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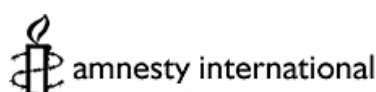
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Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 - Lebanon

Head of state: **Michel Suleiman**Head of government: **Saad Hariri**Death penalty: **retentionist**Population: **4.3 million**Life expectancy: **72.4 years**Under-5 mortality (m/f): **31/21 per 1,000**Adult literacy: **89.6 per cent**

Palestinian refugees continued to face discrimination, which impeded their access to work, health, education and adequate housing. At least 23 recognized Iraqi refugees were reported to have been deported while scores of other refugees and asylum-seekers were detained in what may amount to arbitrary detention. At least 19 people were convicted following unfair trials of collaboration with or spying for Israel; 12 of them were reported to have been sentenced to death. Reports continued of torture in detention. Migrant domestic workers continued to suffer widespread discrimination and abuse. Few official steps were taken to investigate the fate of thousands of individuals missing since the 1975-90 civil war.

Background

Tension increased within the fragile unity government and in the country amid reports that Hizbullah members were to be indicted by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) in connection with the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. Hizbullah called for a boycott of the STL and accused it of being politicized and failing to investigate earlier allegations that had led to four former Lebanese security and intelligence heads being detained without charge for nearly four years. In September, Prime Minister Saad Hariri said that it had been a mistake to accuse the Syrian government of responsibility for his father's assassination.

At least seven civilians were among 16 individuals killed in political violence or by the security forces. In a possible case of excessive use of force, two civilians were shot dead by border police in November near the northern village of Wadi Khaled; according to reports, they were on a motorcycle and failed to stop. Two other civilians were then shot dead by border police during a protest against the killings.

Tension remained high along the southern border with Israel. Israeli airforce jets repeatedly violated Lebanese airspace and Israeli forces continued to occupy part of Ghajar village. In August, at least two Lebanese soldiers, a Lebanese journalist and an Israeli soldier were killed in a cross-border clash.

At least two people were killed and others injured by Israeli cluster bomb units and landmines left in southern Lebanon in previous years.

Lebanon's parliamentary Human Rights Committee continued drafting a National Human Rights Action Plan.

In November, Lebanon's human rights record was assessed under the UN Universal Periodic Review, and Lebanon agreed to take all necessary measures to stop torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Unfair trials

At least 20 individuals were tried for security offences before courts whose procedures were unfair.

More than 120 individuals suspected of involvement with the Fatah al-Islam armed group, detained without charge since 2007, continued to await trial before the Judicial Council. Most were allegedly tortured. The Judicial Council, widely believed to lack independence, fails to provide for the right to appeal, even in death penalty cases. Defendants often wait for long periods for trial without being formally charged.

Scores of people were detained on suspicion of collaborating with or spying for Israel. At least 19 were sentenced to prison terms or death after trials before military courts. Trials before military courts are unfair as judges are predominantly serving military officers. In addition, civilians should not be tried under military jurisdiction.

- The trial began of Maher Sukkar, a Palestinian refugee, and 10 others before a military court on security-related offences including "forming an armed gang to commit crimes against people and property". No investigation was carried out into his allegation that he "confessed" under torture in April while held incommunicado.
- The trial continued before the Judicial Council of Kamal al-Na'san, Mustafa Sayw and others suspected of involvement in the 2007 'Ayn 'Alaq bus bombings which killed three people. Kamal al-Na'san and Mustafa Sayw were arrested in early 2007, held for nine and 26 months respectively in solitary confinement at the Information Branch of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) in Beirut, and reportedly tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Kamal al-Na'san retracted part of his statement in court, saying it had been coerced. No investigations were known to have been carried out into the torture allegations.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Reports continued of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees and few steps were taken to improve the situation. However, the authorities did permit a visit of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture to the country in May, and in November announced that they would criminalize all forms of torture and ill-treatment. Detainees continued to be held incommunicado, allegations of torture were not investigated and "confessions" allegedly given under duress were accepted as evidence in trials. The government failed for a further year to submit its first report under the UN Convention against Torture, which Lebanon ratified in 2000. It also failed to establish an independent body empowered to inspect detention centres, as required by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture to which Lebanon became party in 2008.

