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AI – Amnesty International, HRW – Human Rights Watch, ALEF - Act for Human Rights, Alternative Media Syndicate, DARAJ Media, Helem et al.
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Lebanon: Attack on Freedoms Targets LGBTI People Repressive Legislation; Unlawful Crackdown

- [Lebanese](#) authorities are systematically attacking the fundamental human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people.
- As Lebanon sinks deeper into crisis, the authorities are cracking down on the rights of LGBTI people and allowing unchecked violence against them.
- The Lebanese authorities should immediately scrap the proposed anti-LGBTI laws and end the ongoing attacks on basic freedoms.

(Beirut, September 5, 2023) – [Lebanese](#) authorities are systematically attacking the fundamental human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people, [the Coalition to Defend Freedom of Expression in Lebanon](#), comprised of fifteen Lebanese and international organizations, said today.

In August 2023, two Lebanese officials introduced separate bills that would explicitly criminalize same-sex relations between consenting adults

and punish anyone who “promotes homosexuality” with up to three years’ in prison. The introduction of the bills follows a series of hostile incidents over the past year and an unlawful [ministerial ban](#) on events around homosexuality. These attacks are taking place during a crippling economic crisis that has had [disastrous consequences](#) for human rights and pushed over 80 percent of the population into poverty, [particularly impacting](#) marginalized groups.

“As Lebanon sinks deeper into crisis, the authorities are cracking down on the rights of LGBTI people and allowing unchecked violence against them,” said [Rasha Younes](#), senior LGBT rights researcher at Human Rights Watch, a coalition member. “The Lebanese authorities should immediately scrap the proposed anti-LGBTI laws and end the ongoing attacks on basic freedoms.”

The Lebanese authorities should safeguard the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association, privacy, equality, and nondiscrimination of everyone in Lebanon, including LGBTI people, the coalition said.

Human Rights Watch, in addition to other Coalition members, has previously documented the abuses included in this report, which have been ongoing since 2017, as well as recent attacks targeting LGBTI people in Lebanon. Coalition members also reviewed the videos, social media posts, and government reports mentioned in this report.

Though consensual same-sex conduct is not explicitly criminalized 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](#). In July 2023, nine members of parliament [submitted](#) a draft law to repeal article 534. The draft law’s signatories have since been [subjected](#) to an online harassment campaign from political and religious authorities, resulting in one parliament member [withdrawing](#) his signature.

In response, the country’s culture minister and a member of parliament both submitted bills that would criminalize same-sex conduct and “promoting homosexuality,” which is undefined.

On August 23, men from a group that calls itself Soldiers of God, which is openly hostile toward LGBTI people, [attacked](#) people at a bar in Beirut where a drag event was being held, beat up some of the attendees while they were attempting to leave, and [threatened](#) further violence against LGBTI people.

Internal Security Forces agents, who arrived while the attack was under way, [reportedly did not intervene](#). Instead, they apparently [interrogated](#)

the bar owner and guests about the nature of the performance. No one has been arrested for the attack.

In June 2022, Lebanon's caretaker interior minister, Bassam al-Mawlawi, [issued](#) an unlawful directive instructing security forces to ban pro-LGBTI events. Despite a court order in November 2022 [suspending](#) the directive, al-Mawlawi issued a [second directive](#) banning any "conference, activity, or demonstration related to or addressing homosexuality."

Since 2017, Lebanese security forces have [regularly interfered](#) with [human rights events related to gender and sexuality](#), including by issuing [entry bans](#) against non-Lebanese attendees, which were [annulled](#) in 2021 according to judicial decisions.

The series of attacks on fundamental freedoms in a country once proud to embrace diversity sparked backlash against state-sponsored repression by media organizations and civil society in Lebanon who stood in solidarity with LGBTI people.

On August 25, 18 media organizations in Lebanon [issued](#) a joint statement rejecting the recent crackdown on freedoms, including the targeting of LGBTI people, and calling for unity in the fight against it. "[The] demonization of freedoms, in their various forms, under the guise of 'combating homosexuality,' will inevitably impact all public freedoms," the groups and individuals said.

Reporters sans frontières (Reporters Without Borders or RSF) also [condemned](#) the proposed anti-homosexuality laws as justification for a renewed attack on media freedom. The group documented recent cases of cyberstalking, threats, and intimidation against journalists who report on gender and sexuality issues in Lebanon.

Discrimination in providing protection against violence and access to justice is [prohibited](#) under international law. In 2021, during the Universal Periodic Review of Lebanon's human rights protections at the UN Human Rights Council, Lebanon [accepted](#) recommendations to repeal article 534 and ensure the rights to peaceful assembly and expression for LGBTI people. Lebanon's constitution also [guarantees](#) freedom of expression "within the limits established by law."

The [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR), which Lebanon ratified in 1972, provides that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association, without discrimination.

"Far from serving the public interest, the Lebanese government is undermining basic rights while failing to enact urgent economic and justice reforms," said [Wadih Al-Asmar](#), president of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH), a coalition member. "LGBTI rights are

fundamental human rights and stifling them as an excuse to keep a portion of society marginalized under the false pretext of so-called public morals is detrimental to everyone's human rights."

For detailed background information and analysis, please click here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde18/7168/2023/en/>

Members of the Coalition

Act for Human Rights (ALEF)
Amnesty International
Alternative Media Syndicate
DARAJ Media
Helem
Human Rights Watch
Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE)
Legal Agenda
Maharat Foundation
Media Association for Peace (MAPP)
MENA Rights Group
Samir Kassir Foundation
SEEDS for Legal Initiatives
Social Media Exchange (SMEX)
The Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH)

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ecoi.net description:

Joint NGO statement on attacks against LGBTI individuals and institutions

Country:

Lebanon

Sources:

[AI – Amnesty International](#) , [HRW – Human Rights Watch](#) , ALEF - Act for Human Rights, Alternative Media Syndicate, DARAJ Media, Helem et al.
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