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World Report 2025 - Lebanon

Cross border hostilities between Israel and Lebanese and Palestinian armed groups, including Hezbollah, significantly escalated in 2024. Between October 2023 and the November 27, 2024, ceasefire, Israeli strikes killed more than 3,961 people in Lebanon, including 736 women, 222 health and rescue workers, and 248 children, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

Human Rights Watch has documented violations of the laws of war and war crimes by the Israeli military, including apparently deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on [journalists](#), [civilians](#), [medics](#), [financial institutions](#), and [peacekeepers](#), in addition to the widespread and unlawful use of [white phosphorus](#) in populated areas, among other violations. More than [1.2 million people](#) were displaced by the time of the November ceasefire, [thousands of buildings and houses](#) were destroyed, and [entire border villages](#) were reduced to rubble.

During the hostilities, Hezbollah fired thousands of munitions into northern Israel and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, killing at least 30 civilians. A July 27 attack on the town of Majdal Shams in the occupied Golan Heights, which Israel blamed on Hezbollah, killed 12 children. Hezbollah has denied responsibility.

At least [562,000 people](#) crossed the border from Lebanon into Syria after the escalation of hostilities in September 2024, including at least [354,000 Syrians](#).

Conduct of Hostilities

In March, the Israeli military unlawfully struck [an emergency and relief center](#) in south Lebanon, using a US-made Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) guidance kit and an Israeli-made 500-pound (about 230 kilograms) general purpose bomb, killing seven emergency and relief volunteers.

Israel's widespread and continued use of [white phosphorus](#) contributed to civilian displacement and caused grave civilian harm. Human Rights Watch found that white phosphorus munitions were used in at least 17 municipalities, including unlawfully over populated residential areas in five of them. Israel has also used [US weapons](#) in an unlawful attack that killed aid workers in south Lebanon.

On September 16 and 17, the hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel significantly escalated after thousands of [pagers](#) and walkie-talkies—used by employees of various Hezbollah units and institutions—detonated, killing 37 people, including children and medical workers, and injuring more than 2,800 people, in an indiscriminate attack that violated the prohibition on the use of booby traps under customary international humanitarian law. [US](#) and [former Israeli officials](#) speaking to the media said that Israel was responsible for the attack, but the Israeli military has not [commented](#).

On September 23, at least 558 people, including 50 children, were killed and over 1,835 were injured in Israeli strikes across the country that day. Israel conducted several strikes on the southern suburbs of Beirut, which, between September and October 2024, [killed](#) top Hezbollah commanders, including Hezbollah's secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah, the head of Hezbollah's executive council Hashem Saffieddine, the head of Hezbollah's central council Nabil Qaouk, and senior military commanders Ibrahim Akil, Ahmad Wehbe and Ali Karaki, among others.

Israeli airstrikes on the [main border crossing](#) between Lebanon and Syria on October 4 impeded civilians trying to flee and disrupted humanitarian operations. The Israeli military [repeatedly attacked](#) medical workers and healthcare facilities in Lebanon. Human Rights Watch documented three attacks, involving apparent war crimes, in which Israeli forces unlawfully struck medical personnel, transports, and facilities, including paramedics at a civil defense center in central Beirut

on October 3, 2024, and an ambulance and a hospital in southern Lebanon on October 4, killing 14 paramedics.

The [Israeli](#) military also carried out [repeated attacks](#) harming [United Nations](#) peacekeeping operations in southwestern [Lebanon](#) in apparent violation of the laws of war and deliberate attacks on [financial institutions](#) affiliated to Hezbollah, which amount to war crimes.

Human Rights Watch also verified the use of an air-dropped bomb equipped with a US-produced JDAM guidance kit in an [unlawful Israeli strike](#) that killed three journalists in the southern Lebanese town of Hasbaya, and was most likely a deliberate attack on civilians and an apparent war crime.

According to the Lebanese government, more than [1.2 million people](#) were displaced because of the hostilities between October 2023 and the November 27, 2024 ceasefire. At least 100,000 thousand houses were partially or fully destroyed, according to a study by the [World Bank](#).

Accountability and Justice

In May 2024, the Lebanese government announced a decision to give the International Criminal Court (ICC) jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute serious crimes committed on Lebanese territory since October 7, 2023, but the government reversed the decision just over a month later.

In November, more than 20 human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, [called](#) on Lebanon and other United Nations member states to convene a special session at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to establish an international investigation into all human rights violations committed by all parties involved in the conflict in Lebanon.

August 2024 marked four years since the Beirut port explosion that killed at least 220 people, wounded over 7,000, and caused extensive property damage. The Lebanese authorities have yet to hold anyone accountable.

On January 17, 2024, Lebanese Attorney General at the court of cassation Judge Sabbouh Sleiman [suspended](#) an arrest warrant for former public works minister Youssef Fenianos, which was previously [issued](#) by Judge Tarek Bitar in September 2021. The suspension of the warrant came months after the cassation court's suspension of an arrest warrant for another suspect, former Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil.

Families of the victims and local and international [rights groups](#) continued to call for an international, independent, and impartial investigation into the blast by the UN HRC.

On December 10, two days after the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria was overthrown, Lebanon's Interior Minister Bassam al-Mawlawi said that nine Lebanese individuals previously detained in Syrian prisons had [returned](#) to Lebanon.

The families of the estimated 17,000 who were kidnapped or “disappeared” during and after Lebanon's deadly 1975-1990 civil war continue to wait for information on the fate of their loved ones.

Refugees

In 2024, Lebanese authorities arbitrarily detained, tortured, and [forcibly returned](#) Syrians to Syria, including opposition activists and a Syrian army defector. The Lebanese army and Cypriot authorities [worked together](#) to prevent refugees from reaching Europe.

