

# **Civil Rights and Liberties**

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Joint Submission by:

ALEF - Act for Human Rights

Anti-Racism Movement – ARM

Cedar Centre For Legal Studies – CCLS

Lebanese Center for Human Rights - CLDH

Committee of the Families of the Missing

Proud Lebanon

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World Organization Against Torture - OMCT




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Cedar Centre for Legal Studies is a civil, non-profit company, established in Lebanon in 2013 and registered with No. 609. It is an independent, non-sectarian center and is not affiliated with any political parties. It is concerned with spreading the culture of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.


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The Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) is a Beirut-based local non-profit, non-partisan human rights organization working on monitoring the human rights situation in Lebanon, rehabilitating the victims of torture, and fighting enforced disappearance, impunity, arbitrary detention and racism.

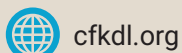
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# AUTHOR ORGANIZATIONS



The Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon (CFKDL) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to finding and releasing kidnapped people, collecting DNA samples for identification, and pushing for legal reform.



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Proud Lebanon is a non-religious, non-political, non-partisan civil rights society that aims to promote sustainable social and economic development in Lebanon and the region and is working on achieving protection, empowerment and equality for marginalized groups through community service activities. Proud Lebanon started its activities in August 2013 and is registered since April 2014 as a Lebanese non-profit civil society.



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Ru'ad alHoukuk FR (Frontiers Right) is a Lebanese NGO specialized in the defense of marginalized groups in Lebanon, particularly stateless persons, refugees, and migrants through legal assistance, research and advocacy. Ru'ad alHoukuk FR is a member of several international networks specialized in combating statelessness and protecting refugees.



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The OMCT works with around 200 member organisations, which constitute its SOS-Torture Network, to end torture, fight impunity and protect human rights defenders worldwide. The SOS-Torture Network is the largest global group actively standing up to torture in more than 75 countries. Helping local voices be heard, the OMCT supports its field partners and directly assists victims. The international secretariat of the OMCT is based in Geneva, with offices in Brussels and Tunis.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Right to Life, Liberty, and Security of Person</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Rights of Migrants</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Right to Identity</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Right to Fair Trial by an Independent Judiciary</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Right to Family Life</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Right to have a Private Life</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Missing Persons and Enforced Disappearances</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>28</b>



# RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND SECURITY OF PERSON

1. Although the constitution doesn't explicitly protect the right to life, Lebanon abides by the UDR and ratified most international human rights conventions, including the ICCPR, the Convention against Torture, and its 2008 Protocol. However, it hasn't ratified the ICCPR's Second Optional Protocol on abolishing the death penalty.
2. The death penalty is the most severe criminal punishment. Although Lebanon hasn't signed OHCHR Resolution 59/2005 urging a moratorium on executions, and courts still issue death sentences, an undeclared moratorium halted the practice since 2004.<sup>1</sup>
3. During the last UPR, Lebanon didn't support most death penalty recommendations.
4. In 2022, two draft bills were presented to Parliament concerning prison overcrowding, including one reducing the death penalty to 25 years of imprisonment.<sup>2</sup> However, no updates followed.
5. Arbitrary detention remains a pressing concern, often targeting individuals for politically motivated dissent.
6. Detention conditions in Lebanon are alarming, characterized by severe overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and widespread rights violations.<sup>3</sup> Many detention centers function as prisons, despite failing to meet the required standards.
7. In 2025, authorities reactivated the Roumieh courtroom to accelerate hearings. While impact remains unclear, this addresses only one overcrowding challenge, transporting inmates to court. It fails to tackle structural causes, including pretrial detention overuse and lack of alternative sentencing.
8. Lebanon continues to suffer from homicides often seen as political assassinations linked to high-level security concerns, political motives, and judicial investigations, often targeting leading political, religious, and security figures, journalists, and thinkers.<sup>4</sup>
9. Between 2022 and 2023, femicides saw an unprecedented 300% rise.<sup>5</sup>
10. Over the last 5 years, sporadic armed clashes and insecurity threatened the right to life and security of residents, especially in the Beqaa, refugee camps, the Syria-Akkar border, and during the Israel-Hezbollah conflict.
11. While Lebanese law doesn't grant a right to bear arms, weapon permits are issued at the executive branch's discretion. Lebanese and non-Lebanese armed groups have long operated outside legal frameworks with government acquiescence. In 2004,

the UNSC officially called for their disbandment and disarmament<sup>6</sup> but without success. Additionally, there are millions of licensed guns, a majority effectively illegal. In the last 5 years, many shooting incidents caused deaths and injuries especially in rural areas. In 2025, the Defense Minister introduced measures to regulate licensed firearms requiring that licenses specify the serial number of each weapon, restricting individuals from owning multiple firearms under one license.

