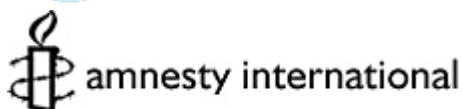


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# Amnesty International Annual Report 2013 - Lebanon

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Head of state: **Michel Suleiman**

Head of government: **Najib Mikati**

**Reports of torture and other ill-treatment continued, including forced, abusive physical examinations of detainees. Discrimination against Palestinian refugees continued, impeding their access to education, health, employment and adequate housing. Migrant workers faced abuse from employers and sometimes security forces. Some refugees and asylum-seekers, including those fleeing violence in neighbouring Syria, were arbitrarily detained. At least 170,000 refugees from Syria sought safety in Lebanon during the year. Women were discriminated against in law and practice. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) announced a trial date in 2013 but the Lebanese authorities again failed to address the fate of the long-term missing and disappeared. Civilians were sentenced to death or to prison terms after unfair trials before military courts. At least nine death sentences were imposed; there were no executions.**

## Background

Tension rose among Lebanon's diverse faith communities, amid fears that the conflict in Syria would spill over into Lebanon. There was a large influx of refugees from Syria. Sporadic violent clashes along the Syria-Lebanon border caused deaths and injuries among civilians. Repeated armed clashes occurred in and around Tripoli between pro-Syrian government Alawite Muslims and Sunni Muslims supportive of Syrian opposition forces. Armed clashes also occurred in Sidon in August and November. Protests broke out in Beirut and elsewhere, notably following the 19 October assassination of the head of intelligence within Lebanon's Internal Security Forces, who was killed by a car bomb in Beirut. Dozens of people, including children, were killed in the violence and hundreds were wounded. At least 20 Syrians and other foreign nationals were kidnapped and held for up to one month in August and September by armed members of the Meqdad clan to pressure a Syrian armed group to release one of their relatives. In December, a draft National Action Plan for human rights in Lebanon was launched in Parliament, but had not been endorsed at the end of the year.

## **Torture and other ill-treatment**

There were new reports of torture and other ill-treatment of detained security and criminal suspects. In at least one case, an individual suspected on security grounds was reported to have been apprehended, beaten and threatened by armed non-state agents and then handed over to Military Intelligence for further interrogation, during which he was subjected to additional assaults.

In an effort to address torture and other abuses, the government, with assistance from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, launched in January a code of conduct for the Internal Security Forces. However, the government again failed to establish an independent monitoring body to visit prisons and detention centres, in breach of its international obligations. It was therefore difficult to establish whether the code of conduct brought about any improvements.

## **Unfair trials**

Civilians accused of spying for Israel or other security-related offences continued to be unfairly tried before military courts, which lacked independence and impartiality. Military courts generally failed to investigate allegations by defendants that they were tortured in pre-trial detention to force them to "confess".

## **Freedom of expression**

Journalists and other media workers were attacked and harassed by security forces and non-state actors for their real or perceived political views.

- In June, at least three men threw burning material into the entrance of Al-Jadeed television station following the broadcast of a controversial interview with a Salafist cleric.

## **The Special Tribunal for Lebanon**

The Netherlands-based STL announced that the trial of four men it indicted in 2011 for alleged involvement in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005 and other crimes, would begin in March 2013. It was expected that the accused would be tried in their absence.

## **Impunity – enforced disappearances and abductions**

The fate of thousands who were abducted, detained or went missing during and after Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, including many said to have been taken to Syria, mostly remained unresolved. A draft decree proposed by the Minister of Justice to establish an Independent National Commission to investigate the fate of the disappeared and missing was widely criticized and had not been enacted by the end of the year. The release of Yacoub Chamoun from a Syrian prison almost 27 years after he went missing gave hope to families of the disappeared that some of their loved ones may still be alive.

## **Women's rights**

Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice. A draft law to allow Lebanese women married to foreign nationals to pass on their nationality to their children, as Lebanese men can do, was discussed by the Cabinet, although not enacted. Parliament continued to discuss a draft law against domestic violence.

## **Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants**

Thousands of Palestinian refugees, long-term residents in Lebanon, continued to be excluded by law from working in certain professions and accessing other rights available to Lebanese citizens.

Tens of thousands of refugees from Syria fled across the border to Lebanon, increasing pressure on Lebanon's housing, education, health and other resources. UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, was aware of over 170,000 refugees from Syria in Lebanon by the end of the year, although the true figure was likely to be much higher. Most were in northern Lebanon and the Bekaa valley area. Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria faced discriminatory entry requirements imposed by the Lebanese authorities. Lebanon had not ratified the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol.

Some refugees, asylum-seekers and migrant workers said they were ill-treated by the security forces, in particular during arrest and detention, which in some cases were carried out arbitrarily or during raids in their neighbourhoods or work places. They included around 70 mostly Syrian, Egyptian and Sudanese migrant workers who alleged that they were beaten by soldiers in October during a raid on Beirut's Geitawi district.

Women foreign nationals employed as domestic workers under the official sponsorship scheme remained vulnerable to abuse by employers.

- UN human rights experts called for an investigation into the suicide in March of an Ethiopian woman after the alleged owner of her employment agency was filmed dragging her and forcing her into his car to prevent her entering the Ethiopian Consulate in Beirut.

### **Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people**

LGBTI people faced discrimination and abuse.

- In July, 36 men arrested at a film show were forcibly subjected to rectal examinations to determine whether they had engaged in anal sex. Following this, the national medical association advised all doctors to refuse to participate in such abusive examinations or they would face disciplinary measures.

### **Death penalty**

At least nine death sentences were imposed; no executions had been carried out since 2004. The proposed National Human Rights Action Plan suggested substituting life imprisonment for the death penalty in all relevant Lebanese laws.

- At least five men were sentenced to death for spying for Israel.
- In April, a military judge requested the death penalty for 26 men after charging them with abducting and detaining a group of Estonian nationals in 2011. The trial was continuing at the end of the year.

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