Lebanon 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

Expanded Israeli airstrike campaigns and an Israeli ground incursion in the south targeting Hizballah, including in densely populated urban areas, caused significant civilian harm and displacement and severely worsened the human rights situation in the country during the year. Exchanges of fire between Israel and Hizballah across the Blue Line – initiated by Hizballah on October 8, 2023 – continued during the year. On November 26, Lebanon and Israel agreed to a cessation of hostilities; as of year's end, implementation continued.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest and detention; witting cooperation with another country to carry out acts of transnational repression; serious abuses in a conflict; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; trafficking in persons, including forced labor; and significant presence of any of the worst forms of child labor.

The government did not take credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Nonstate armed groups, including Hizballah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other Palestinian militias, operated with impunity, using intimidation, harassment, and violence against perceived critics and opponents. Armed members of these groups impeded access to certain neighborhoods, refugee camps, and other areas where they operated outside the reach and authority of the government. These groups allegedly operated unofficial detention facilities in which they unlawfully detained individuals, sometimes incommunicado, for indefinite periods of time. Israeli incursions and airstrikes across the country targeting Hizballah, Hamas, and other armed groups caused civilian deaths and injuries and damaged civilian infrastructure.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killing during the year. On February 23, a Beirut Municipality policeman killed Syrian citizen Muhammad Zaid al-Hariri and severely injured Syrian citizen Rabia al-Othman, age 17, at a checkpoint in downtown Beirut, according to local media. The policeman reportedly kicked the moving motorcycle al-Hariri and al-Othman were riding, which caused them to lose control and be thrown from the vehicle, killing al-Hariri immediately and severely injuring al-Othman. On February 23, the Lebanese Armed

Forces' (LAF) Directorate of Intelligence reportedly detained the municipality policemen that were at the checkpoint during the incident and took them to the Ministry of Defense. There was no update at year's end on accountability for the case.

According to the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH), on July 5, a Military Court judge ordered the release of the fifth and last State Security official detained for involvement in the 2022 death in custody of Syrian citizen Bashar Abdel Saoud, after receiving a reconciliation and release notice from the victim's family. According to the CLDH, on October 1, all five defendants' sentences were reduced to time served after the court replaced felony antitorture law charges with misdemeanor charges of causing death through negligence and violating regulations, orders, and general instructions. Amnesty International alleged the decision sent a "chilling message" that members of the security services involved in torture were above the law and could commit crimes without fear of being held accountable.

Alleged Israeli attacks on Hizballah affiliates on September 17 and September 18 via exploding pager devices and walkie-talkies across the country reportedly killed 37 persons – including at least two children – and injured 2,931 others.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

c. War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Evidence of Acts that May Constitute Genocide, or Conflict-Related Abuses

Conflict-related abuses resulting from exchanges of fire between Israel and Hizballah across the Blue Line initiated by Hizballah on October 8, 2023, continued during the year. Hizballah launched thousands of rockets at Israeli civilians, displacing approximately 68,500 Israelis along the border, while locating personnel and control centers in densely populated areas. Expanded Israeli airstrike campaigns targeting Hizballah starting on September 23 and an Israeli ground incursion in the south starting on October 1 killed 3,961 persons and injured 16,520 between October 8, 2023, and November 28, 2024, according to Ministry of Public Health data, which did not disaggregate civilians and Hizballah militants. More than 100 hundred health-care workers were killed in Israeli airstrikes on health-care facilities, according to the ministry and the United Nations, while civil defense members were reportedly killed in separate Israeli airstrikes in Taybeh (October 2), Baraachit (October 7), Tyre (October 9), and Baalbek (November 14). On October 16, an Israeli airstrike on the municipal building

of the town of Nabatieh killed Ahmad Kahil, the town's mayor, and 15 others and injured 52 persons, according to the Ministry of Public Health. According to media reports, Israeli officials reported targeting "dozens of Hizballah terrorist targets" in the area, including command centers and weapons storage facilities "embedded by Hizballah adjacent to civilian infrastructure." On October 25, an Israeli airstrike on a residence housing journalists in Hasbaya killed three media personnel from Al-Mayadeen TV and Hizballah-run Al-Manar TV, according to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international media outlets. Media teams from Sky News Arabia, al-Jazeera, and the Lebanese MTV station, which reportedly had "PRESS" markings on their cars parked outside the residence, were also present. Israeli defense officials stated Hizballah militants were present in the building and announced the incident was "under review."

Between October 8, 2023, and November 25, according to the International Organization for Migration, 899,725 persons in the country became internally displaced due to the fighting.