- 12.** Armed violence kills hundreds yearly, including children. A key driver is Lebanon's 'gun culture', shown in celebratory gunfire at weddings, exams, funerals, and elections. A 1959 law prohibited 'anyone firing into residential areas or in a crowd, whether their gun is licensed or not', but remains unenforced despite stricter recent laws and penalties.<sup>7</sup>
- 13.** Kidnappings are driven by ransoms, politics, or clan disputes. In the last five years, abductions rose sharply, increasing by 194%, between 2021 and 2022 alone.<sup>8</sup>
- 14.** In late 2023 and 2024, Lebanon experienced severe IHL violations amid the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. Between October 2023-November 2024, the Ministry of Public Health reported 15,244 casualties, including at least 231 children and 226 health workers.<sup>9</sup> In South Lebanon, attacks on civilian infrastructures destroyed 25,000 houses.<sup>10</sup>

# RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND SECURITY OF PERSON

## Recommendations

1. Adopt a formal moratorium on executions through a Cabinet decision, as a step towards abolition, and halt all death sentences while Parliament considers reforms.
2. Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR abolishing the death penalty.
3. Reintroduce the draft bill proposing commutation of the death penalty to life imprisonment (or 25 years) and bring it to parliamentary vote.
4. Strengthen safeguards against arbitrary detention by ensuring judicial review within 48 hours, as mandated by Lebanese Law, ensure the presence of legal counsel during interrogations.
5. Improve detention conditions through comprehensive reforms that reduce overcrowding, ensure full-time healthcare in detention facilities, and prohibit prolonged solitary confinement.
6. Establish a national plan for the control of arms and weapons.
7. Strictly enforce the 1959 law prohibiting celebratory gunfire, including clear arrest protocols and public reporting on incidents.
8. Launch a public awareness campaign against gun violence, targeting youth and rural areas, coordinated by the Ministry of Information and CSOs.
9. Ensure independent investigations into alleged violations of IHL during the 2023–2024 conflict, including attacks on civilian infrastructure and medical personnel.
10. Adopt a national strategy to combat femicide, including legal reforms to classify femicide as a distinct crime, protection measures for at-risk women, and awareness campaigns.
11. Ensure impartial investigation and judicial accountability in cases of political assassination, including protection for whistleblowers and journalists.

# RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

1. Before 2019, Lebanon hosted over 400,000 Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) from African and South/Southeast Asian countries, around 10% of the female population.<sup>11</sup> Due to the economic crisis and the Lebanese pound devaluation,<sup>12</sup> the number decreased by almost half, reaching a total 176,506 individuals by 2024.<sup>13</sup> Lebanon has repeatedly ignored UN recommendations to ensure workplace protection for these workers.
2. Lebanon failed to ratify key international instruments protecting MDWs, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW) and ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work.
3. Despite prior UPR commitments, Lebanese Labor Law excludes MDWs, leaving them under a sponsorship system that grants employers excessive control over their legal residency status and exacerbates their vulnerability. No protective reforms have been adopted yet.<sup>14</sup>
4. Most MDWs are recruited through abusive agencies that enable human rights violations, including mistreatment and worker-paid recruitment fees.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the Directorate General of General Security's (DGGS) regulations limit workers to a maximum of three sponsors throughout their stay, further restricting mobility.
5. MDWs face rampant abuses due to lack of control over their schedules and freedoms: denied rest, unpaid or underpaid wages, restricted movement, confiscated passport and IDs, and physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Despite no legal requirements, the DGGS mandates live-in arrangements with their employers for residency renewal.<sup>16</sup> When employers refuse to renew residency permits, workers are criminalised instead of holding employers accountable. The DGGS enforces residency policies that hinder migrants fleeing abuse to maintain legal status in the country. State authorities fail to inspect abusive workplaces without an official mandate for ministerial Labor Inspection Department to enter private homes.
6. Working conditions have led to an alarming number of suicide cases among MDWs. Those fleeing abusive workspaces risk detention and deportation, as their legal status depends on their employer. They instead seek the support network of migrant community groups, churches, and local supporters that provide them shelter, work, and legal aid.<sup>17</sup> Alternatives, however, could expose them to further vulnerability.
7. By summer 2023, almost 60,000 MDWs were working in an unregulated shadow economy, with some reportedly being forced into labor or sex trafficking.<sup>18</sup>



