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Lebanon is a parliamentary republic based on the 1943 National Pact, with a Maronite Christian president, Shia speaker of the Chamber of Deputies (parliament), and a Sunni prime minister. Observers considered the 2009 parliamentary elections peaceful, free, and fair. The parliament twice postponed parliamentary elections scheduled for May 2013. The elections are scheduled for June 2017. Government security forces reported to civilian authorities, although the terrorist group Hizballah, Palestinian security and militia forces, and other extremist elements operated outside the direction or control of government officials.

Following a flood of refugees in 2013, more than tripling the population by some estimates, Lebanon experienced increased violence, including air raids from the Syrian regime on Lebanese border towns and several rounds of fighting ignited by the extremist groups the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al Nusra Front (Nusra). These groups conducted an offensive in the border town of Aarsal, a key refugee hub, in early August and although the army suppressed the violence, extremists kidnapped 29 police officers and soldiers and executed four.

The most significant human rights abuses during the year were torture and abuse by security forces, harsh prison and detention center conditions, and limitations on freedom of movement for Palestinian and Syrian refugees.

Other human rights abuses included arbitrary arrest and detention; lengthy pretrial detention; a judiciary subject to political pressure and long delays in trials; violation of citizens' privacy rights; some restrictions on freedoms of speech and press, including intimidation of journalists; some restrictions on freedom of assembly; reports of harassment of Syrian political activists and other refugees; restrictions on citizens' ability to change their government; official corruption and lack of transparency; widespread violence against women; societal, legal, and economic discrimination against women; trafficking in persons; discrimination against persons with disabilities; systematic discrimination against Palestinian refugees and minority groups; discrimination based on sexual orientation; killings related to societal violence; restricted labor rights for and abuse of migrant domestic workers; and child labor.

Although the legal structure provides for prosecution and punishment, government officials enjoyed a measure of impunity for human rights abuses.

Despite the presence of Lebanese and UN security forces, Hizballah retained significant influence over parts of the country, and the government made no tangible progress toward disbanding and disarming armed militia groups, including Hizballah. Palestinian refugee camps continued to act as self-governed entities and maintained security and militia forces not under the direction of government officials.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. Islamic extremist groups, however, committed numerous unlawful killings.

In June 2013 Nader Bayoumi, a 36-year-old car mechanic, died while in military custody. Available evidence indicated beatings led to his death. In June 2013 a Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) official informed Bayoumi's family that they could recover his body from the military hospital in Beirut. In July 2013 LAF charged five LAF personnel with violating military orders, abuse of power, and accidentally killing a person, in connection with Bayoumi's death. At year's end the case remained in the courts.

The country was increasingly affected by the Syrian crisis, which further polarized its politics, paralyzed many state institutions, generated a massive humanitarian refugee crisis, depressed the economy, inflamed sectarian tensions, and degraded national security. The continued spillover of violence led to the unlawful deprivation of life throughout the country, particularly in Tripoli, Arsal, and the southern suburbs of Beirut, by nonstate actors, including gangs and terrorist organizations.

On June 20, a suicide bomber from the Salafist Islamic group, "Free Sunnis of Baalbek Brigades," attacked a checkpoint manned by the Internal Security Forces (ISF) in Dahr el Baidar in the Beqaa and killed one ISF member and injured 32 persons. On June 23, another suicide bomber attacked an army checkpoint at the Tayyounh traffic circle at the entrance of the Beirut southern suburbs and killed one member of the Directorate of General Security (DGS) and injured 20 persons.

On June 25, a suicide bomber detonated his device during a security raid at the Duroy Hotel in Raouche, Beirut. The bomber was a Saudi Arabian citizen, and authorities arrested another potential bomber, also Saudi Arabian. The device killed the bomber and injured seven bystanders.

On August 2, clashes erupted between army personnel and Islamic militants aligned with ISIL and Nusra. Nineteen LAF members and 40 to 45 Syrians and Lebanese died; 90 to 100 individuals were injured. Islamic militants took 29 LAF and ISF members hostage; four of whom were executed, six released, and the remainder held prisoner.

The recurring conflict in the northern city of Tripoli between the generally pro-Syrian regime Alawite residents of Jabal Mohsen and the nearby generally pro-Syrian opposition Sunni district of Bab al-Tabbaneh continued. Following increased violence in April, the army entered Jabal Mohsen, prompting members of the Eid family, who were Alawite, pro-Asad, and, facing prosecution, to flee. When violence occurred again in October, the army entered Sunni-dominated Bab al-Tabbaneh to suppress the fighting.

On October 24, following the arrest of Ahmed Salim Mikati, a local extremist leader, fighting broke out between the army and extremist elements in Tripoli. After four days of fighting, the army reasserted control over the city. Six soldiers including an officer, two militants, and two civilians died. The fighting injured 24 soldiers, militants, and civilians.

In October 2013 the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), which operated based upon an agreement between the United Nations and the government, indicted Hassan Habib Merhi, a Hizballah member, as a fifth suspect in the 2005 killing of former prime minister Rafik Hariri and 22 other individuals. In 2011 the STL indicted four individuals, Mustafa Amine Badreddine, Hussein Hassan Oneissi, Salim Jamil Ayyash, and Assad Hassan Sabra, all of whom were Hizballah operatives suspected of collaborating in the 2005 killings. Due to the incidents' similar nature and gravity, the STL also established jurisdiction over the killing of former Communist Party leader George Hawi and attacks on former ministers Elias Murr and Marwan Hamadeh. Lebanese authorities, however, notified the STL that they were unable to detain or serve the accused with the indictments. On January 16, the STL opened its first trial in the case of Ayyash and other defendants.

b. Disappearance

There were no confirmed reports security forces were responsible for disappearances during the year.

On July 1, a former detainee told Human Rights Watch (HRW) that his family had no information about his brother; missing since the clashes on June 23. The family believed he was still in detention because military intelligence officials asked one of the family members to bring the missing man's cell phone to his local branch. The family had been informed by another detainee, after his release, that he had seen their relatives in detention, which was the first information the families had received regarding the detainees.

Syrians who fled to Lebanon, including political activists and other refugees, risked being targeted, harassed, and kidnapped by Syrian and Lebanese security services as well as by others. Syrian opposition activists asserted that Syrian agents in Lebanon targeted them. They claimed they had to operate clandestinely for their protection. Additionally, retaliatory sectarian kidnappings occurred as a result of ISIL and al-Nusra's actions in Aarsal.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law does not specifically prohibit all forms of torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and there were reports security officials employed such practices. The penal code prohibits using acts of violence to obtain a confession or information about a crime, but the judiciary rarely investigated or prosecuted allegations of such acts. According to domestic and international human rights groups, security forces abused detainees and used torture to obtain confessions or encourage suspects to implicate other individuals.

Human rights organizations reported that torture occurred in certain police stations, in the Ministry of Defense's detention facilities, and in the Information Branch of the ISF. The government continued to deny the use of torture, although authorities acknowledged violent abuse sometimes occurred during preliminary investigations at police stations or military installations, where suspects were interrogated without an attorney. Such abuse occurred despite national laws prohibiting judges from accepting confessions extracted under duress.

In June 2013 HRW released a report that stated the ISF threatened, mistreated, and tortured drug users, sex workers, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in their custody. The report was based on more than 50 interviews conducted during the previous five years. The most common forms of abuse reported were blows from fists, boots, or implements, such as sticks, canes, and rulers. Seventeen former detainees stated security members denied them food, water, or medication and authorities confiscated their medication; nine reported being handcuffed in bathrooms or kept in extremely uncomfortable positions for extended periods; and 11 stated authorities forced them to listen to the screams of other detainees to induce them to cooperate or

confess. One former detainee claimed he was sexually violated when accused of being gay. The ISF responded that the report defamed the organization on the local and international levels and called for verification of the unproven allegations and claims.

Former prisoners, detainees, and reputable local human rights groups reported that methods of torture and abuse included continuous blindfolding, hanging detainees by wrists tied behind their backs, violent beatings, blows to the soles of the feet, electric shocks, sexual abuse, immersion in cold water, extended periods of sleep deprivation, being forced to stand for extended periods, threats of violence against relatives, and deprivation of clothing, food, and toilet facilities.

On June 24, the BBC, based on information provided by HRW, reported instances of torture at a LAF checkpoint between the border town of Arsal and Labweh. The broadcast did not show the anonymous victim's face but showed bruises across his arms and back. During the interview the victim claimed he was beaten, hit with cables, and shocked with a Taser.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and detention center conditions were harsh and often lacked access to basic sanitation. In some prisons, such as the central prison in Roumieh, conditions were life threatening. Facilities were not adequately equipped for persons with disabilities.

Physical Conditions: As of November 11, there were 6,012 prisoners and detainees, including pretrial detainees and remand prisoners, in facilities built to hold 3,500 inmates. The central prison in Roumieh, with a capacity of 1,500, held approximately 2,722 persons. Authorities often held pretrial detainees together with convicted prisoners. Men and women were held separately in similar conditions, and ISF statistics indicated that 893 minors and 295 women were incarcerated.