On November 26, Lebanon and Israel agreed to a cessation of hostilities. Both countries alleged violations of the terms of the Cessation of Hostilities through the end of the year. Implementation continued at year's end.

Section 2. Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The constitution provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press, and stipulated that restrictions could be imposed only under exceptional circumstances. Nevertheless, there were serious governmental restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions against of journalists, censorship, and enforcement of or threat to enforce criminal libel laws to limit expression.

Freedom House reported nearly all media outlets depended on the patronage of political parties, wealthy individuals, or foreign powers, and consequently practiced some degree of self-censorship. In November, a representative of the Samir Kassir Foundation stated Lebanese and foreign journalists faced risks of confiscation of their communications devices, intimidation campaigns, and other threats that imposed a type of self-censorship on their work.

During the year, the government reportedly barred some foreign journalists from entering the country via the airport without explanation amid heightened security measures at points of entry due to the conflict between Israel and Hizballah, according to local media. In November, Acting General Security Chief Elias Baissari reportedly assured the Press Syndicate that

journalists who met the legal requirements could enter, while others would be barred.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

Authorities did not protect members of the media from violence online or in-person intimidation by members of political, religious, and other influence groups. Protesters and security forces attacked or harassed journalists covering protests on several occasions.

On November 13, local media reported Hizballah supporters beat and shot at journalist Nabil Mamlouk in Tyre, where Mamlouk worked for a number of Lebanese and Arab media outlets. The Hizballah supporters reportedly confiscated Mamlouk's mobile phone and computer but were unsuccessful in opening them. Mamlouk alleged he was attacked after publishing social media posts warning residents in Tyre to not take photographs of a drone that fell at sea. LAF intelligence officers reportedly arrived on site upon hearing the gunfire; Mamlouk's belongings were reportedly returned to him after a senior Hizballah party official intervened.

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

Authorities selectively applied elements of the law permitting censorship of pornographic material, political opinion, and religious material considered a

threat to national security or offensive to the dignity of the head of state or foreign leaders. Journalists faced violence, intimidation, and harassment. Some journalists reported political violence and extralegal intimidation led to self-censorship.

Some outlets avoided reporting from areas where Hizballah exercised influence, but those that did so often removed identifying markings from their vehicles and equipment. The Internal Security Forces' Cybercrimes Bureau and other state security agencies summoned journalists, bloggers, and activists for questioning regarding their social media and blog posts, especially when they criticized political figures or religious sects.

On July 30, Hizballah members attacked and destroyed the equipment of MTV crew members who were attempting to provide coverage of an Israeli strike on the southern suburbs of Beirut, according to local media. The government reportedly did not respond to the attack.

On October 5, a Beirut criminal court and military court separately issued search warrants for journalist and MTV contributor Mariam Majdoline al-Lahham, reportedly for expressing her opinion on social media that those working for the Hizballah-affiliated Islamic Health Committee and targeted by Israeli air strikes were not neutral civilians. Her widely circulated post reportedly drew criticism from some internet users, notably Hizballah sympathizers, accusing her of treason and of justifying the targeting of rescue workers. The two cases against her on treason charges remained

pending as of year's end.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining were not always respected. The government and other political actors interfered with the functioning of worker organizations, particularly the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers, the country's main federation of workers and the only national confederation recognized by the government.

Antiunion discrimination and other instances of employer interference in union functions occurred. Some employers fired workers who were in the process of forming a union before the union could be formally established.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The labor law stipulated a minimum wage, although it did not apply to foreign workers, including Syrians, Palestinian refugees from Syria, and

migrant domestic workers. Observers concluded the minimum wage was lower than the minimum living wage, and less than the poverty estimate in most cases, owing to the steep depreciation in the value of the Lebanese pound. On April 4, the cabinet reportedly agreed to raise the official monthly minimum wage in the private sector to 18 million Lebanese pounds ($200 based on the exchange rate at that time). The basic salary of civil servants was paid in Lebanese pounds and determined in the state budget each year. To partially compensate for the drastic loss in purchasing power, however, civil servants received a pay supplement to their basic salary equal to two times their 2021 basic salary. On May 1, civil servants were granted an additional pay supplement equal to four times their 2021 basic salary, effectively granting seven basic salaries to public employees who worked at least 14 days a month. According to the official government statement, this supplement of four basic salaries could not be less than 8 million Lebanese pounds ($82.50) nor more than 50 million Lebanese pounds ($515) per month.

