



## **Universal Periodic Review**

# **Lebanon: Addressing Structural Failures in Human Rights Protection**

## **Fourth Cycle: Submission to the Stakeholders' Summary**

**CEDAR CENTRE FOR LEGAL STUDIES, 15 July 2025**



## **Introduction:**

The Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) is a Lebanese civil society organization established in 2013 and committed to promoting human rights, the rule of law, and social justice. As an independent, non-sectarian, and non-profit organization, CCLS works through legal research, policy advocacy, and direct support to individuals whose rights have been violated.

CCLS provides legal aid, documentation, and rehabilitation services to vulnerable groups, including survivors of torture, refugees, detainees, and victims of enforced disappearance. In December 2024, the Centre launched a Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture in North of Lebanon, which offers a multidisciplinary approach combining legal assistance, psychosocial care, and medical support.

As part of its broader advocacy efforts, CCLS joined the Lebanese Coalition for Freedom of Opinion and Expression in May 2025. The coalition brings together local and international organizations committed to protecting civic space and promoting the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, and association in Lebanon.

This submission draws on our documentation, legal casework, and field interviews conducted between 2022 and 2025. It highlights key human rights concerns and systemic gaps in Lebanon's legal and institutional frameworks, with a focus on torture and ill-treatment, violations related to irregular migration from Lebanon, and the lack of judicial accountability.

The report concludes with targeted recommendations aimed at advancing Lebanon's compliance with its international human rights obligations under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.



## Table of Contents

<b>1- Background and Framework.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Recommendations .....	4
<b>2- Right to Life, Liberty, and Security of Person .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Torture and Arbitrary Detention.....	4
Recommendations .....	6
<b>3- The Rights of Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Deportation, Non-Refoulement, and Lack of Legal Safeguards.....	7
Recommendations .....	8
<b>4- ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW .....</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1 Right to Fair Trial and Judicial Independence.....	9
Recommendations .....	9
<b>5- Missing Persons and Enforced Disappearances .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Recommendations .....	11



## 1- Background and Framework

1. Lebanon is a party to several core international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the **Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT)**. Lebanon signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (**ICPPED**) in 2007 but has to ratify it.
2. While the ratification of OPCAT was a positive step, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) visited Lebanon twice<sup>1</sup>—in 2010 and 2022—yet the Lebanese authorities have not published the reports of either visit.
3. Lebanon also faces ongoing political and economic crises, a fragile judicial system, and a high number of refugees, all of which undermine the state's ability to protect rights. Furthermore, Lebanon's cooperation with UN mechanisms remains inadequate, marked by delays in submitting treaty body reports and limited engagement with Special Procedures.

### Recommendations

4. Ratify the **ICPPED** without reservations.
5. Publish the reports of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT)'s visits to Lebanon in 2010 and 2022, and commit to implementing the Subcommittee's confidential recommendations in full transparency and cooperation with civil society.
6. Submit all overdue periodic reports to UN treaty bodies, including the second periodic report to the Committee against Torture (CAT) (due 12 May 2021) and the periodic report to the Human Rights Committee (ICCPR) (due 6 April 2023).
7. Recognize the competence of the Committee against Torture under Article 22 of CAT, allowing individuals to submit complaints of torture directly to the Committee, and ensure regular and timely engagement with all treaty monitoring mechanisms.

## 2- Right to Life, Liberty, and Security of Person

### 2.1 Torture and Arbitrary Detention

8. Lebanon's commitment to upholding the right to life, liberty, and security of person remains under significant scrutiny. Despite existing legal frameworks, including Law No. 65/2017<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Lebanon: Little progress in torture prevention, UN experts find, 12 May 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/05/lebanon-little-progress-torture-prevention-un-experts-find> (accessed on 11 July 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Law No. 65/2017 in Arabic language, 26 October 2017, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/AntiTortureLaw.pdf> (accessed on 12 July 2025).



criminalizing torture, violations persist, undermining the state's obligations under international human rights law<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, the amendment in 2020 to Article 47<sup>4</sup> of the Criminal Procedure Law, intended to strengthen safeguards during preliminary investigations, has not been effectively implemented. Security agencies continue to deny detainees their basic rights, including access to a lawyer and medical examination, during the critical early stages of detention. Between September 2023 and May 2024, the Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) documented 23 cases<sup>5</sup> involving violations of Article 47, affecting 20 male and 3 female victims—5 Lebanese, 10 Syrians, and 8 Palestinians. This gap between legal reform and enforcement continues to enable a climate of impunity for torture and ill-treatment.

