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The State of the World's Human Rights; Lebanon 2024

The armed conflict between Israel and the armed group Hezbollah claimed thousands of lives and had a devastating impact on civilians in Lebanon. Israeli forces carried out violations of international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate attacks and direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects. Hezbollah also repeatedly launched unguided rockets into northern Israel in violation of international humanitarian law. The Lebanese government failed to fully guarantee the right to social security, despite some positive reforms. Many buildings failed to meet minimum safety standards and people were killed when residential buildings collapsed. Journalists and government critics were harassed and intimidated by public officials using criminal defamation laws. A declaration accepting the ICC's jurisdiction in Lebanon was swiftly withdrawn by the government, and an investigation into the Beirut Port explosion in 2020 remained suspended. The authorities increased pressure on Syrian refugees to leave the country. Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice.

Background

Parliament failed to elect a president during the year, and the government continued to function in a caretaker capacity.

The conflict between Hezbollah, a Lebanon-based armed group, and Israel escalated significantly. On 23 September the Israeli military launched Operation Northern Arrows, striking thousands of sites across Lebanon and killing more than 500 people during the first 24 hours. On 27 September, Israeli air strikes in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, killed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah. On 1 October, Israel began a ground invasion into southern Lebanon. Between 8 October 2023 and 28 November 2024, more than 4,047 people were killed, including at least 240 children, and at least 16,638 injured – the vast majority since September 2024. More than 1.2 million people were displaced by the

conflict. In Israel, more than 100 people were killed by Hezbollah rocket attacks, and 63,000 people were displaced. A further 12 civilians were killed in the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

Within days of an Israel/Lebanon ceasefire deal on 27 November, numerous ceasefire violations were recorded. According to the World Bank in October, the cost of physical damage and economic loss in Lebanon due to the conflict with Israel was estimated to be USD 8.5 billion.

According to the Central Administration of Statistics, the annual average inflation rate of the consumer price index reached 45.24% in 2024, nearly 80 points below that of 2023, marking the return of the inflation to a double-digits rate after three years of fluctuation between 100% and 300%. The decrease was predominantly attributed to the stability of the exchange rate as of August 2023.

Israeli attacks destroyed tens of thousands of olive trees and damaged agricultural land across Lebanon. Between 8 October 2023 and November 2024, 2,000 hectares had been damaged and 340,000 head of livestock killed, and about 75% of farmers had lost their primary source of income, according to the Lebanese government.

Violations of international humanitarian law

Israeli forces committed violations of international humanitarian law in Lebanon, including direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, indiscriminate attacks and disproportionate attacks, which likely constituted war crimes.

The Israeli military issued inadequate, and in some cases misleading, evacuation warnings to residents of the southern suburbs of Beirut and south Lebanon, in violation of its obligations under international law to take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians.

The Israeli military intentionally left a trail of destruction as it moved through Lebanon, at times razing entire villages. Many villages in southern Lebanon were left uninhabitable when Israeli forces destroyed civilian structures. Amnesty International identified 21 villages that were significantly damaged or destroyed by Israeli ground forces between 1 October and 7 November. In each of the 21 villages, civilian buildings were destroyed after Israeli soldiers manually laid out explosive charges or razed them with excavators. Among the civilian buildings destroyed were at least 16 religious sites, including a 2,100-year-old shrine and two cemeteries.

Amnesty International found that Israeli forces unlawfully attacked residential buildings in the villages of al-Ain in northern Bekaa on 29

September and Aitou in northern Lebanon on 14 October, as well as in the city of Baalbeck on 21 October. Israeli forces also unlawfully attacked the municipal headquarters in Nabatieh, in southern Lebanon, on 16 October. The Israeli military did not issue warnings before these strikes, which killed at least 49 civilians including entire families and which likely constituted war crimes.¹

According to the WHO, between 8 October 2023 and 22 November 2024, 226 health workers and patients were killed in Lebanon in 137 Israeli attacks on health facilities and ambulances.