There was no official minimum wage for domestic workers. Employment contracts for domestic workers stipulated monthly wages; however, the contractual wage depended on the nationality of the worker. Whenever an employee signed a contract with an employer, the contract had to be registered with the DGS for the worker to obtain a residency permit. While the contract established uniform terms and conditions of employment and provided some labor protections, it did not address wages for domestic

workers.

The law prescribed a standard 48-hour work week with a weekly rest period of not less than 36 consecutive hours. The law stipulated 48 hours of work as the maximum per week in most businesses except the agricultural sector. The law permitted a 12-hour day under certain conditions but stipulated that overtime pay should be 150 percent of normal pay. The law did not set limits on compulsory overtime.

Many workers took on second and even third jobs to meet their basic living necessities. Some private-sector employers failed to provide employees with family and transportation allowances as stipulated under the law and failed to register them with the National Social Security Fund.

Occupational Safety and Health

The Ministry of Labor set occupational safety and health (OSH) standards. The law required employers to implement proper safety measures. The ministry had the authority to revoke a company's license if its inspectors found a company noncompliant. The law stipulated workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, although government officials did not protect employees who exercised this right. The responsibility for identifying hazards in the work environment remained with OSH experts and not workers.

Labor experts deemed the country's OSH standards inappropriate for the main industries in the country and noted the government did not regularly enforce them. OSH violations were especially prevalent in the construction, industrial, and informal sectors.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The Ministry of Labor's enforcement team handled all inspections of potential labor violations, although it lacked sufficient staffing, legal tools, and political support to carry out its mandate of enforcing minimum wage, overtime, and OSH laws. Political interference with inspectors sometimes affected the quality of inspections. Penalties for wage and hour violations were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud. Penalties were rarely applied against violators.

Workers could report wage and hour violations directly to the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers, the Ministry of Labor, or the National Social Security Fund, or indirectly through their respective unions. In most cases, workers opted to remain silent due to fear of dismissal. Acceptable-conditions-of-work statutes did not apply to those involved in work within the context of a family, day laborers, temporary workers in the public sector, or workers in the agricultural sector.

Violations of wage and overtime pay were most common in the construction industry and among migrant workers, particularly domestic workers.

Foreign domestic workers often faced physical, mental, and sexual abuse, to include unsafe working conditions and nonpayment of wages.

Penalties for violations of OSH laws were commensurate with those for similar crimes such as negligence. Penalties for OSH violations were rarely applied against violators. While most licensed businesses and factories strove to meet national OSH workplace standards, conditions in informal factories and businesses were poorly regulated and often did not meet these standards. Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and to initiate sanctions, but a shortage of OSH inspectors hampered enforcement. There were no reported cases in which the ministry revoked a company's license for OSH violations.

Some employers subjected domestic workers, mostly of Asian and African origin, to nonpayment of wages, mistreatment, and abuse, including rape. Victims of abuse could file civil suits or seek other legal action, but most victims settled for an administrative resolution that usually included monetary compensation and repatriation.

Authorities typically did not prosecute perpetrators of abuse against domestic workers because of the victims' refusal to press charges or a lack of evidence. Authorities settled an unknown number of cases of nonpayment of wages through negotiation.

Migrant workers were especially vulnerable to wage, hour, and OSH

violations. Most arrived in the country through local- and source-country recruitment agencies. Although the law required recruitment agencies to be licensed by the Ministry of Labor, the government did not adequately monitor their activities. The employer-based visa system tied a foreign worker's employment visa to a specific employer, making it difficult to change employers. In cases of employment termination, workers lost their legal status. This discouraged many migrant workers from filing complaints.

The most recent available data, from a 2021 report by the International Labor Organization, estimated 78 percent of total employment was informal and not subject to labor legislation, income taxation, social protection, or entitlements such as paid leave.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were no known reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court; the government generally observed these requirements. The law required judicial warrants before arrests except in cases of active pursuit.

Pretrial detention periods were often lengthy, in some cases equal to or exceeding the maximum allowable sentence under the law for the alleged crime. In September, the CLDH reported 83 percent of inmates were in pretrial detention according to information from the Prisons Committee of the Beirut Bar Association. The law stated the period of detention for a misdemeanor could not exceed two months. The law allowed officials to extend this period up to two additional months. The law stipulated the initial period of detention for felonies could not exceed six months but also permitted extensions.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

Section 3. Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or

Punishment

The law prohibited using acts of violence to obtain a confession or information regarding a crime, but the judiciary rarely investigated or prosecuted allegations of torture. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and local NGOs alleged instances where security officials tortured detainees and elicited confessions under duress. Authorities acknowledged violent abuse sometimes occurred during pretrial detention at police stations or military installations where officials interrogated suspects without an attorney present.