9. Torture and ill-treatment continue to be reported within detention facilities. Between September 2023 and May 2024, the Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) submitted 23 cases<sup>6</sup> of torture to local courts under Law 65/2017, all involving male victims—18 Lebanese, 4 Syrians, and 1 Egyptian. Despite the severity of the allegations, all cases were referred to the military court, and mostly no investigations were opened into the torture claims. Notably, the only that there was investigation is the case of Syrian refugee Bashar Abed Al-Saud, who died on 31 August 2022, highlighted the severity of such abuses. He was reportedly<sup>7</sup> tortured by five officers from the State Security Directorate at the Tebnine branch. Although the officers were arrested, the case was referred to the military court, in violation of Lebanon's legal obligations. On 1 November 2024, the court<sup>8</sup> sentenced them to time served after downgrading the charges from felony torture to a military misdemeanor. This ruling disregarded clear forensic evidence linking Al-Saud's death to torture and contradicted the findings of two state-appointed forensic doctors.

10. Since December 2024 and through the end of June 2025, the CCLS Rehabilitation Centre<sup>9</sup> for Victims of Torture has provided holistic support to victims and their families. Services

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<sup>3</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Joint Statement: Lebanon must end practices of refoulement and torture, 26 June 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/lebanon-must-end-practices-of-refoulement-and-torture/> (accessed on 14 May 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Amendment to Article 47 of Criminal Procedure Law in Arabic language, 22 October 2020, [https://ccls-lebanon.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Art-47-Criminal-Procedure-Law-2020\\_AR.pdf](https://ccls-lebanon.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Art-47-Criminal-Procedure-Law-2020_AR.pdf) (accessed on 12 July 2025).

<sup>5</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Report on Legal Violations in Lebanon: Torture, Enforced Disappearances, and Violations of Detainees' Rights (September 2023 – May 2024), 10 December 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/torture-enforced-disappearances-and-violations-of-detainees-rights-september-2023-may-2024/> (accessed on 11 July 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 5.

<sup>7</sup> OHCHR, Réf. : AL LBN 3/2022, 28 November 2022, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=27650> (accessed on 11 July 2025).

<sup>8</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Trial Monitoring Report of Bachar Abed Saoud Case, 04 April 2025, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/trial-monitoring-report-of-bachar-abed-saoud-case/> (accessed on 14 April 2025).

<sup>9</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Cedar Centre for Legal Studies Opens a Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture in Tripoli, North Lebanon, 07 March 2025, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/cedar-centre-for-legal->



included 60 medical consultations, 41 physiotherapy sessions, 258 psychosocial support sessions, and pro bono legal representation in 10 cases. The high demand for psychosocial and legal services reflects the ongoing practice of torture and ill-treatment in detention facilities across Lebanon.

11. The Anti-Torture Law's implementation is hindered by several shortcomings<sup>10</sup>. It imposes a statute of limitations for prosecuting torture, contrary to international standards that advocate for no such limitations. Furthermore, the law's narrow definition of torture and the possibility of military courts handling such cases dilute its effectiveness.

12. Arbitrary detention remains a pressing concern. The arrest of Turkish-Egyptian poet Abdulrahman Al-Qaradawi<sup>11</sup> on 28 December 2024, based on politically motivated charges from Egyptian and UAE authorities, exemplifies this issue.

13. Detention conditions in Lebanon are alarming, characterized by severe overcrowding and inadequate facilities. On 02 September 2022, Lebanese Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi has reported to media<sup>12</sup> that his country's prisoners are overcrowded by 300 per cent, and 75 per cent of inmates are not convicted.

## Recommendations

14. Amend Law No. 65/2017 to include a more precise and comprehensive definition of the crime, abolish the statute of limitations, impose appropriately serious penalties, and restrict jurisdiction over torture cases to regular courts.

15. Refer all torture cases to regular courts in accordance with Article 15 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, ensuring fair and transparent trials.

16. Conduct prompt, independent, effective, and impartial investigations into all complaints of torture and other ill-treatment.

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[studies-opens-a-rehabilitation-center-for-victims-of-torture-in-tripoli-north-lebanon/](#) (accessed on 11 July 2025).

<sup>10</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Lebanon: Seven Years of Enacting a Torture Law without Effective Implementation, 26 June 2025, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/lebanon-seven-years-of-enacting-a-torture-law-without-effective-implementation/> (accessed on 11 July 2025).

<sup>11</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Arrest and Risk of Forced Extradition of Poet Abdulrahman Al-Qaradawi, 04 January 2025, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/arrest-and-risk-of-forced-extradition-of-poet-abdulrahman-al-qaradawi/> (accessed on 14 April 2025).

<sup>12</sup> Middle East Monitor, Lebanon prisons 300% overcrowded, 75% inmates not convicted, 03 September 2022, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220903-lebanon-prisons-300-overcrowded-75-inmates-not-convicted/> (accessed on 15 July 2025).