- Mohammad Osman Zayat was reported to have been severely beaten during arrest by plain-clothed members of the ISF on 24 June. While detained at the ISF's Information Branch in Beirut, he was repeatedly forced to stand in stress positions, beaten and given electric shocks to sensitive parts of his body. As a result, he signed "confessions" that were expected to be used against him in trial.

Discrimination – Palestinian refugees

Two amendments to the Labour and Social Security laws were approved in August but did little to diminish the discriminatory laws and regulations faced by some 300,000 Palestinian refugees who are denied basic rights, including the right to inherit property and to work in around 20 professions. One amendment cancelled the fees payable by Palestinian refugees for work permits, but administrative and other difficulties in obtaining the permits continued and few if any new ones were issued. The other amendment gave Palestinians access to pensions, but only when provided by a yet-to-be-established employers' fund. It did not give Palestinians access to sickness and other benefits.

Violence and discrimination against women

In May, the Appeals Court overturned a lower court ruling that would have given Lebanese women the right to pass on their nationality to their children. Samira Soueidan had obtained the earlier court decision in June 2009 but the Minister of Justice appealed. Under Lebanese law, nationality is passed on through the father only.

Women migrant domestic workers continued to face exploitation and physical, sexual and psychological abuse at work. It was reported in June that, in a rare prosecution, a Lebanese woman was sentenced to one month's imprisonment and fined for beating and mistreating a Sri Lankan woman she employed as a housemaid.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

Scores of refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly Iraqis and Sudanese, were detained beyond the expiry of sentences imposed for irregular entry into Lebanon or despite having been cleared of an offence. Many were held in poor conditions at an underground facility at 'Adliyah in Beirut and were forced to decide between remaining in indefinite detention or returning "voluntarily" to their countries of origin. At least 23 recognized Iraqi refugees were reported to have been deported in clear violation of international law.

- On 10 November, 'Alaa al-Sayad, an Iraqi refugee, was taken from detention at the 'Adliyah facility and was reported to have been beaten severely to force him to board a plane on which he was then forcibly returned to Iraq.

Some 20,000 Palestinian refugees, who had been forced to flee the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp area in 2007 during a 15-week battle between the Lebanese Army and Fatah al-Islam, remained displaced due to the devastation and delays in reconstruction. Around 11,000 had been able to return to live in areas close to the camp.

Enforced disappearances and abductions

The government took few steps to investigate the fate of thousands of people who went missing during the 1975-90 civil war despite continuous campaigning by relatives seeking the truth. However, senior government leaders boycotted the Arab Summit held in Libya in March in protest at Libyan leader Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi's alleged involvement in the abduction and enforced disappearance of a senior Shi'a Imam, Musa al-Sadr, and two companions in 1978.

The Council of Ministers provided a short document about mass graves to a court that was hearing a lawsuit filed by two NGOs. The NGOs were working on behalf of people whose relatives had disappeared or been abducted, and who hope to protect and identify the bodies buried in three mass graves cited in an official 2000 report.

Death penalty

At least 12 people were reported to have been sentenced to death, including five in their absence, after being convicted of collaborating with or spying for Israel. In June, President Suleiman said he would be prepared to sign execution warrants of those sentenced to death for acting as agents for Israel. Tens of other prisoners continued to be held on death row. There were no executions, maintaining the de facto moratorium in force since 2004.

- On 18 February, Mahmoud Rafeh was sentenced to death by a military court for "collaboration and espionage on behalf of the enemy". He said he was tortured to make him "confess", an allegation that was not investigated by the court.

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