Sanitary conditions in overcrowded prisons were poor, and they worsened in Roumieh following the destruction of much of the infrastructure, including plumbing and central air conditioning, during a riot in 2011. According to a government official, most prisons lacked adequate sanitation, ventilation, and lighting, and temperatures were not regulated consistently. Prisoners lacked consistent access to potable water. Roumieh prisoners slept on bedrolls, often 10 to a room that originally was built to accommodate two prisoners. Basic medical care at Roumieh improved with better equipment and training, but staffing continued to be inadequate, and working conditions were poor. Additionally, the medical facilities were extremely overcrowded. A source recently reported that Tripoli prison, which often received less attention due to its smaller size, had worse conditions than Roumieh. During the year prisoners in Tripoli prison experienced a scabies outbreak. According to ISF statistics, nine prisoners died from natural causes. Some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) complained of authorities' negligence and failure to provide appropriate medical care, which may have contributed to some of the deaths. The ISF reported that none died of police abuse and that there were no cases of rape in prisons during the year.

There were reports of female prisoners exchanging sex in return for "favors," such as cigarettes, food, more comfortable conditions in their cells, or a more lenient police report.

Administration: Recordkeeping was not adequate. In many prisons inmates who completed their sentences were not released due to poor recordkeeping. Some juveniles benefitted from alternative sentencing. Although there is a legal means to impose a sentence of probation or supervised release for adults in lieu of incarceration, it was not applied. A person sentenced to imprisonment for more than six months may obtain a sentence reduction upon demonstrating good behavior, that he does not pose a threat to himself or others, and that he has met certain conditions depending on the category of crime and the release order. The Commission on the Reduction of Sentences

considered sentence reduction requests. A chamber of the Court of Appeals, which made the final decision on whether to reduce a sentence, reviewed the commission's recommendations.

There were no prison ombudsmen. Authorities did not implement a 2005 law establishing an ombudsman to serve on behalf of citizens. The ISF, however, posted signs stating detainees' rights and had an inspection unit. The minister of interior assigned a general-rank official as the commander of the inspection unit and a colonel-rank official as the commander of the medical and human rights unit. The units were instructed to investigate every complaint. After completing an investigation, authorities transferred the case to the inspector general for action in the case of a disciplinary act or to a military investigative judge for additional investigation. If investigators found physical abuse, the military investigator assigned a medical team to confirm the abuse, and the judge ruled at the conclusion of the review. There were no statistics available at year's end regarding the number of complaints, investigations, and disciplinary or judicial actions taken.

Families of prisoners normally contacted the Ministry of Interior to report complaints, although prison directors could also initiate investigations. According to a government official, prison directors often protected officers under investigation.

Inmates could receive visitors once or twice per week, with the frequency of visits varying, depending on the severity of the inmate's crime. Prison officials allowed religious observance.

The ISF's Committee to Monitor against the Use of Torture and Other Inhuman Practices in Prisons and Detention Centers conducted a minimum of one or two prison visits per week. The parliamentary human rights committee was responsible for monitoring the Ministry of Defense detention center.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted independent monitoring of prison and detention conditions by local and international human rights groups and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and such monitoring took place. During 2013 the ICRC visited 6,249 prisoners in 29 prisons and detention centers.

Nongovernmental entities, such as Hizballah and Palestinian militias, also operated detention facilities, but no information about these facilities was available.

Improvements: The ISF received from an international donor 20 transport vehicles for use as well as three donated in 2012 for transporting prisoners from prison to the courts.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law requires judicial warrants before arrests except in cases of active pursuit. Nonetheless, the government arbitrarily arrested and detained persons.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The ISF, under the Ministry of Interior, enforced laws, conducted searches and arrests, and referred cases to the judiciary. The General Directorate for State Security, reporting to the prime minister, and the DGS, under the Ministry of Interior, were responsible for border control. The LAF, under the Ministry of Defense, is responsible for external security but also may arrest and detain suspects on national security grounds. Both the security directorate and the DGS collected information on groups deemed possible threats to state security. Each security apparatus had its own internal mechanisms to investigate cases of abuse and misconduct. A 2012 ISF code of conduct defines the obligations of ISF members and the legal and ethical standards by which they must abide in performing their duties. Various security forces underwent training on the code. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over security forces. Government security force

officials, however, reportedly enjoyed a measure of implicit impunity due to the lack of publicly available information on the outcome of prosecutions. The government lacked mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There are internal complaint mechanisms within the security forces, but there was no information available upon which to assess the efficacy of the mechanism.

In accordance with UN Security Resolutions 425 and 426, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was established in 1978 to confirm the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, restore peace and security, and assist the government in restoring its authority over its territory. UN Security Resolution 1701 stated UNIFIL was to monitor (per UN resolutions) cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hizballah after their 2006 war, accompany the LAF in deploying in southern Lebanon, assist in providing humanitarian access to civilians and safe return of displaced, and assist the government in securing its borders.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law generally requires a warrant for arrest and provides the right to a medical examination, and referral to a prosecutor within 48 hours of arrest. If authorities hold a detainee longer than 48 hours without formal charges, the arrest is considered arbitrary, and the detainee must be released or a formal extension requested. The code of criminal procedures provides that a person may be held in police custody for investigation for 48 hours, unless the investigation requires additional time, in which case the period of custody may be renewed for another 48 hours.

The code of criminal procedures also states that from the moment of arrest a suspect or the subject of a complaint has the right to contact a member of his family, his employer, an advocate of his choosing, an acquaintance, or an interpreter, and undergo a medical examination on the approval of the general prosecutor. It does not mention, however, whether a lawyer may attend preliminary questioning with the judicial police. In practical terms, the lawyer may not attend the preliminary questioning with judicial police. Under the framework of the law, it is possible for a suspect to be held at a police station for hours before being granted the right to contact an attorney. If the suspect lacks the resources to obtain legal counsel, authorities must provide free legal aid. The law does not, however, require the judicial police to inform an individual who lacks legal counsel that one may be assigned through the Bar Association, whether in Beirut or Tripoli.

The law does not require authorities to inform individuals they have the right to remain silent. Many provisions of the law simply state that if the individual being questioned refuses to make a statement or remains silent, this should be recorded and that the detainee may not be "coerced to speak or to undergo questioning, on pain of nullity of their statements."

The law states the period of detention for a misdemeanor may not exceed two months. This period may be extended by a maximum of two additional months. The period of custody may not exceed six months for a felony, which may be renewed. Excluded from this protection are suspects accused of homicide or with a previous criminal conviction, drug crimes, endangerment of state security, violent crimes, and crimes involving terrorism.

Officials responsible for prolonged arrest may be prosecuted on charges of depriving personal freedom, but authorities rarely filed charges. The law requires authorities to inform detainees of the charges filed against them. A suspect caught in the act of committing a crime must be referred to an examining judge, who decides whether to issue an indictment or order the release of the suspect. By law bail is available in all cases regardless of the charges, although the amounts required may be prohibitively high.

Authorities failed to observe many provisions of the law, and government security forces, as well as extralegal armed groups such as Hizballah, continued the practice of extrajudicial arrest and

detention, including incommunicado detention. Additionally, the law permits military intelligence personnel to make arrests without warrants in cases involving military personnel or involving civilians suspected of espionage, treason, or weapons possession.

Arbitrary Arrest: According to local NGOs, there were no clear cases of arbitrary detention of citizens, but cases from previous years continued. Civil society groups reported authorities frequently detained foreign nationals arbitrarily. On September 25 and 26, the LAF temporarily detained approximately 400 Syrian men. The media published photographs of the men, lying face down, handcuffed, several of them without shirts. Of the 400 detained, authorities released all but three.

Pretrial Detention: According to ISF statistics, 3,981 of the 6,012 persons in prison were in pretrial detention as of November 11. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern about arbitrary pretrial detention without access to legal representation and refused to support construction of prisons until the serious problem of arbitrary pretrial detention was resolved. According to a study by the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH), detainees spent one year on average in pretrial detention prior to sentencing. Individuals accused of murder spent on average 3.5 years in pretrial detention. Many Salafist prisoners remained in prolonged pretrial detention, including detainees from the Nahr el-Bared fighting in 2007.

State security forces and rival Palestinian factions subjected Palestinian refugees to arbitrary arrest and detention. No statistics on the number of such cases were available.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the judiciary was subjected to political pressure, particularly in the appointment of key prosecutors and investigating magistrates. Influential politicians and intelligence officers intervened at times and used their influence and connections to protect supporters from prosecution. Persons involved in routine civil and criminal proceedings sometimes solicited the assistance of prominent individuals to influence the outcome of their cases.

Trial Procedures

Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Trials are generally public, but judges have the discretion to order a closed court session. There is no trial by jury. Defendants have the right to be present at trial, to consult with an attorney in a timely manner, and to question witnesses against them. Defendants could present witnesses and evidence, and their attorneys had access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases. Defendants have the right not to be compelled to testify or confess guilt; they have the right of appeal.