17. Ensure the effective enforcement of Article 47 by all security agencies, guaranteeing detainees' rights to legal counsel, medical examination, and silence from the moment of arrest, with independent oversight and accountability for violations.

18. Improve detention conditions by addressing overcrowding, ensuring access to medical care, and prohibiting prolonged solitary confinement.

19. Provide support and rehabilitation programs specifically for torture survivors and ensure their access to medical, psychological, and legal services.

### 3- The Rights of Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees

#### 3.1 Deportation, Non-Refoulement, and Lack of Legal Safeguards

20. Lebanon continues to face significant challenges in protecting the rights of irregular migrants, particularly in the context of economic collapse, political instability, and the absence of a coherent migration policy.

21. The lack of a national refugee law and Lebanon's non-ratification of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol exacerbate the vulnerability of migrants. This legal vacuum leaves many without protection, exposing them to exploitation and abuse.

22. In December 2024, the Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) released a report<sup>13</sup> titled "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Between Discriminatory Policies, Hate Speech, and the Death Boats," highlighting the growing risks faced by Syrian refugees due to the absence of a national asylum framework and rising institutional discrimination. The report documented curfews, denial of education and legal residency, and the spread of hate speech, all of which have pushed many refugees to attempt dangerous sea migration.

23. Irregular migration from Lebanon has increased due to deteriorating living conditions. Many migrants embark on perilous sea journeys, often resulting in tragedies. For instance, in April 2022, a boat sank<sup>14</sup> off Tripoli's coast, leading to numerous deaths and missing persons.

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<sup>13</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Report on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon between Discriminatory Policies, Hate Speech and the "Death Boats", 18 December 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-between-discriminatory-policies-hate-speech-and-the-death-boats/> (accessed on 13 April 2025).

<sup>14</sup> OHCHR, Réf. : AL LBN 2/2022, 21 September 2022, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=27568> (accessed on 12 July 2025).



In December 2023, another boat carrying about 85 individuals, including women and children, disappeared without a trace<sup>15</sup>.

24. Since January 2023, Lebanon has carried out summary deportations of Syrian refugees, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement under the Convention against Torture. In one high-profile case, over 200 Syrians<sup>16</sup> rescued from a sinking boat off Lebanon's northern coast were forcibly returned to Syria. The Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) also intervened in the case of Abdel-Rahman Al Qaradawi<sup>17</sup>, who was deported from Lebanon to the UAE in early 2025, despite credible risks of torture. He remains forcibly disappeared to this day.

## Recommendations

25. Develop and implement a comprehensive national migration policy that aligns with international human rights standards, ensuring protection for all migrants regardless of status.

26. Ratify the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol to provide a legal framework for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers.

27. Enhance search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean and establish safe and legal pathways for migration to prevent loss of life at sea.

28. Provide accessible legal aid and support services for migrants, including psychological and medical assistance.

29. Collaborate with international organizations and civil society to develop programs aimed at addressing the root causes of irregular migration, such as poverty, conflict, and lack of opportunities.

30. Cease all practices of refoulement, particularly concerning vulnerable refugee populations, and uphold non-refoulement obligations.

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<sup>15</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Joint Statement: Lebanon: Seeking Justice for Migrants, 06 February 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/lebanon-seeking-justice-for-migrants/> (accessed on 13 April 2025).

<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International, Lebanon: Syrians who survived boat sinking allegedly deported, 18 January 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/lebanon-syrians-who-survived-boat-sinking-allegedly-deported/> (accessed on 12 July 2025).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid 11.



## 4- ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW

### 4.1 Right to Fair Trial and Judicial Independence

31. Lebanon's Constitution enshrines the principle of judicial independence and the right to a fair trial. However, systemic issues continue to undermine these rights for both Lebanese citizens and non-citizens. Despite Lebanon's ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees the right to a fair trial, the judiciary often lacks independence due to political interference and inadequate legal safeguards. Judges are frequently appointed based on political affiliations rather than merit, compromising the impartiality of the judiciary.

32. The use of military courts to try civilians is particularly concerning, as these courts are composed of military officers who may lack formal legal training and operate under the authority of the Ministry of Defense; raising serious doubts about their independence and impartiality. The Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) has documented multiple cases involving arbitrary detention, denial of legal representation, and trials that fall short of international fair trial standards, such as in the case of Rabih Fadel Zakaria<sup>18</sup>. In torture cases referred to military courts, complainants<sup>19</sup> are denied access to case files and trial proceedings, and are only allowed a copy of the verdict after it is issued.

33. In line with broader concerns about judicial independence and the misuse of military courts in Lebanon, human rights lawyer Mohammad Sablough<sup>20</sup>, head of the Legal Support Program at the CCLS, faced reprisals in August 2024 after publicly criticizing a military court ruling. He was barred from entering the Military Court for three months under Article 59(b) of the Military Judicial Law—a provision lacking due process safeguards. The decision was later overturned by the Military Court of Cassation in September 2024.

