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The human rights situation continued to be affected by the armed conflict in Syria. Lebanon hosted more than 1 million refugees from Syria, but the authorities severely restricted their right to asylum and maintained restrictions that effectively closed Lebanon's borders to those fleeing Syria. Most refugees faced severe economic hardship. Women were discriminated against in law and practice and were inadequately protected against sexual and other violence. Migrant workers faced exploitation and abuse. The authorities took no steps to investigate the fate of thousands of people who disappeared or went missing during the conflict of 1975 to 1990. Long-resident Palestinian refugees continued to face discrimination. Parliament approved a new law to establish a National Human Rights Institute. Courts continued to impose death sentences; there were no executions.

Background

Tensions between the main political parties caused continued political impasse. However, in October, the Parliament elected a new president; the presidency had been vacant since May 2014. Public protests against the government's continued failure to implement sustainable solutions to the country's waste collection and disposal problems diminished compared with 2015.

Security conditions deteriorated; there were bomb attacks in the capital Beirut and in Beqaa governorate. Suicide bombers killed five people and wounded 28 others, mostly civilians, on 27 June in the predominantly Christian village of Qaa in the Beqaa Valley. The army detained dozens of refugees following the attacks in Qaa, accusing them of having irregular status in Lebanon.

Lebanese border areas continued to come under fire from Syria, where the armed group Islamic State (IS) continued to hold Lebanese soldiers and security officials that its forces abducted from Lebanon in 2014.

In September, judicial authorities indicted two Syrian government intelligence officers. They were accused of committing simultaneous bomb attacks in 2013 at two mosques in the northern city of Tripoli, in which 42 people were killed and some 600 injured, mostly civilians. Neither of those indicted had been apprehended by the end of 2016.

Torture and other ill-treatment

In October the Parliament approved a new law to establish a National Human Rights Institute, including a committee to investigate the use of torture and other ill-treatment in all places of detention, including prisons, police stations and immigrant detention sites.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

Lebanon hosted more than 1 million refugees from Syria in addition to some 280,000 long-term Palestinian refugees and more than 20,000 refugees from Iraq, Sudan, Ethiopia and other countries.

Lebanon again failed to become party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Refugees from Syria continued to face serious restrictions on their right to seek asylum, as the Lebanese authorities did not formally recognize them as refugees. The authorities also maintained strict criteria introduced in January 2015 and denied entry to all refugees from Syria who did not meet the criteria, effectively closing Lebanon's borders to people fleeing the armed conflict and persecution in Syria. A government decision from May 2015 continued to bar UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, from registering newly arrived refugees. Within Lebanon, Syrian refugees faced financial and administrative difficulties in obtaining or renewing residency permits, exposing them to a constant risk of arbitrary arrest, detention and forcible return to Syria. They also faced severe economic hardship. According to the UN, 70% of Syrian refugee households lived below the poverty line and more than half lived in substandard conditions in overcrowded buildings and densely populated neighbourhoods.

The UN humanitarian appeal for Syrian refugees in Lebanon was only 52% funded by the end of the year and resettlement places in other countries remained inadequate. Cuts in funding led the UN to reduce both the amount of its support to Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the number in receipt of UN support.

On 8 January, security officials at Beirut Airport forcibly returned more than 100 Syrians to Syria, in violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*. The returned refugees had been seeking to travel to Turkey via Lebanon.

Palestinian refugees, including many long-resident in Lebanon, remained subject to discriminatory laws that deny them the right to own or inherit property and access public education and health services, and that prevent them from working in at least 35 professions. At least 3,000 Palestinian refugees who did not hold official identity documents faced further restrictions denying them the right to register births, marriages and deaths.

Women's rights

Women remained subject to personal status laws that retained discriminatory provisions pertaining to marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. The nationality law continued to prevent Lebanese women married to foreign nationals from passing on their nationality to their children. The same law did not apply to Lebanese men.

Women remained unprotected from marital rape, which the 2013 Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence failed to criminalize. This law was used in 2016 to charge the husbands of Roula Yaacoub and Manal Assi for beating their wives to death in 2013 and 2014 respectively; the latter was sentenced to death, which was reduced in July to five years in prison.

Syrian and Palestinian refugee women from Syria faced serious human rights abuses, including gender-based violence, exploitation and sexual harassment, particularly in public places. Refugee women heads of households were especially at risk of harassment by men if they had no adult male

relatives residing with them. Many refugee women from Syria lacked valid residence permits and, as a result, feared reporting sexual harassment or other abuse to the Lebanese authorities.

Migrant workers' rights

Migrant workers were excluded from the protections provided to other workers under the Labour Law, exposing them to labour exploitation and physical, sexual and psychological abuse by their employers. Migrant domestic workers, mostly women, remained especially vulnerable under the *kafala* sponsorship system that ties workers to their employer.

International justice

Special Tribunal for Lebanon

The Netherlands-based Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) continued to try in their absence four men accused of complicity in the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and others in a 2005 car bombing in Beirut. The four continued to evade arrest. A fifth accused died in Syria.

On 8 March, the STL Appeals Panel acquitted Lebanese journalist Karma Khayat and her employer Al Jadeed TV of contempt of court. On 15 July, the STL charged *al-Akhbar* newspaper and its editor-in-chief, Ibrahim al-Amine, with contempt of court for failing to comply with a court order requiring them to remove information concerning confidential witnesses and obstruction of justice. On 29 August the court sentenced Ibrahim al-Amine to a fine of €20,000 and *al-Akhbar* newspaper to a fine of €6,000.

Impunity

The government again failed to establish an independent national body to investigate the fate of thousands of people who were forcibly disappeared or went missing during the civil war of 1975 to 1990 and who may have been unlawfully killed. This failure perpetuated the suffering of the families of the disappeared, who continued to face administrative, legal, social and economic hurdles resulting from the enforced disappearance of their relatives.

Death penalty

Courts imposed at least 107 death sentences for terrorism-related crimes. No executions have been carried out since 2004.