serve as tools of influence for political leaders. However, activists affiliated with the 2019 protest movement have successfully challenged incumbent forces in recent elections within some unions and professional associations.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Lebanon's judiciary is not independent. Political leaders exercise significant influence over judicial appointments, jurisdiction, processes, and decisions, which are also affected by corruption and the undue influence of other prominent people.

In April 2023, the Beirut Bar Association amended their ethical code, restricting lawyers' freedom of expression by requiring them to obtain permission from the head of the bar association before participating in events or speaking with media outlets and social media platforms.

Hezbollah, its political allies, and other officials implicated in the 2020 Beirut port explosion case have repeatedly sought to impede the investigation into the explosion, pushing to replace the judges leading the investigation, including Tarek Bitar in 2022. In January 2023, Bitar reopened the investigation, charging a number of prominent officials, including former prime minister Hassan Diab and Prosecutor General Ghassan Oweidat, with crimes related to the explosion. Within days, the prosecutor general filed charges against Bitar and released all suspects being held in relation to the case. Numerous Lebanese and international rights organizations have asked the United Nations Human Rights Council

(OHCHR) to support the creation of an independent investigation into the blast.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Due process is subject to a number of impediments, including violations of defendants' right to counsel and extensive use of lengthy pretrial detention. Due process guarantees are particularly inadequate in the country's exceptional courts, including the military courts, whose judges do not require a background in law and are authorized to try civilians and juveniles in security-related cases. In practice, military courts have asserted jurisdiction over cases involving human rights activists and protesters in addition to those focused on alleged spies and militants.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 2 / 4

Residents of southern Lebanon have lived with the risk of land-mine detonation since the 1975–90 civil war, and armed militias, terrorist groups, and criminal organizations continue to undermine security in the country. During 2023, armed groups in southern Lebanon fired rockets towards Israel, and the Israeli military carried out strikes on Lebanese territory. Since early October, after Palestinian political and militant group Hamas carried out a surprise attack on Israeli territory, physical security has deteriorated in the region, particularly around Lebanon's southern border with Israel, where Israeli armed forces and Hezbollah militants have repeatedly exchanged fire. According to media and civil society reports, these clashes along the border had led to the deaths of at least 20 civilians and the displacement of approximately 74,500 people as of December. Some international human rights organizations have suggested that Israeli forces have knowingly carried out strikes on civilians.

During the summer of 2023, clashes erupted between rival armed factions in Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp, resulting in the death of 15 people and injuring members of the Lebanese army. In September, a Lebanese general mediated a cease-fire, halting the fighting.

The organizers of past political violence generally enjoy impunity. In 2022, an appellate panel of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, based in the Netherlands, convicted two Hezbollah operatives in absentia of involvement in the 2005 assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri. They were sentenced to life imprisonment, but as with another suspect who was convicted in absentia in 2020, their whereabouts remained unknown as of year-end 2023. The special tribunal came to a close in December.

Prisons and detention centers are badly overcrowded and poorly equipped, and the use of torture by law enforcement, military, and state security personnel continues despite the passage of antitorture legislation and the creation of institutional mechanisms to halt the practice. Amnesty International reported in June 2023 that the number of deaths among prisoners in Ministry of Interior-run detention centers has significantly increased in recent years.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of 1 / various segments of the population? 4

The country's legal system is meant to protect members of recognized confessional communities against mistreatment by the state, but groups have engaged in discriminatory behavior toward one another in practice, and people who do not belong to a recognized community have difficulty obtaining official documents, government jobs, and other services.

Women face discrimination in wages, benefits, and societal standards and practices, and they are barred from certain types of employment.

LGBT+ people face official and societal discrimination and harassment. A criminal code provision barring same-sex sexual relations remains in force, and people who violate this law risk a one-year prison sentence. Anti-LGBT+ rhetoric from religious leaders, politicians, and media personalities noticeably increased in 2023. In August, far-right Christian extremist group Jnoud el Rab (Soldiers of God) attacked a pro-LGBT+ bar in Beirut; the owner of the bar later reported that the Internal Security Forces (ISF) responded to the attack, preventing the assailants from entering the bar, but did not arrest any of the attackers.