The Military Court has jurisdiction over cases involving the military as well as those involving civilians accused of espionage, treason, weapons possession, and draft evasion. Civilians may be tried on security charges, and military personnel may be tried on civil charges. The Military Court has a permanent tribunal and a cassation tribunal. The latter hears appeals from the former. A civilian judge chairs the higher court. Defendants on trial under the military tribunal have the same procedural rights as defendants in ordinary courts. Human rights groups expressed concerns about the trial of civilians in military courts, the extent to which they were afforded full due process, and the lack of review of verdicts by ordinary courts.

Palestinian groups in refugee camps operated an autonomous and arbitrary system of justice outside the control of the state. For example, local popular committees in the camps attempted to resolve disputes using tribal methods of reconciliation. If the case involved a killing, the committees occasionally transferred the accused to state authorities for trial.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent judiciary in civil matters, but civil lawsuits seeking damages for government human rights violations were seldom submitted to it. During the year there were no examples of a civil court awarding a person compensation for such violations.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits such actions, but authorities frequently interfered with the privacy of persons regarded as enemies of the government. There were reports security services monitored private e-mail and other digital correspondence.

The law provides for the interception of telephone calls with prior authorization from the prime minister upon a request made by either the minister of interior or minister of defense.

Militias and non-Lebanese forces operating outside the area of central government authority also frequently violated citizens' privacy rights. Various nonstate actors, such as Hizballah, used informer networks and telephone monitoring to obtain information regarding their perceived adversaries.

Personal status is legally handled by religious courts, which applied religious laws of the various confessions and occasionally interfered in family matters.

g. Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts

ISIL and other extremist groups conducted an offensive in the border town of Arsal, a key refugee hub, in early August. The military closed the town for several days to human rights groups, limiting their ability to investigate the army's conduct. There were no serious human rights abuse allegations against the army during the offensive.

Media and the LAF reported ISIL and other extremist groups hid in refugee settlements, intentionally destroyed civilian infrastructure and refugee tents, and captured 29 soldiers and police officers, subsequently executing four of them.

To protect civilians the army evacuated the town, resulting in the displacement of tens of thousands citizens and Syrian refugees during the counteroffensive. Displaced civilians received assistance from aid groups.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech and press and stipulates that restrictions may be imposed only under exceptional circumstances. The government generally respected these rights, but there were some restrictions, particularly regarding political and social issues, such as criticism of the president or other heads of state.

Freedom of Speech: Individuals are free to criticize the government but are legally prohibited from publicly criticizing the president and foreign leaders. Authorities also hindered the expression of certain views. Activists promoting democratic reform in Syria complained that Asad

supporters harassed them and the government did not offer protection. NGOs that advocated for women's rights, particularly those focused on combating domestic violence, organized protests and media campaigns that met with some interference by the security forces.

Press Freedoms: Independent media outlets were active and expressed a wide variety of views. The majority of outlets had political affiliations, which hampered their ability to operate freely in areas dominated by other political groups and affected their reporting. Local, sectarian, and foreign interest groups financed media outlets that reflected their views. The law restricts the freedom to issue, publish, and sell newspapers. Publishers must apply for and receive a license from the Ministry of Information in consultation with the press union.

The law governing the audiovisual media bans live broadcasts of unauthorized political gatherings and certain religious events and prohibits the broadcast of "any matter of commentary seeking to affect directly or indirectly the well-being of the nation's economy and finances, material that is propagandistic and promotional, or promotes a relationship with Israel." Media outlets must receive a license from the Council of Ministers, based on a recommendation by the minister of information, to broadcast direct and indirect political news and programs. The law also prohibits broadcasting programs that seek to affect the general system, harm the state or its relations with Arab and other foreign countries, or have an effect on the well-being of such states. The law also prohibits the broadcast of programs that seek to harm public morals, ignite sectarian strife, or insult religious beliefs.

In 2011 the Criminal Investigation Service in Beirut opened a criminal investigation against CLDH staff members Marie Daunay and Wadih al-Asmar on the charge of inciting sectarian strife in connection with the publication of the CLDH report, *Arbitrary Detention and Torture: The Bitter Reality of Lebanon*. The investigation continued at year's end.

On March 18, *Executive Magazine* published an article noting, "some individuals in government positions have submitted lawsuits against critical publications, including *Executive Magazine*." The article noted the "fact that these cases are held in a criminal court, rather than a civil one, means those journalists risk jail."

Violence and Harassment: On May 21, the DGS confiscated playwright and director Lucien Bou Rjeily's passport and refused to renew it. Bou Rjeily was scheduled to represent the country at the London International Festival of Theatre. Interior Minister Nouhad Mashnouq intervened and had Bou Rjeily's passport released allowing him to attend the festival. In 2013 Bou Rjeily directed a play criticizing the DGS's censorship bureau.

On November 26, customs officials reportedly beat and detained an al-Jadeed television news crew for attempting to cover a story on corruption within the Customs Agency. Authorities dispatched the LAF to quell the dispute. Al-Jadeed filed suit, and the Customs Agency filed a countersuit. Authorities questioned numerous customs officials, and the investigation continued at year's end.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: The law permits, and authorities selectively used, prior censorship of pornographic material, political opinion, and religious material considered a threat to national security or an offense to the dignity of the head of state or foreign leaders. The DGS reviewed and censored all foreign newspapers, magazines, and books to determine admissibility into the country. Political violence and extralegal intimidation led to self-censorship among journalists.

The law includes guidelines regarding materials deemed unsuitable for publication in a book, newspaper, or magazine. Any violation of the guidelines may result in the author's imprisonment or a fine.

Authorities of any of the recognized religious groups may request the DGS to ban a book. The government may prosecute offending journalists and publications in the publications court.

On January 23, Lebanese Army Intelligence briefly detained an activist, Bilal Hussein, in Tripoli for promoting a cartoon apparently criticizing LAF Commander Jean Kahwagi. Authorities detained Hussein for six hours.

Libel Laws/National Security: The 1991 security agreement between the Lebanese and Syrian governments, still in effect at year's end, contains a provision prohibiting the publication of any information deemed harmful to the security of either state. During the year there were no publications so identified.

Nongovernmental Impact: Radical Islamist groups sometimes sought to inhibit freedom of the press. On January 4, unknown assailants burned a library owned by a Greek Orthodox priest, Ibrahim Sarrouj, in Tripoli. The arson attack on the al-Saeh Library followed reports claiming Ibrahim Sarrouj published a book deemed insulting to Islam.

Authors could publish books without prior permission from the DGS, but if the book contained material that violated the law, the DGS could legally confiscate the book and put the author on trial. In some cases authorities might see the offending material as a threat to national security. Such offenses were not taken to trial based on the publication law, but on the basis of criminal law or other statutes. Publishing a book without prior approval and which contained unauthorized material could put the author at risk of a prison sentence, fine, and confiscation of the published materials.

Internet Freedom

The law does not restrict access to the internet. Despite this legal safeguard, the Telecommunications Ministry temporarily disabled mobile broadband in Tripoli following the October fighting. There was a perception among knowledgeable sources, however, that the government monitored e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and internet chat rooms where individuals and groups engaged in the expression of views. The government reportedly censored some websites to block online gambling, pornography, and religiously provocative material, but there were no verified reports the government systematically attempted to collect personally identifiable information via the internet.

In the absence of laws governing online media and activities on the internet, the ISF's Cyber Crimes Unit (CCU) and other state agencies summoned a number of journalists, bloggers, and activists to question them about tweets, Facebook posts, and blog posts critical of political figures. On March 18, blogger Ana Maria Luca reported the CCU summoned cyber activist Imad Bazzi regarding a satirical blog post he wrote criticizing a politician. The same unit summoned Rita Kamel for exposing a possible fraud attempt by the organizers of a Pan-Arab internet award. Bloggers reported that the manner in which the CCU summoned bloggers "is the most concerning." One blogger, Gino Raidy, said authorities summoned and interviewed him without being allowed a lawyer. While summoned by police and intimidated, no bloggers were charged with offenses.

Restrictions on freedom of speech concerning the president applied to social media communications on Facebook and Twitter, which authorities considered a form of publication rather than private correspondence. On February 13, the Court of Publications sentenced Jean Assy for "slander, libel, and contempt against President Michel Sleiman" for a series of tweets. There were also reports of political groups intimidating individuals and activists for their online posts.

Internet access was available and widely used by the public. According to the International Telecommunication Union, internet penetration rose from 61.3 percent in 2012 to 70.5 percent in 2013.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There are no government restrictions specific to academic freedom, but libel and slander laws apply. The government censored films, plays, and other cultural events. The DGS reviewed all films and plays and prohibited those deemed offensive to religious or social sensibilities. Cultural figures and those involved in the arts practiced self-censorship. On November 15, the government banned the movie *The Silent Majority Speaks*, which chronicled the 2009 "Green Movement" protests of contested elections in Iran. The Daily Star reported the DGS considered the film "offensive towards a country." The Cultural Resistance International Film Festival planned to screen *The Silent Majority Speaks* but was informed of the ban just two hours before the scheduled screening.

The law provides for freedom of assembly, but the government sometimes restricted this right. Organizers are required to obtain a permit from the Interior Ministry three days prior to any demonstration. In previous years the ministry sometimes did not grant permits to groups that opposed government positions, but there were no known examples of this restriction being applied during the year.