Amnesty International investigated four Israeli attacks on healthcare facilities and medical vehicles in Beirut and southern Lebanon between 3 and 9 October, in which 27 healthcare workers and three other individuals were killed. Prior to these attacks, the Israeli military had repeatedly accused Hezbollah of using ambulances to transport fighters and weapons, and of using medical centres affiliated with the Islamic Health Association as a “cover for terrorist activities”. However, Amnesty International did not find evidence of these facilities being used for military purposes at the time of the attacks and instead found that the strikes likely amounted to direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects.

Between October and November, Israel targeted branches of Qard al-Hassan, a non-profit financial institution affiliated with Hezbollah, across Lebanon. In the absence of evidence that these branches had become military objectives, the strikes constituted unlawful direct attacks on civilian objects.²

On 17 September, Israel detonated explosive devices hidden within thousands of pagers across Lebanon, killing at least 12 people including two children and two medics, and injuring at least 2,323 people. The following day, Israel detonated similar explosive devices inside scores of hand-held walkie-talkies, killing at least 25 people and injuring at least 608.³ The attacks were indiscriminate and may constitute war crimes.

Right to social security

Despite the government making limited reforms and taking other measures during the year, Lebanon remained far from having a universal social protection system that guaranteed the right to social security for all.

The government failed to ensure access to even minimal social protection during the economic crisis for which it was largely responsible. Lebanon’s social protection system, which was already fragmented, limited and inequitable before the 2019 economic crisis, collapsed. This left many people without access to key forms of social security, including affordable health insurance and basic income security for families with children, older people and those unable to work.⁴

In February, after several years of discussion and delay, the government adopted its National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS). The NSPS included key reforms, such as an inclusive pension scheme for private sector workers, income security for older people, and improved medical coverage for persons with disabilities.

In November the Ministry of Social Affairs announced a one-time cash transfer of USD 100 to people with valid Personal Disability Cards, supported by the ILO, UNICEF, the EU and the Netherlands. The transfer was a continuation of the National Disability Allowance (NDA) programme, launched in April 2023 to provide income support to people with disabilities. The ministry announced the renewal of the NDA until September 2025 with a monthly sum of USD 40 transferred to eligible individuals with disabilities who were born between 1994 and 2009.

Right to housing

Many buildings in Lebanon failed to meet minimum safety standards.

One year after the February 2023 earthquakes, people in the city of Tripoli and elsewhere continued to live in homes that were severely damaged because they could not afford repairs or alternative housing. Tripoli had the highest concentration of unsafe buildings in the country. Of the 162 buildings listed as being at risk of collapse in Lebanon, 63 were in Tripoli, along with 51 historical or heritage buildings in dire need of renovation, many of which were inhabited.⁵ The government's response was inadequate and limited to serving eviction notices, and in some cases fines, to people living in unsafe structures.

In February, two residential buildings collapsed in the Choueifat region, southern Beirut. On 11 February the residents evacuated the first building minutes before it collapsed, when they noticed cracks appearing. The second building collapsed after midnight on 19 February, killing at least four people, including a baby.

Freedom of expression

The authorities continued to use criminal defamation laws to harass, intimidate and attack journalists and critics.

The General Directorate of the Internal Security Forces disclosed that the Cybercrimes Bureau investigated 1,684 insult and defamation cases between January 2019 and March 2024, including 18 defamation cases between January and March 2024.

At least four individuals, including three journalists, were summoned for questioning by high-ranking officials in relation to their work. The criminal complaints against them appeared to be retaliatory, targeting speech

protected under international human rights law, rather than addressing actual harm caused. In three instances, the summoned parties were not informed of the allegations prior to the questioning, violating their fair trial rights. At the end of the year, two of the individuals remained uncertain whether the charges against them had been dropped.⁶

Right to truth, justice and reparation

On 26 April, Lebanon's caretaker cabinet voted to instruct the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants to file a declaration with the ICC, accepting the court's jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes on Lebanese territory since 7 October 2023. On 28 May the government reversed this decision leading to concerns about impunity for international crimes.