Syrians escaping Lebanon to Syria, particularly men, faced arbitrary detention and abuse by Syrian authorities. No Syrians should be forced back until conditions that guarantee voluntary, safe, and dignified returns in line with international standards, are in place. Human Rights Watch [has documented](#) arbitrary detentions, torture, and killings of returning refugees since 2017. At least two Syrian men deported from Lebanon and Türkiye to Syria since 2023 died in Syrian government detention in suspicious circumstances in 2024, while two others arrested in Lebanon were forcibly disappeared.

Lebanon's General Directorate of General Security reported detaining or returning 821 Syrians attempting to leave Lebanon on 15 boats between January 2022 and August 2024.

In May 2024, the EU Commission [announced](#) a one billion euros (approximately US\$1.048 billion) financial assistance package for Lebanon, with some of the funds allocated to the Lebanese army for "border and migration management." According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Lebanese authorities [deported](#) at least 1,763 Syrians between January and June 2024.

According to the UN, there were [nearly 520,000 Palestinian refugees, including over 31,000 from Syria](#), living in Lebanon, where they continued to face restrictions, including on their right to work and own property.

Following the killing of a local political party official in April, which the Lebanese army [alleged](#) was carried out by a group of Syrian nationals, Lebanese ministers and political officials reiterated calls for the [return of Syrians](#) in Lebanon. Following the incident, Syrians in Lebanon were reportedly [beaten](#) and [faced demands across Lebanon to leave](#) their homes, with [governorates](#) and [municipalities](#) imposing discriminatory curfews, [unlawfully restricting](#) Syrians' right to freedom of movement.

Economic Crisis and Rights

In 2024, the Israeli military's airstrikes across the country and their humanitarian impacts have massively exacerbated the preexisting economic crisis.

Most people in Lebanon were unable to secure their economic, social, and cultural rights amid the ongoing economic crisis and during the hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel, with low-income households bearing the brunt of the crisis. World Bank [data](#) revealed that even before the hostilities started, over 70 percent of the population was experiencing multidimensional poverty.

The cost of damages and economic losses from the war is estimated to be at US\$8.5 billion, with around 166,000 people having lost their jobs because of the war, and agricultural losses and damages estimated to be at around \$1.2 billion, according to the [World Bank](#).

Lebanon's social security system has vast coverage gaps and only about 20 percent of the population have access to any form of social security. [Existing social assistance programs](#), funded in part by the World Bank, very narrowly targeted households in extreme poverty, leaving large segments of the population vulnerable to hunger, unable to obtain medicines, and subject to other deprivations that undermine their rights.

Lebanese authorities have failed to provide reliable and sustainable access to [electricity](#) following decades of mismanaging the sector, which culminated with a nationwide black out in August 2024 after the state-run electricity company, Electricité du Liban (EDL) [ran out of fuel](#). The outage left residents and key state [institutions](#) without state-provided electricity for more than 24 hours.

In September, Lebanon's Public Prosecutor Jamal Hajjar [ordered](#) the arrest of former central bank governor Riad Salameh for alleged financial crimes, including embezzlement of public funds.

Freedom of Expression

Lebanese journalists, activists, and artists continued to face increasing restrictions by Lebanese authorities and other political groups. In May, Lebanon's highest Sunni and Shiite religious authorities filed lawsuits against comedian [Shaden Fakih](#), accusing her of blasphemy and inciting sectarian strife in response to a joke at a stand-up comedy show.

In January 2024, journalist [Riad Tawk](#) was summoned to the Central Criminal Investigation Department following a defamation claim brought against him by Judge Sabouh Sleiman, Lebanon's Attorney General. Tawk had [criticized](#) Sleiman's decision to suspend the arrest warrant issued against former public works minister, Youssef Fenianos, in the Beirut blast case. According to Amnesty International, Lebanese officials, including caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and former Interior Minister Nouhad Machnouk, filed several [defamation lawsuits](#) in 2024 against anti-corruption watchdogs.

Several [individuals](#), including [journalists](#), who publicly criticized Hezbollah, including on social media, were reportedly subjected to physical assault by supporters of the group.

Women's Rights

As of November 28, 736 women had been killed in Israeli strikes across Lebanon since October 2023. UN Women warned of growing gender inequality, as [women and women-headed households in Lebanon](#), prior to the conflict, "were already more food insecure, struggled to meet basic needs and draw their livelihoods from participation in the labor market," in comparison to households headed by men.

Various religion-based [personal status laws](#) are discriminatory against women and allow religious courts to control matters related to marriage, divorce, and child custody. Lebanon's nationality law bars Lebanese women, but not men, from passing citizenship to their children and foreign spouses.

In April 2024, several independent members of parliament submitted a [draft law](#) which would increase protections for women facing abuse.

According to the local digital rights NGO [SMEX](#), 80 percent of individuals in Lebanon subjected to digital threats and harassment between 2020 and 2023 were women.

Migrant Workers

The legal status of thousands of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, including workers from Ethiopia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, is regulated by a restrictive and abusive regime of laws, regulations, and customary practices known as the [kafala](#) (sponsorship) system.

After the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, many migrant workers were reportedly [abandoned](#) by their employers and denied access to shelters across the country. Recruitment agencies [have been accused](#) of subjecting workers to abuse, labor violations, and human trafficking.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people continue to face systemic discrimination in Lebanon. Article 534 of the penal code punishes "any sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature" with up to one year in prison, despite [a series of court rulings](#) between 2007 and 2018 that consensual same-sex relations are not illegal.