Security forces occasionally intervened to disperse demonstrations, usually when clashes broke out between opposing protesters.

Civil society activists protesting the November 5 parliamentary extension engaged in a small clash with the ISF and parliamentary security forces, resulting in one injury.

b. Freedom of Association

The law provides for freedom of association with some conditions, and the government generally respected the law.

No prior authorization is required to form an association, but the Interior Ministry must be notified for it to be recognized as legal, and the ministry must verify that the organization respects public order, public morals, and state security. The ministry sometimes imposed additional inconsistent restrictions and requirements and withheld approval. In some cases the ministry sent notification of formation papers to the security forces to initiate inquiries on an organization's founding members. Organizations must invite ministry representatives to any general assembly where members vote on bylaws, amendments, or positions on the board of directors. The ministry must then validate the vote or election. Failure to do so may result in the dissolution of the organization by a decree issued by the Council of Ministers.

The cabinet must license all political parties (see section 3).

Independent NGOs in areas under Hizballah's sway faced harassment and intimidation. Local NGOs working in the southern part of the country faced social, political, and financial pressures. For example, the Youth Network for Civic Activism (YNCA), which primarily worked in the predominantly Shia southern town of Nabatiyeh, gained attention for hosting numerous controversial events, such as talks on sectarianism, dancing of men and women together in the town's streets, and youth activism against drug use. Despite being able to organize such events, the YNCA continued to face significant social resistance because of its activities. Young persons attending YNCA events were harassed, windows in YNCA facilities were broken, and the municipality regularly rejected the organization's requests to host events without explanation.

Financing also played a significant role in drawing youth away from "problematic" local NGOs. Hizballah reportedly paid youth who worked in "unacceptable" NGOs to leave the groups.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report*.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights for citizens but placed limitations on the rights of Palestinian refugees. No equivalent restrictions were placed on Syrian or Iraqi refugees. As of October 31, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided protection and support to 1,134,813 refugees and asylum seekers, the vast majority of whom were from Syria. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provided assistance specifically to Palestinian refugees registered in the country as well as to those who were registered in Syria and who had fled to Lebanon and were recorded with UNRWA. The government cooperated with the UNHCR, UNRWA, and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, and other persons of concern.

In-country Movement: The government maintained security checkpoints, primarily in military and other restricted areas. Hizballah also maintained checkpoints in certain Shia-majority areas. Government forces were usually unable to enforce the law in the predominantly Hizballah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut and did not typically enter Palestinian refugee camps. According to UNRWA, Palestinian refugees registered with the Interior Ministry's Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs could travel from one area of the country to another. The directorate, however, had to approve the transfer of registration of residence for refugees who resided in camps. UNRWA stated the directorate generally approved such transfers. In 2012 authorities revoked the requirement to obtain an access permit to enter the Nahr el-Bared camp, and Lebanese and Palestinians entering the camps needed only to show their identity cards at LAF checkpoints outside the camp.

Refugees from Syria reported that if they were stopped at a checkpoint and lacked valid visas or documents, they were often detained and sent to the DGS detention center, a substandard facility located under an overpass in Beirut. Authorities often held detainees for up to a month but then released them.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Due to fighting in 2007, the Nahr el-Bared camp was destroyed, displacing 30,000 Palestinian refugees. UNRWA reported that 6,846 Palestinian refugees returned to housing units in Nahr el-Bared camp, while another 15,088 were living in areas adjacent to the camp. Approximately 7,433 Nahr el-Bared residents remained displaced in Beddawi Camp and other areas of the country.

The August clashes in Aarsal between ISIL, the Nusra, and the LAF, displaced at least 1,072 families. Most families returned, but the UNHCR reported many families were likely scattered outside of the town.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status. As a result observers estimated 37 percent of Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR lacked any

legal status and could be arrested. Nonetheless, the government provided some protection through interim arrangements. The government granted admission and temporary (six-month) refuge to asylum seekers but not permanent asylum. The DGS sometimes arbitrarily detained asylum seekers at its detention facility for more than one year before deporting them.

A 2003 agreement between the DGS and the UNHCR recognizes and grants protection to non-Palestinian refugees, providing temporary relief for those seeking determination of refugee status. Those wishing to claim refugee status must do so within two months of arriving in the country. The DGS issued residence permits, valid for three months, during which time the UNHCR had to make a refugee status determination. The DGS issued residency permits for up to 12 months to persons to whom the UNHCR accorded refugee status and who applied and paid for the permit. Refugees receiving residency permits continued to be required to apply and pay fees for permit renewal. Syrian, Iraqi, and Palestinian refugees had to pay a fee of 300,000 lira (\$200) for a six-month or temporary residency permit, which could be renewed for another six months free of charge, after the one-year permit expired. Starting May 22, the DGS granted a one-month grace period for Palestinian refugees from Syria to regularize their illegal status. As of August 21, the DGS also granted Syrian refugees a three-month grace period relieving those who resided illegally and wished to return to Syria of the regularization fee and residency fee. Nevertheless, many refugees reported officials denied them a visa after paying the fees, and some reported being detained while attempting to regularize their status. As the crisis continued, the DGS renewed fewer visas and residency permits. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council, the DGS refused visa renewals for refugees working without work permits in agriculture and construction, despite the Labor Ministry not requiring and, therefore, not issuing, work permits for this type of labor for Syrians. Additionally, the DGS reportedly offered legal status to Syrians and Palestinians who did not enter through official crossings but did not offer any additional extension after the visa expired.

A huge influx of Syrians entered the country to escape escalating violence after the start of mass unrest in Syria in 2011. While some Syrians lived in temporary tent settlements, the majority resided with host families, who were not always direct family or friends of the refugees. As of October 31, there were 1,123,150 Syrians registered or awaiting registration with the UNHCR. The government did not officially recognize these persons as refugees, and it limited freedom of movement of individuals who entered the country illegally. There were no official refugee camps for Syrians; however, a small UNHCR site in Aarsal was referred to as a "formal settlement." Multiple NGOs and the UNHCR shared reports of sexual harassment and exploitation by government employers and landlords of refugees, including paying workers below the minimum wage, working excessive hours, debt bondage, and pressuring families into early marriage or nonconsensual sex.

There was also an influx of Iraqi refugees who entered the country seeking to escape violence from the fight against ISIL. As of November 28, there were 13,122 Iraqi refugees registered with the UNHCR in Lebanon.

While 490,405 refugees were officially registered with UNRWA (approximately 10 percent of the country's population), many estimated the number of Palestinian refugees to be less than 300,000 due to emigration. One-half of refugees were under age 25, two-thirds were food insecure and lived below the poverty line, one-third suffered from chronic illness, and the school drop-out rate of secondary students (students between ages 16 and 18) was more than 50 percent. Palestinian refugees were prohibited from accessing public health and education services or owning land, and were barred from employment in many fields, making refugees dependent upon UNRWA as the sole provider of education, health care, and social services. A 2010 labor law revision expanded employment rights and removed some restrictions on Palestinian refugees; however, this law was

not fully implemented, and Palestinians remained barred from working in most skilled professions, including almost all those that require membership in a professional association.

Refoulement: On May 3, the DGS forced 49 Palestinian refugees from Syria to return to Syria after clarifying that authorities arrested them at the airport for using forged documents in attempted onward travel outside the country.

Refugee Abuse: Syrian refugees residing inside the border near Syria faced danger from cross-border shelling and from Syrian army incursions into the country. In August, ISIL conducted an offensive in Aarsal, a major gathering point for refugees. During the battle witnesses reported ISIL burned refugee shelters.

The government lacked the capacity to provide adequate protection for refugees. Refugees regularly reported abuse by members of political parties and gangs, often without official action in response.

According to the UNHCR, domestic courts often sentenced Iraqi and African refugees registered with the UNHCR to one month's imprisonment and fines instead of deporting them for illegal entry. After serving their sentences, most refugees remained in detention unless they found employment sponsors and the DGS agreed to release them in coordination with the UNHCR.

According to the ISF, as of November 11, two foreign detainees completed their sentences and were awaiting deportation by the DGS or regularization of their situation in the country.

Employment: The law does not distinguish between refugees and other aliens. Authorities allowed non-Palestinian refugees residing in the country legally to work in certain sectors, provided they had a sponsor for a work permit and could pay the associated fees.

The law permits Syrians to work and to open businesses after obtaining proper licenses. The Consumer Protection Department at the Ministry of Economy and Trade, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, identified 1,196 unlicensed Syrian businesses operating in the country; 377 in the Beqaa region were closed. The majority of these businesses were small stores or fruit stands. Anecdotal evidence indicated the government was taking action against such businesses, but business owners responded to the problem by obtaining the required licenses. Syrian refugees complained authorities forced them to obtain the required licenses but did not enforce the same laws against Lebanese citizens.

A 2010 amendment to the social security law created a special account to provide end-of-service indemnities or severance pay to Palestinian refugees who retired or resigned. These benefits were available only to Palestinians working in the legal labor market. Palestinians did not benefit from national sickness and maternity funds or the family allowances fund. UNRWA continued to bear the cost of any medical, maternity, or family health-care expenses (excluding worker's compensation). The law provides for benefits only from 2010 onward.