More than 1.5 million Syrians resided in Lebanon as of 2023. However, only about 785,000 were officially registered as refugees by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of December 2023, as the government has barred the agency from registering new Syrian refugees since 2015. Refugees have faced arbitrary arrests, harassment, and discrimination; most live in poverty due in part to limitations on their employment options. The government has also enforced housing regulations to compel Syrian refugees to destroy their informal camps. In 2023, Lebanese authorities intensified their crackdown on unregistered Syrians; the army arrested and deported thousands of Syrians, including unaccompanied children, in breach of international treaties that Lebanon has signed.

About 479,000 Palestinian refugees are registered in Lebanon, though only about 210,000 actually live there. Many reside in 12 designated refugee camps and are restricted from 39 professions, contributing to widespread poverty, unemployment, and underemployment. In 2019, Lebanese authorities issued new regulations requiring foreigners to

possess work permits, further restricting Palestinians' access to the labor market.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Citizens enjoy constitutional and legal rights to freedom of movement. With few formal restrictions, they are able to travel within Lebanon. Nevertheless, citizens find it extremely difficult to transfer official places of residence for voting purposes. They also face de facto sectarian boundaries and militia checkpoints in some areas.

Noncitizens are subject to much harsher restrictions on movement. Many Palestinians classified as refugees live in designated camps, and access to those areas is controlled and often constrained by Lebanese security services. Many Syrian refugees live in informal camps or smaller settlements, and are subject to curfews and other obstacles to movement.

Migrant workers face severe restrictions on movement under a sponsorship system that revokes their residency rights if they are dismissed by their designated employers. Employers often confiscate migrant workers' passports, further reducing their autonomy.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

Lebanese law protects citizens' rights to own property and operate private businesses, but powerful groups and individuals sometimes engage in land-grabbing and other infringements without consequence, and business activity is impaired by bureaucratic obstacles and corruption.

Refugees, including longtime Palestinian residents, have few property rights. Women have weaker property rights than men under the religious codes that govern inheritance and other personal status issues in Lebanon, and they often face family pressure to transfer property to male relatives.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Because the religious codes and courts of each confessional community determine personal status law in Lebanon, people's rights regarding marriage, divorce, and child custody depend on their affiliation, though women are typically at a disadvantage compared with men. The incidence

of child marriage has reportedly increased in recent years, particularly among refugee populations. Partners seeking to enter an interfaith marriage often travel abroad, as Lebanon recognizes civil marriages performed elsewhere. Women cannot pass Lebanese citizenship to non-Lebanese spouses or children of non-Lebanese fathers. Incidents of gender-based violence against women and girls have reportedly increased in recent years.

Same-sex marriage remains illegal in Lebanon. However, transgender people have some legal precedent allowing them to live publicly based on their gender identity: a 2016 Court of Appeals ruling allowed a transgender man to legally change his gender in the civil registry and supported the plaintiff's desire to seek gender confirmation surgery.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from 1 / economic exploitation? 4

Citizens' communal affiliation can either enhance or restrict their economic opportunities in a given area, company, or public-sector entity, depending on which group is in a dominant position. Individuals must also contend with political patronage and clientelism, layered on top of communally enabled corruption, in the public and private sectors.

All residents of Lebanon have faced hardship amid the economic crisis that emerged in 2019, featuring rampant inflation, currency devaluation, import shortages, food insecurity and a sharp rise in poverty rates. However, noncitizens, such as refugees and migrant workers, are subject to particular disadvantages and have long been especially vulnerable to exploitative working conditions and sex trafficking. The authorities do not effectively enforce laws against child labor, which is common among Syrian refugees, rural Lebanese, and segments of the urban poor.

Household workers and migrant workers who operate under the sponsorship system routinely suffer from economic exploitation. Employers are favored in legal cases involving migrant workers, discouraging the latter from reporting denial of wages and contract obligations as well as physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.

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