The investigation into the Beirut Port explosion on 4 August 2020, which killed at least 236 people and left more than 7,000 injured, remained suspended since December 2021.

On 16 January the Court of Cassation suspended an arrest warrant against former public works minister Youssef Fenianos, who was charged in September 2021 with homicide and criminal negligence by the lead investigator in the Beirut Port explosion case.⁷

On 1 July, families of victims of the Beirut Port explosion joined Lebanese and international human rights organizations in addressing an open letter to the UN Human Rights Council, calling for the establishment of an international, independent and impartial fact-finding mission into human rights violations related to the explosion.

Perpetrators continued to commit torture and other ill-treatment with impunity. Lebanon's military court missed an opportunity to hold accountable security officials who were accused of torturing to death Syrian refugee Bashar Abd Saud. On 1 November, all the defendants in his case were sentenced to time in prison already served after the court reduced the nature of their crime from felony to misdemeanour, dropped the charges under the anti-torture law and replaced them with charges under Article 166 of the Code of Military Justice, which prohibits violating regulations, orders and general instructions.⁸

Refugees' and migrants' rights

Lebanon continued to host the largest number of refugees per capita, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency. Prior to the escalation of hostilities with Israel, the government estimated that there were 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

In April the authorities stepped up the use of hateful rhetoric towards refugees from Syria and introduced additional restrictive measures

intended to pressure them to leave Lebanon, even though no part of Syria was safe for refugee returns. Starting in May, the security services carried out dozens of raids and forcibly deported scores of Syrian refugees. On 2 May the European Commission announced a EUR 1 billion aid package to Lebanon, in part to bolster the ability of Lebanese security services to curb irregular migration through the Mediterranean from Lebanon to Europe. Human rights groups raised serious concerns about the deal, which was followed by numerous discriminatory policies targeting Syrian refugees, more than 83% of whom did not have access to legal residency in Lebanon.⁹

On 26 September Lebanese General Security announced new measures aimed at returning to Syria those Syrians who overstayed their residency or entered Lebanon irregularly, despite the well-documented risks that they would face on return, including torture, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. UNHCR expressed concerns over the Lebanese General Security issuing re-entry bans for some of those individuals.

The effect of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah on infrastructure and humanitarian access and operations left many refugees without access to shelter, healthcare, food, cash assistance or protection services.

Women's rights

Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice.

Women's rights groups continued to advocate for a unified personal status law and political rights, including the right to equal custody of their children, to full protection from domestic violence, and to pass on their nationality to their foreign spouses and children.

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1. "Lebanon: Israeli air strikes that killed at least 49 civilians further evidence of war crimes", 12 December ↩
 2. "Israel/Lebanon: Branches of Hezbollah-affiliated financial institution not military targets", 22 October ↩
 3. "Lebanon: Establish international investigation into deadly attacks using exploding portable devices", 20 September ↩
 4. *Lebanon: "The Country Is Dissolving and No One Cares": Surging Need and Crashing Support for Social Security During Lebanon's Economic Crisis*, 2 December ↩
 5. "Lebanon: Thousands in Tripoli living in unsafe housing a year on from devastating earthquakes", 20 February ↩
 6. "Lebanon: End use of defamation laws to target journalists and critics", 3 May ↩

7. "Lebanon: Suspension of arrest warrant for former minister another travesty of justice in Beirut blast investigation", 18 January ↩
8. "Lebanon: Missed opportunity for justice in landmark case over torture and death in custody of Syrian refugee", 5 November ↩
9. "Lebanon: World leaders must commit to protecting Syrian refugees as Lebanon steps up crackdown ahead of Brussels conference", 27 May ↩

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Associated documents

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[Amnesty Report 2024/25: Zur Lage der Menschenrechte weltweit; Libanon 2024](#) (Periodical Report, German)

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