Access to Basic Services: The law considers UNRWA-registered Palestinian refugees to be foreigners, and in several instances they received poorer treatment than other foreign nationals. This discrimination was particularly true for women. UNRWA has the sole mandate to provide health, education, social services, and emergency assistance to the 490,405 registered Palestinian refugees residing in the country. The amount of land allocated to the 12 official Palestinian refugee camps in the country has changed only marginally since 1948, despite a four-fold increase in the population. Consequently, most Palestinian refugees lived in overpopulated camps, some of which were heavily damaged during multiple conflicts. In accordance with agreements with the government, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) security committees, not the government, provided security for refugees in the camps, with the exception of the Nahr el-Bared camp.

The UN Children's Fund estimated approximately 400,000 Syrian children in the country did not attend school.

A 2001 amendment to a 1969 decree barring persons who are explicitly excluded from resettling in the country from owning land and property is designed to exclude Palestinians from purchasing or inheriting property. Palestinians who owned property prior to the law entering into force were unable to bequeath it to their heirs, and individuals who were in the process of purchasing property in installments were unable to register the property.

Palestinian refugees residing in the country could not obtain citizenship and were not citizens of any other country. Palestinian refugee women married to Lebanese citizens were able to obtain citizenship and transmit citizenship to their children. Palestinian refugees, including children, had limited social and civil rights and no access to public health, education, or other social services. Children of Palestinian refugees faced discrimination in birth registration, and many had to leave school at an early age to earn an income.

Palestinians who fled Syria received limited basic support from UNRWA, including food aid, cash assistance, and winter clothing vouchers. Authorities permitted their children to enroll in UNRWA schools and access UNRWA health clinics. There were approximately 44,000 Palestinians from Syria registered with the agency at year's end.

Iraqi refugees had access to both the public and private education systems. The UNHCR reported that 739 Iraqi children were registered in public schools, and it provided grants to the children's families to help defray the costs associated with attending school. Iraqi refugees also had access to the primary health-care system. The UNHCR, through NGOs, provided secondary health care.

Syrian refugees had access to the public education system. The Ministry of Education facilitated their enrollment in public schools, and the UNHCR covered school-related expenses, such as school fees, books, and uniforms. The UNHCR arranged with the Ministries of Social Affairs and Public Health for registered Syrians to access designated public health centers and local clinics for primary care services, and the organization covered the bulk of the costs. The large number of refugees placed extreme burdens on the services, which could not accommodate all Syrian refugees.

A comprehensive, multi-year plan to rebuild the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp and surrounding communities in eight stages, begun in 2008, was in process, but remaining reconstruction was not fully funded, and only 55 percent of the required donations were secured by year's end.

The government did not consider local integration of other refugees, such as Iraqis, a viable durable solution. After Syrians and Palestinians, Iraqis were the third largest group of refugees in the country.

Temporary Protection: The government did not provide a temporary protection regime for asylum seekers, and it regularly deported refugees and asylum seekers who may have had valid claims to protected status. According to the UNHCR, there were 478 refugees and asylum seekers in detention as of September 30. Also, as of October 31, the DGS deported 12 persons despite UNHCR objections. Of the 12 individuals, four had refugee status and eight were asylum seekers.

The UNHCR continued to intervene with authorities to request the release of persons of concern who were detained either beyond their sentence or for illegal entry or presence.

As of October 31, there were 9,518 Iraqi refugees registered with the UNHCR. The government provided limited services for Iraqi refugees.

Stateless Persons

Citizenship is derived exclusively from the father, resulting in statelessness for children of a citizen mother and a noncitizen father when registration under the father's nationality is not possible. This discrimination in the nationality law particularly affected Palestinians. Additionally, some children born to Lebanese fathers may not have had their births registered due to a lack of understanding of the regulations or administrative obstacles. The problem was compounded since nonnational status is a hereditary circumstance that stateless persons pass to their children. There were no official statistics on the size of the stateless population.

Approximately 3,000 to 5,000 Palestinian refugees were not registered with UNRWA or the government. Also known as undocumented Palestinians, most of these individuals moved to the country after the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan in 1971. Palestinians faced restrictions on movement and lacked access to fundamental rights under the law. Undocumented Palestinians, who were not registered in other fields, were not necessarily eligible for the full range of services provided by UNRWA. Nonetheless, UNRWA provided primary health care, education, and vocational training services to undocumented Palestinians, in most cases. The majority of undocumented Palestinians were men, many of them married to UNRWA-registered refugees or Lebanese citizen women, who could not transmit refugee status or citizenship to their husbands or children.

The Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs continued to extend late registration to Palestinian refugee children under age 10. It previously was the directorate's policy to deny late birth registration to Palestinian refugee children who were above age two. Children between age 10 and 20 are registered after the following were completed: a DNA test, an investigation by the DGS, and the approval of the directorate.

Approximately 1,000 to 1,500 of an estimated 100,000 Kurds living in the country lacked citizenship, despite decades of family presence in the country. Most were descendants of migrants and refugees who left Turkey and Syria during World War I but were denied citizenship to preserve the country's sectarian balance. The government issued a naturalization decree in 1994, but high costs and other obstacles prevented many individuals from acquiring official status. Some individuals who received official status had their citizenship revoked in 2011 as a result of a presidential decree. Others held an "ID under consideration" document without date or place of birth.

Stateless persons lacked official identity documents that would permit them to travel abroad and could face difficulties traveling internally including detention for not carrying identity documents. They had limited access to the regular employment market and no access to many professions. Additionally, they could not access public schools or public health-care facilities, register marriages or births, and own or inherit property.

Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Although the law provides citizens the ability to change their government peacefully in periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage, lack of government control over parts of the country, defects in the electoral process, prolonged extension of parliament's mandate, and corruption in public office significantly restricted this ability. The president and parliament nominate the prime minister, who, with the president, chooses the cabinet.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In May 2013 parliament postponed legislative elections to November 2014 and later rescheduled them for June 2017. Observers concluded that the 2009 parliamentary elections were generally free and fair, with minor irregularities, such as instances of vote buying. The NGO Lebanese Transparency Association reported its monitors witnessed election fraud through cash donations on election day in many electoral districts.

Political Parties and Political Participation: All major political parties and numerous smaller ones were almost exclusively based on confessional affiliation, and parliamentary seats were allotted on a sectarian basis.

Participation of Women and Minorities: There were significant cultural barriers to women's participation in politics. Prior to 2004 no woman held a cabinet position, and there have been only four female ministers since then. During the year one woman served in the cabinet. Only four of 128 members of parliament were women, and all were close relatives of previous male members. With a few notable exceptions, leadership of political parties effectively excluded women, limiting their opportunities for high office.

Minorities participated in politics to some extent. Regardless of the number of its adherents, every government-recognized religion, except Coptic Christianity, Ismaili Islam, and Judaism, was allocated at least one seat in parliament. Three parliamentarians representing minorities (one Syriac Orthodox Christian and two Alawites) were elected in the 2009 elections. These groups also held high positions in government and the LAF. Since Palestinian refugees are not citizens, they have no political rights. An estimated 17 Palestinian factions operated in the country, generally organized around prominent individuals. Most Palestinians lived in refugee camps that one or more factions controlled. Palestinian refugee leaders were not elected, but there were popular committees that met regularly with UNRWA and visitors.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

Although the law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity and on a wide scale. Government security officials, agencies, and police were subject to laws against bribery and extortion. The lack of strong enforcement limited the laws' effectiveness.

Corruption: Observers widely considered government control of corruption to be poor. Types of corruption generally encountered included systemic patronage; judicial failures, especially in investigations of politically motivated killings; electoral fraud facilitated by the absence of preprinted ballots; and bribery. Bribes customarily accompanied bureaucratic transactions. In addition to regular fees, customers paid bribes for driver's licenses, car registrations, or residential building permits. Syrian refugees reportedly paid bribes to shopkeepers or municipal officials for a variety of services, for example, to receive consignment of aid or facilitate their registration.

On March 12, *al-Akhbar* newspaper journalist Mohammed Nazzal exposed corruption in the judiciary, leading directly to a judge being demoted. The Publications Court, however, declared that Nazzal brought the judiciary into disrepute and fined him six million lira (nearly \$4,000).

On April 4, a video circulated on YouTube showed then acting governor of Beirut and Governor of North Lebanon, Nassif Qallouch, attempting sexual extortion on a female employee in exchange for renewing her contract. Qallouch resigned his position.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires the president of the republic, the president of the Chamber of Deputies, and the president of the Council of Ministers to disclose their financial assets in a sealed envelope deposited at the Constitutional Council, but the information is not made available

to the public. Judges disclose their financial assets in a sealed envelope at the Higher Judicial Council and civil servants deposit their sealed envelopes at the Civil Servants Council, but the information is also not available to the public. The Court of Accounts, the Central Inspection Department, the Central Bank's Special Investigation Committee, and the Disciplinary Board are tasked with fighting corruption.