The CLDH documented at least 77 cases of torture by security forces during the year. It reported torture cases often went undocumented because prisoners' wounds healed during prolonged incarceration, making corroboration of claims difficult.

On March 8, persons dressed in civilian clothes whom the lawyer believed to be members of the Lebanese Army intelligence directorate approached a Syrian national with disabilities at a protest for Gaza solidarity in Beirut and asked for proof of his legal presence in the country, according to his lawyer and as reported by Human Rights Watch. The lawyer claimed her client was taken to an Army intelligence directorate building where he confessed under torture to belonging to a terrorist organization and was then released later that day. According to Human Rights Watch, a medical exam showed

the man had bruises and marks on his body resulting from “being beaten or hit...with a hard, cable-shaped object.”

The law allowed security force units accused of abuses to conduct their own internal investigations and try implicated security force members in military court for charges unrelated to their official duties. A lack of transparency and urgency in investigations, leading to impunity, was a persistent problem in the security forces, including the Internal Security Forces, the LAF, and the Parliamentary Police Force, according to NGO and media reports. Impunity was also a significant problem with respect to the actions of nonstate armed groups.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

See the Department of Labor’s *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/.

Child Marriage

There was no legal minimum age for marriage. The government did not perform civil marriages or enforce minimum age requirements imposed by various religious sects. The minimum age of marriage varied from 14 to 18, depending on the sect. Religious courts generally enforced respective minimum age limits for marriage; recognized groups were: Shia, Sunni,

Druze, Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Latin Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Coptic, Chaldean, Assyrian, and Protestant.

UN agencies reported a shift in the age of girls subjected to early marriages in the country during the year, with some as young as 12 to 13. UN agencies, NGOs, and government officials observed high rates of early marriage among the Syrian refugee population, which was attributed to social and economic pressure on families with limited resources.

c. Protection to Refugees

The government generally coordinated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations to allow the provision of protection and assistance to refugee residents, asylum seekers, and other persons of concern under the framework of the Lebanon Response Plan, but it continued to call for Syrian refugees to return to Syria and took additional actions that undermined refugee protection.

The government had not allowed UNHCR to register Syrian refugees since 2015. There were no formal refugee camps in the country for Syrians. The majority of Syrian refugees resided in urban and semiurban areas, many in unfinished, substandard, or nonresidential buildings, while others lived in informal tented settlements, many located in rural and agricultural areas. In April, the government introduced new fees on Syrian refugees, resulting in

an increase in the number of refugees living in the country without legal status, exposing them to exploitation, arrest, and deportation.

The government reportedly enacted more than 500 administrative measures regulating impacting Syrian refugees between January and August. Such measures included movement restrictions, raids, imposition of curfews, taxes, checkpoints, strict registration and legal requirements, restrictions on rental and accommodation, increased evictions, demolition of tents, data collection, restrictions on livelihood and basic services, and imposition of municipal identification cards.

On May 9, the DGS circulated an internal memorandum instructing the complete suspension of the issuance or renewal of residency permits for Palestinian refugees from Syria. Although the DGS did not formally confirm any policy changes regarding their residency, renewals for these refugees had reportedly effectively stopped.

Provision of First Asylum

The law did not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the country was not a party to either the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

At year's end there were an estimated 70-100 Jews living in the country and

5,500 registered Jewish voters who lived abroad but had the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Antisemitic discourse appeared in the media, and some politicians used antisemitic rhetoric.

On September 12, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities granted to the Israelite Communal Council a six-year validation, which had been stalled for eight years. The council, which represented the interests of the country's Jewish citizens, repeatedly but unsuccessfully submitted requests to change its government-appointed name to reduce stigma. The council blamed its official name in part for the difficulties experienced with renewals every six years.

For further information on incidents in the country of antisemitism, whether or not those incidents were motivated by religion, and for reporting on the ability of Jews to exercise freedom of religion or belief, please see the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

e. Instances of Transnational Repression

The government knowingly cooperated with another government to facilitate an act of transnational repression.

On December 28, authorities reportedly detained Egyptian-Turkish poet Abdel Rahman Youssef al-Qaradawi based on a security cooperation memorandum with Egyptian authorities, and subsequently arrested him per

a warrant issued by the Council of Arab Interior Ministers, following a social media post by al-Qaradawi criticizing the governments of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. On December 29, dozens of NGOs and human rights defenders issued a public letter stating al-Qaradawi's detention represented a "grave and alarming example of transnational repression."