### Recommendations

34. Adopt a law on the independence of the judiciary in accordance with international standards to ensure the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary, including in cases of torture and other ill-treatment.

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<sup>18</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Arbitrary Arrest and Torture of Rabih Fadel Zakaria, 27 May 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/arbitrary-arrest-and-torture-of-rabih-fadel-zakaria/> (accessed on 14 April 2025).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid 8.

<sup>20</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Harassment against Attorney Mohammad Sablough, 21 August 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/harassment-against-attorney-mohammad-sablough/> (accessed on 12 July 2025).



35. Activate the Judicial Inspection Authority and ensure accountability for perpetrators of torture.

36. Reform the military justice system to restrict its jurisdiction strictly to military personnel for strictly military offenses. Ensure all courts comply with fair trial guarantees, including independence, impartiality, and access to legal representation.

37. Amend Article 59(b) of the Military Judicial Law to ensure due process and prevent reprisals against lawyers. Safeguard the independence of legal professionals in line with international standards.

## 5- Missing Persons and Enforced Disappearances

38. Lebanon continues to grapple with the enduring legacy of enforced disappearances stemming from its 1975–1990 civil war. An estimated 17,000 individuals<sup>21</sup> remain unaccounted for, leaving families in prolonged anguish and uncertainty. These disappearances, often involving civilians abducted at checkpoints, from their homes, or in public spaces, have left indelible scars on the nation's social fabric.

39. A significant advancement occurred in 2018 with the ratification of Law 105, which acknowledges the right to know and mandates the establishment of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared. This independent body is tasked with uncovering the fate of missing persons, informing families, and establishing reparation mechanisms<sup>22</sup>.

40. Despite these legislative strides, the implementation of Law 105 has been sluggish. The Commission faces challenges in operationalizing its mandate, including investigating mass graves and conducting DNA testing. The lack of political will and resources hampers efforts to provide answers to families who have waited decades for information<sup>23</sup>.

41. The Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) has been proactive in addressing both historical and ongoing cases of enforced disappearance. Between September 2023 and May 2024, CCLS submitted 12 complaints<sup>24</sup> to the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation, but none have led

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<sup>21</sup> Lebanon UN Women, Ba'adon: The Legal, Medical, And Psychological Needs Of The Families Of The Disappeared, December 2021, [https://lebanon.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Needs%20assessment%20report-Families%20of%20Missing%20and%20Disappeared%20-%202031.3.22\\_1.pdf](https://lebanon.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Needs%20assessment%20report-Families%20of%20Missing%20and%20Disappeared%20-%202031.3.22_1.pdf) (accessed on 14 April 2025).

<sup>22</sup> ICTJ, A Step Closer to Uncovering the Fate of Loved Ones: Lebanon Forms a Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, 23 June 2020, <https://www.ictj.org/news/step-closer-uncovering-fate-loved-ones-lebanon-forms-commission-missing-and-forcibly> (accessed on 14 April 2025)

<sup>23</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Enforced Disappearances in Lebanon: A Call for Justice and Accountability, 30 August 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/enforced-disappearances-in-lebanon-a-call-for-justice-and-accountability/> (accessed on 14 April 2025).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid 5.



to action. The Centre also reported these cases to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Among these are the cases of Rifaat Falih<sup>25</sup>, a Syrian refugee who disappeared after being detained by Lebanese authorities in January 2024; M.A., a young Syrian lady last seen in the custody of military intelligence in May 2024<sup>26</sup>; and Abedullah Al Zohouri<sup>27</sup>, who was forcibly disappeared after his arrest in the Bekaa region in May 2024.

## Recommendations

42. Fully implement Law 105/2018 by ensuring the National Commission is adequately resourced and empowered to carry out its mandate effectively.
43. Initiate comprehensive investigations into all cases of enforced disappearance, including the examination of mass graves and DNA testing.
44. Provide psychological, legal, and cash assistance to families of the disappeared, recognizing their prolonged suffering and need for closure.

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<sup>25</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Disappearance of a Syrian in Lebanon Sparks Concern, 12 February 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/disappearance-of-a-syrian-in-lebanon-sparks-concern/> (accessed on 14 April 2025).

<sup>26</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, The Disappearance of M.A after Entering Lebanon, 15 July 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/the-disappearance-of-m-a/> (accessed on 14 April 2025).

<sup>27</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, The Enforced Disappearance of Mr. Abedullah Al Zohouri, 08 July 2024, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/the-enforced-disappearance-of-mr-abedullah-al-zohouri/> (accessed on 14 April 2025).