A 2011 report by the Lebanese Transparency Association claimed corruption was institutionalized. Since parliament had not passed a budget since 2005, there was limited parliamentary or auditing authority oversight of revenue collection and expenditures.

Public Access to Information: There are no laws regarding public access to government documents, and the government generally did not respond to requests for documents.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials generally were not responsive to these groups' views, and there was limited or no accountability for human rights violations.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The parliamentary Committee on Human Rights struggled to advance existing legislative proposals to make legal changes to guide ministries in protecting specific human rights or, for example, improving prison conditions. The Ministry of Interior also had a human rights department to monitor and improve prison conditions. The ministry staffed the department with two officers, two sergeants, and an information technology specialist, in addition to the department's head. The department was not adequately resourced. Its leadership maintained high standards of professionalism, but given the integrated structure, the department's independence could not be assured.

On April 3, the ISF launched a revised complaint mechanism allowing citizens to track complaints and receive notification of investigation results. Citizens may file formal complaints against any ISF officer in person at a police station, through a lawyer, by mail, or online through the redesigned ISF website. At the time a complaint is filed, the filer receives a tracking number that may be used to check the status of the complaint throughout the investigation. The complaint mechanism provides for the ISF to notify those filing complaints of the results of its investigation.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides for equality among all citizens and prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. Although the government generally respected these provisions, they were not enforced, especially with regard to economic matters, and aspects of the law and traditional beliefs discriminated against women. The law does not protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Protection of Refugees

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape. While the government effectively enforced the law, its interpretation by religious courts precluded full implementation of civil law in all provinces. Rape and domestic violence were underreported. The minimum prison sentence for a person convicted of rape is five years, or seven years for raping a minor. According to the penal code, the state would not prosecute a rapist and would nullify his conviction if the rapist

married his victim. The law does not criminalize spousal rape. According to the domestic NGO KAFA (Enough Violence and Exploitation), 80 percent of domestic violence victims the NGO assisted suffered spousal rape.

On April 1, parliament passed legislation for the Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence. The law criminalizes domestic violence, but it does not specifically provide protection for women. The law does not criminalize spousal rape but rather the use of threats or violence to claim a "marital right to intercourse," and it does not criminalize the nonconsensual violation of physical integrity. The maximum sentence under this law is 25 years' imprisonment if one of the spouses commits homicide.

A 2010 UN Population Fund assessment estimated there were high rates of domestic violence in the country. Despite a law that sets a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison for battery, some religious courts may legally require a battered wife to return to her home despite physical abuse. Foreign domestic workers, usually women, often were mistreated, abused, and in some cases raped or placed in slavery-like conditions (see section 7.c.). Some police, especially in rural areas, treated domestic violence as a social rather than a criminal matter.

The government provided legal assistance to domestic violence victims who could not afford it, but in most cases police ignored complaints submitted by battered or abused women. The NGOs Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women and KAFA worked to reduce violence against women by offering counseling and legal aid and raising awareness about the problem. Through October, KAFA assisted in 502 new cases and followed up on 400 old cases of victims of violence, the majority of which concerned domestic violence.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): There were no reports of prevalent or widespread FGM/C in the country.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: The government abolished the law against honor killings; such actions are prosecuted as murder. Abuses were very rare, but the media reported two cases during the year without details.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment, but it was a widespread problem, and authorities did not enforce the law effectively. According to the UN Population Fund, the labor law does not explicitly prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace; it merely gives a male or female employee the right to resign without prior notice from his or her position in the event that an indecent offense is committed towards the employee or a family member by the employer or his or her representative, without any legal consequences for the perpetrator. Legal consequences are cited in the penal code and the criminal procedure.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely the number, spacing, and timing of having children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of reproductive health that they can afford, is available, and is legal, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. Some women in rural areas faced social pressure on their reproductive choices due to long-held conservative values. There are no legal prohibitions or governmental encumbrances to equal access under the law for reproductive health-care products or services, although the most advanced clinics and practices were in larger metropolitan areas.

Discrimination: Women suffered discrimination under the law and in practice. Social pressure against women pursuing some careers was strong in some parts of society. Men sometimes exercised considerable control over female relatives, restricting their activities outside the home or their contact with friends and relatives. In matters of child custody, inheritance, and divorce, personal status laws provide unequal treatment across the various confessional court systems but

generally discriminate against women. For example, Sunni civil courts apply an inheritance law that provides a son twice the inheritance of a daughter. Religious law on child custody matters favors the father in most instances. Nationality law also discriminates against women, who may not confer citizenship to their spouses and children, although widows may confer citizenship to their minor children. By law women may own property, but they often ceded control of it to male relatives due to cultural reasons and family pressure.

The law provides for equal pay for equal work for men and women, but in the private sector there was discrimination regarding the provision of benefits. Although they constituted the majority of the resident population, women made up only 14 percent of the workforce and only 8 percent of senior officials and managers, according to the World Economic Forum. Only 26 percent of women, compared with 76 percent of men, were in the formal labor force, and these women earned on average 61 percent of what men earned for comparable work, according to the latest *World Economic Forum Gender Gap* report (see section 7.d.).

The Women's Affairs Division in the Ministry of Social Affairs undertook some projects to address sexual or gender-based violence, such as providing counseling and shelter for victims and training ISF personnel to combat it in prisons. In 2012, for the first time, women were commissioned as ISF officers.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women, headed by the president's wife, is the highest governmental body addressing women's issues. Due to the continuing presidential vacancy, this post remained vacant.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived exclusively from the father, which may result in statelessness for children of a citizen mother and noncitizen father who may not transmit his own citizenship (see section 2.d.). If a child's birth is not registered within the first year, the process for legitimating the birth is long and costly, often deterring families from registration. Syrian refugees faced numerous challenges registering their births because of the country's complicated registration system. Refugees without valid residency papers were not permitted to register their child's birth, preventing them from obtaining necessary documents for passports.

Some refugee children and the children of foreign domestic workers also faced obstacles to equal treatment under the law. NGOs reported discrimination against them, although some could attend public school.

Education: Education is free and compulsory through the primary phase for citizens. Noncitizen children, including those born of noncitizen fathers and citizen mothers, lack this right. Certain public schools had quotas for noncitizen children, but there were no special provisions for children of female citizens, and spaces remained subject to availability. Boys and girls have nearly equal rates of primary education, with women outnumbering men in secondary and tertiary education. Authorities permitted Syrian refugee children to enroll in public schools; however, the Ministry of Education limited enrollment to 100,000 Syrian students in first shifts for the 2014-15 school year, resulting in overcrowded classes. As of November 13, the Education Ministry agreed, in principle, to permit 85,000 Syrian students to enroll in second shifts. Assuming all the available enrollment slots were filled, this would leave an estimated 400,000 children unable to obtain formal education. Informal education was not permitted by the Education Ministry, limiting the number of opportunities for refugee children to receive accredited education or a pathway to enroll once they achieved grade-level proficiency.

Child Abuse: According to a 2012 study by the NGO KAFA in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs, more than 885,000 children were victims of psychological abuse, of whom 738,000

were also victims of physical abuse and 219,000 were victims of sexual abuse. In 2012 the ministry, in cooperation with the NGO Save the Children and the Higher Council for Childhood, launched an awareness campaign, "No for Violence Against Children," to combat all forms of violence against children. The Ministry of Social Affairs had a hotline to report cases of child abuse.

Syrian refugee children were vulnerable to child labor and exploitation. Children reportedly joined local gangs engaged in sectarian violence in the northern part of the country.

Early and Forced Marriage: The legal age for marriage is 18 for men and 17 for women. Family matters are governed by confessionally determined personal status law, and minimum ages acceptable for marriage differ accordingly. According to UN statistics, 5 percent of women were married by age 19. The UNHCR reported early and forced marriage was common in the Syrian refugee community. According to a study conducted by the Heartland Alliance during the year, the marriages were not official but usually endorsed by sheikhs in the refugee community, often encouraged with a bribe. These sheikhs were not linked to the country's Sunni family courts, and the marriages had no legal standing.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): There are no reports of prevalent or widespread FGM/C in the country.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The penal code prohibits and punishes commercial sexual exploitation, child pornography, and forced prostitution. Prescribed punishment for commercial sexual exploitation of a person under age 21 is imprisonment for one month to one year and fines between 50,000 and 500,000 lira (\$33 and \$333). The maximum sentence for commercial sexual exploitation is two years' imprisonment. The minimum age for consensual sex (for girls and boys?) is 18, and statutory rape penalties include hard labor for a minimum of five years and a minimum of seven years' imprisonment if the victim is younger than 15. Imprisonment ranges from two months to two years if the victim is between ages 15 and 18. The government generally enforced the law. The ISF investigated at least four cases of child trafficking and referred them to the judiciary.

Displaced Children: The Ministry of Education limited the number of Syrian refugee children enrolled in first shifts to 100,000 students. In principle Syrian refugees may enroll in second-shift courses based on availability, with a cap of 85,000. As of November 13, the ministry had yet to start enrollment for a second shift. NGOs often used informal education to assist students not performing at grade-level, but the Ministry of Education did not endorse it (see section 2.d.).

Some displaced children lived and worked on the street (see section 7.c.).

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For country-specific information see the Department of State's website at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/english/country/lebanon.html.

Anti-Semitism

At year's end there were approximately 100 Jews living in the country and 6,000 registered Jewish voters who lived abroad but had the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

The national school curriculum materials did not contain materials on the Holocaust.

On February 10, the Middle East Media Research Institute's website reported that Hizballah's al-Manar television circulated propaganda claiming Jews created the fictional super hero Superman

as part of a plan to control the United States and advance Jewish goals globally. During the segment a narrator stated, "Hollywood is a Jewish invention that changed the way Americans view America, and created dreams, rather than reality. They managed to make the Americans live the dream, divorced from reality. Undoubtedly, the goal was to take over the greatest superpower in the world, to control all aspects of its daily life, and to harness it in the service of Jewish goals worldwide. Whenever someone challenges this, Superman is ready to deal with him."

In March the daily newspaper *Al-Sharq* published an article by Sana Kojok which claimed that, during Passover, the Jews eat matzoh made with the blood of non-Jews, a traditional anti-Semitic conspiracy charge. Hizballah-owned, Lebanon-based media outlet Al Manar continued to broadcast anti-Semitic content.

The Ministry of Interior delayed validation of the elections of the Israeli Communal Council, the organization that represents the Jewish community in the country.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

Persons with Disabilities

Although prohibited by law, discrimination against persons with disabilities continued. Employment law defines a "disability" as a physical, sight, hearing, or mental impairment. The law stipulates that at least 3 percent of all government and private sector positions be filled by persons with disabilities, provided such persons fulfill the qualifications for the position, but there was no evidence it was enforced. Employers are legally exempt from penalties if they provide evidence no otherwise qualified person with disabilities applied for employment within three months of advertisement. The law mandates access to buildings by persons with disabilities, but the government failed to amend building codes. Many persons with mental disabilities received care in private institutions, several of which the government subsidized (see section 7.d.).

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Council of Disabled are responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. According to the president of the Arab Organization of Disabled People, little progress has occurred since parliament passed the law on disabilities in 2000. Approximately 100 relatively active but poorly funded private organizations provided most of the assistance received by persons with disabilities.

Depending on the type and nature of the disability, children with a disability may attend regular school. Due to a lack of awareness or knowledge, school staff often did not identify a specific disability in children and could not adequately advise parents. In such cases children often repeated classes or dropped out of school.

The public school system was ill equipped to accommodate students with disabilities. Problems included a poor regulatory framework; poor infrastructure that was not accessible to persons with disabilities; curricula that did not include material to assist children with disabilities; laboratories and workshops that lacked the equipment required for children with disabilities; laboratories that lacked space and access for persons with disabilities, especially those using wheelchairs; teaching media and tools that relied increasingly on computers and audiovisual material that were not accessible to students with disabilities, including the blind, the deaf, and those with other physical disabilities; and lack of accessible transportation to and from schools.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education's 2002 decree for new school building construction stipulated: "Schools should include all necessary facilities in order to receive the physically challenged."

Some NGOs (often managed by religious entities) offered education and health services for children with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs contributed to the cost per child, although the ministry often delayed payments to the organizations. According to the Ministry of Social Affairs, it supported school attendance, vocational training, and rehabilitation for approximately 7,300 persons in 2012.

In the 2009 election, a Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union study showed, only six of the country's 1,741 polling stations satisfied all criteria for accessibility.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

A 2011 report funded by the EU and written by a coalition of local human rights organizations, *A Culture of Racism in Lebanon*, identified a widespread pattern of discrimination against persons who did not appear to be ethnically Lebanese. Lebanese of African descent attributed discrimination to the color of their skin and claimed harassment by police, who periodically demanded to see their papers. Foreign Arab, African, and Asian students, professionals, and tourists reported being denied access to bars, clubs, restaurants, and private beaches. For example, in an article published in the daily newspaper *al-Akhbar* on March 26, Gabi Kheil, a Gabonese-Lebanese woman, reported that when she worked as a flight attendant for Middle East Airlines, "a Lebanese woman got furious after she accidentally bumped the trolley into her chair," Kheil said, "I apologized but she felt offended when a 'black' woman like myself dared to address her and tell her to calm down." The woman called Kheil demeaning names and directly referred to the "inferiority" of her dark skin. Kheil called security and filed a complaint, but no action was taken by year's end.

Syrian workers, usually employed as manual laborers and construction workers, continued to suffer discrimination, as they did following the 2005 withdrawal of Syrian forces from the country. Many municipalities enforced a curfew on Syrians' movements in their neighborhoods to curb an increased number of robberies and to control security.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Official and societal discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons persisted. There is no all-encompassing antidiscrimination law to protect LGBT persons. The law prohibits "unnatural sexual intercourse," an offense punishable by up to one year in prison but rarely applied; however, it often resulted in a fine. The Ministry of Justice did not keep records on these infractions. There were no reports authorities imprisoned anyone for violation of this law during the year.

Meem, the first NGO in the country exclusively for nonheterosexual women, and the NGO Helem hosted regular meetings in a safe house, provided counseling services, and carried out advocacy projects for the LGBT community.

Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or lack of access to education or health care based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The government did not collect such information, and individuals who faced problems were reluctant to report incidents due to fear of additional discrimination. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination. During the year *Oui Pour La Vie*, an NGO working on the issue of stigma and discrimination against LGBT persons, reported employers expelled two transgender women and one gay person from their work because of their gender identity and sexual orientation (see section 7.d.).

NGOs claimed LGBT persons underreported incidents of violence and abuse due to negative social stereotypes. Observers received reports from LGBT refugees of physical abuse by local gangs, which the victims did not report to the ISF; observers referred victims to UNHCR-sponsored protective services.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

As in previous years, there were reports of incidents of societal violence and interreligious strife. Observers reported Shia militias, most notably Hizballah, harassed unfamiliar refugees entering territories under their control. The rise of ISIL, Nusra, and other extremist groups led to repeated fighting between the LAF and these groups. The same extremist groups also attacked Hizballah positions in the Beqaa Valley. On October 24, the army fought extremists in Tripoli, regaining control of the city. Political leaders across the country condemned the action of extremist groups.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of private-sector workers to form and join trade unions, strike, and bargain collectively. The law, however, places a number of restrictions on these rights. The Ministry of Labor must approve the formation of unions, and it controlled the conduct of all trade union elections, including election dates, procedures, and ratification of results. The law permits the administrative dissolution of trade unions and bars trade unions from political activity. Unions have the right to strike after providing advance notice to and receiving approval from the local governor. Organizers of a strike (at least three of whom must be identified by name) must notify the governor of the number of participants in advance and the intended location of the strike, and 5 percent of a union's members must take responsibility for maintaining order during the strike.

There are significant restrictions on the right to strike. The law excludes public sector employees, domestic workers, and agricultural workers; therefore, they neither have the right to strike, nor to join and establish unions. The public-servants law prohibits public-sector employees from any kind of union activity, from striking, organizing collective petitions, or joining professional organizations.

Despite this prohibition public-sector employees succeeded in forming leagues of public school teachers and civil servants that created the Union of Coordination Committee (UCC), which along with private school teachers, demanded better pay.

The law protects the right of workers to bargain collectively, but a minimum of 60 percent of workers must agree on the goals beforehand. Collective bargaining agreements must be ratified by two-thirds of union members at a general assembly. The Union of Syndicates of Bank Employees and the Association of Banks renewed their collective agreement in 2013; the previous one expired in 2010. The union complained that many banks did not comply with the agreement.

The law prohibits antiunion discrimination. Under the law when employers misuse or abuse their right to terminate an elected union official's contract, including for union activity, the worker is entitled to indemnity and may institute proceedings before a conciliation board. The board adjudicates the case, after which an employer may be compelled to reinstate the worker, although this protection is only available to the elected members of a union's board. Anecdotal evidence showed widespread antiunion discrimination, although this issue did not receive significant media coverage. Most flagrant abuses occurred in banking, private schools, retail businesses, among daily and casual workers, and the civil service.

By law foreigners with legal resident status may join trade unions. The migrant law permits migrant workers to join existing unions (regardless of nationality and reciprocity agreements) but denied them the right to form their own unions. They do not enjoy full membership as they may neither vote in trade union elections nor run for union office. Certain sectors of migrant workers, such as migrant domestic workers, challenged the binding laws supported by some unions by forming their own autonomous structures that act as unions.

Palestinian refugees generally may organize their own unions on an ad hoc basis. Because of restrictions on their right to work, few refugees participated actively in trade unions. While some unions required citizenship, others were open to foreign nationals whose home countries had reciprocity agreements with Lebanon.

The government's enforcement of applicable laws was weak, including with regard to prohibitions on antiunion discrimination.

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining were not always respected. The government and other political actors interfered with the functioning of worker organizations, in particular the main federation, the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers (CGTL). The CGTL is the only national confederation recognized by the government, although several unions boycotted or unofficially or officially broke from the CGTL and no longer recognized it as an independent and nonpartisan representative of workers. The UCC, a grouping of public and private teachers as well as civil servants, largely overshadowed the CGTL, notably in pushing the government to pass a promised revised salary scale. Although UCC strikes and demonstrations prompted the government to send the revised salary scale proposal to parliament, parliament has yet to approve the proposal.

The law permits unions to conduct activities free from interference, but the Ministry of Labor interfered in union elections. Government officials and other political figures sought to influence union activities. In the past government officials encouraged the establishment of unions for political purposes to gain control of the CGTL.

Antiunion discrimination and other instances of employer interference in union functions occurred. Some employers fired workers in the process of forming a union before the union was formally established and published in the official gazette.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, but the government did not effectively enforce the law.

Forced labor occurred, although the government made some efforts to prevent or eliminate it.

Children, foreign workers employed as domestic workers, and other foreign workers sometimes worked under forced labor conditions. The law provides protection for domestic workers against forced labor, but domestic work is excluded from protections under the labor law and vulnerable to exploitation. In violation of the law, employment agencies and employers routinely withheld foreign workers' passports, especially in the case of domestic workers, sometimes for years. According to the Beirut Bar Association, authorities jailed one employer for a year for withholding an employee's passport. To mitigate this practice, the DGS began handing back passports to the worker rather than the employer. According to NGOs assisting migrant workers, some employers withheld salaries for the duration of the contract, which was usually two years.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The minimum age for employment is 14, and the law prescribes the occupations that are legal for juveniles. The law requires juveniles, defined as children between ages 14 and 18, to undergo a medical exam by a doctor certified by the Ministry of Public Health to assure they are physically fit for the type of work they are asked to perform. The law prohibits employment of juveniles younger than age 18 for more than seven hours per day and requires one hour of rest for work lasting more than four hours. The law prohibits juveniles younger than age 17 from working in jobs that jeopardize their health, safety, or morals, and from working between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. The law prohibits the employment of juveniles younger than age 16 in industrial jobs or jobs that are physically demanding or harmful to their health.

A Ministry of Labor list contains a comprehensive itemization of prohibited occupations, including working on streets. The list also specifies activities that are prohibited to minors under age eight and activities prohibited to minors under age 16 unless they are provided with proper protection and adequate training. Under the penal code, violations may result in penalties that include a fine of 250,000 lira (\$167), one to three months' imprisonment, and forced closure of the establishment.

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor requirements through its Child Labor Unit. Additionally, the law charges the Ministry of Justice, the ISF, and the Higher Council of Childhood (HCC) with enforcing laws related to forced labor and child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and the use of children in illicit activities. The HCC is also responsible for referring children held in protective custody to appropriate NGOs to find safe living arrangements. There were approximately 25 labor inspectors trained to undertake child labor inspections. Overall, the government did not enforce child labor laws effectively, in part because of inadequate resources. The penalty is 50,000 lira (\$33) per infraction, if enforced. The penal code calls for penalties for those who abrogate child labor laws ranging from a fine of 250,000 lira (\$165), a one- to three-months' imprisonment, and closure of the offending establishment. Advocacy groups do not consider these punishments sufficient deterrents.

The government made efforts to prevent child labor and remove children from such labor during the year. In 2012 the Ministry of Labor revived the interministerial National Steering Committee on Child Labor, chaired by the minister of labor. In November 2013 the committee launched a national action plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2016 in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO). Throughout the year the Ministry of Social Affairs and the HCC held awareness campaigns in schools and workshops for social workers who handle and journalists who cover child-related issues.

Child labor occurred, including in its worst forms. While up-to-date statistics on child labor were unavailable, anecdotal evidence suggested the number of child workers rose during the year and that more children worked in the informal sector, including commercial sexual exploitation (also see section 6, Children).

Child labor was predominantly concentrated in the informal sector, including in small family enterprises, mechanical workshops, carpentry, construction, manufacturing, industrial sites, welding, agriculture including tobacco, and fisheries. Children worked unofficially in some of these informal sector jobs, often in small and family businesses that were not part of any formal activity. Street children worked selling goods, polishing shoes, and washing car windows. Anecdotal evidence also suggested child labor was prevalent in Palestinian refugee camps, among Iraqi refugees and Romani communities, and most prevalent in the Syrian refugee community. Some children worked in hazardous conditions, including street begging. Observers also reported children involved in trafficking. The ILO noted abuses involving the use, recruitment, and

exploitation of children in political protests and militant activities in North Lebanon and some areas of Beirut.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor*.

d. Discrimination with respect to Employment or Occupation

The law provides for equality among all citizens and prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. The law does not specifically provide for protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status, or other communicable diseases.

Although the government generally respected these provisions, they were not enforced, especially in economic matters, and aspects of the law and traditional beliefs discriminated against women. Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to women, persons with disabilities, foreign domestic workers, and LGBT and HIV-positive persons (see section 6).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The legal minimum wage was raised in 2012 to 675,000 lira (\$450) per month in the private sector.

The law prescribes a standard 48-hour workweek with a weekly rest period that must not be less than 36 consecutive hours. The law stipulates 48 hours work as the maximum per week in most corporations except agricultural enterprises. A 12-hour day is permitted under certain conditions, including a stipulation that overtime pay is 50 percent higher than pay for normal hours. The law does not set limits on compulsory overtime. The law includes specific occupational health and safety regulations and requires employers to take adequate precautions for employee safety.

Domestic workers are not covered under the labor law or other laws related to acceptable conditions of work. Such laws also do not apply to family concerns, day laborers, temporary workers in the public sector, or workers in the agricultural sector.

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing regulations related to acceptable conditions of work but did so unevenly. The ministry employed approximately 70 administrative and field labor inspectors. The number of inspectors, available resources, and legal provisions were not sufficient to deter violations, nor was the political will for proper inspections in other cases. Interference with inspectors affected the quality of inspections and issuance of fines for violators was common. The law stipulates that workers may remove themselves from situations that endanger their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, although government officials did not protect employees who exercised this right.

Workers in the industrial sector worked an average of 35 hours per week, while workers in other sectors worked an average of 32 hours per week. Some private-sector employers failed to provide employees with family and transportation allowances as stipulated under the law and did not register them with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF).

Some companies did not respect legal provisions governing occupational health and safety in specific sectors, such as the construction industry. Workers could report violations to the CGTL, Ministry of Labor, NSSF, or through their respective unions. In most cases they preferred to remain silent due to fear of arbitrary dismissal.

Violations of wage, overtime, and occupational health and safety standards were most common in the construction industry and among migrant workers, and particularly with foreign domestic workers.

Foreign migrant workers arrived in the country through local recruitment agencies and source-country recruitment agencies. Although the law requires recruitment agencies to have a license from the Ministry of Labor, the government did not adequately monitor their activities. A sponsorship system tied foreign workers' legal residency to a specific employer, making it difficult for foreign workers to change employers. If employment is terminated, a worker loses residency. This circumstance made many foreign migrant workers reluctant to file complaints to avoid losing their legal status.

There is no official minimum wage for domestic workers. Official contracts stipulated a wage ranging from 150,000 to 450,000 lira (\$100 to \$300) per month for domestic workers, depending on the nationality of the worker. A unified standard contract, which was registered with the DGS for the worker to obtain residency, granted migrant domestic workers some labor protections. The standard contract covered uniform terms and conditions of employment, but the section covering wages was completed individually.

Some employers mistreated, abused, and raped foreign domestic workers, who were mostly of Asian and African origin. Domestic workers often worked long hours and, in many cases, did not receive vacations or holidays. Victims of abuse may file civil suits or seek other legal action, often with the assistance of NGOs, but most victims, counseled by their embassies or consulates, settled for an administrative solution that usually included monetary compensation and repatriation.

Authorities did not prosecute perpetrators of abuses against foreign domestic workers for a number of reasons, including the victims' refusal to press charges and lack of evidence. Authorities settled an unknown number of other cases of nonpayment of wages through negotiation. According to source-country embassies and consulates, many workers did not report violations of their labor contracts until after they returned to their home countries, as they preferred not to stay in the country for a lengthy judicial process.

In 2012 Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International television released a video by an anonymous bystander in which a labor recruiter, identified as Ali Mahfouz, physically abused Ethiopian domestic worker Alem Dechasa-Desisa outside the Ethiopian consulate in Beirut. Dechasa-Desisa subsequently committed suicide at the Deir el-Saleeb psychiatric hospital. Following the investigation Beirut prosecutor general charged Mahfouz with contributing to and causing Dechasa-Desisa's suicide, and the case was referred to the Beirut penal court. By year's end, however, the Labor Ministry had not reported taking any action against Mahfouz's labor agency.

While official businesses and factories strove to meet international standards for working conditions with respect to occupational safety and health, conditions in informal factories and businesses were poorly regulated and often did not meet these standards. The Ministry of Industry is responsible for enforcing regulations to improve safety in the workplace. The regulations require industries to have three types of insurance (fire, third-party, and workers policies) and to implement proper safety measures. The ministry has the authority to revoke a company's license if its inspectors find a company noncompliant.

The law requires businesses to adhere to safety standards, but it is poorly enforced and does not explicitly permit workers to remove themselves from dangerous conditions without jeopardy to their continued employment.

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