8. MDWs seeking justice for abuse or rape by employers often face counteraccusations like theft. Many are unable to pursue legal action due to financial constraints or deportation before trial. Inadequate language interpretation services in courts prevent them from defending themselves.<sup>19</sup>
9. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) failed to ensure legal remedies for MDWs. A 2024 governmental directive prohibited notaries from issuing Powers of Attorney to migrants without valid residency permits and passports, blocking most from legal representation in the country when it comes to challenging deportation orders, recovering unpaid wages, and transferring sponsorship.
10. Due to legal restrictions and lack of political will, the Ministry of Labor (MoL) doesn't recognize the Domestic Workers Union, denying MDWs' right to unionize and push for change in Lebanon.<sup>20</sup>
11. Following September 2024 hostilities, 61,000 MDWs in South Lebanon, Beqaa and Beirut,<sup>21</sup> were at risk. Many were abandoned by employers, denied shelters, and excluded from government protection programs despite their vulnerability.<sup>22</sup> Several preventable deaths were reported<sup>23</sup> but due to the Kafala system, authorities failed to repatriate or identify the victims.<sup>24</sup>
12. The IOM received at least 20,000 new requests from migrants and their embassies in Lebanon for travel assistance in November 2024.<sup>25</sup> Financial restrictions, limited flights, and insufficient embassy support left many feeling abandoned.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, widespread confiscation of identity documents made departure nearly impossible for workers.<sup>27</sup>
13. Irregular migration from Lebanon rose over the last 5 years due to deteriorating living conditions. Many migrants embark on perilous sea journeys, often resulting in tragedies. For instance, in April 2022, a boat sank off Tripoli's coast, causing numerous deaths and disappearances. In December 2023, another boat carrying about 85 individuals vanished.<sup>28</sup>

# RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

## Recommendations

1. Ratify the ICRMW, ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work, and ILO Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment.
2. Develop a Cabinet-endorsed roadmap to reform the sponsorship system by amending residency and work regulations to delink migrant's legal status from employers, and transfer oversight to the MoL.
3. Investigate and prosecute recruitment agencies and employers violating of workers' rights.
4. Amend Lebanese Labor Law to include MDWs under its protections, ensuring equal rights regarding working hours, leave, wages, and legal recourse, in consultation with labor rights NGOs and embassies of major sending countries.
5. Issue a binding directive to revise DGGS regulations to shift legal responsibility for residency status violations of MDWs from the workers to their employers, in line with criminal law principles and the workers' limited agency in the sponsorship process.
6. Establish and enforce a public accreditation system for recruitment agencies, with human rights compliance checks, penalties for violations, and a blacklist of abusive agencies.
7. Ban worker-paid recruitment fees via MoL directive and monitor contract conditions before arrival in Lebanon.
8. Enforce a revised, rights-based Standard Unified Contract for MDWs, mandating provisions on minimum wage, maximum working hours, weekly rest days, and abuse protections, including complaint and enforcement mechanisms. This contract should be legally binding for employers and recruitment agencies, with enforcement through inspections and a multilingual awareness campaign targeting workers and employers.
9. Mandate professional legal interpretation services in court proceedings involving MDWs, with court staff training and a certified interpreter registry maintained by the MoJ.

10. Establish a publicly funded legal aid scheme for MDWs pursuing claims of abuse, rape, or unpaid wages, with outreach through embassies and shelters.
11. Criminalize employers' confiscation of passports and IDs and enable anonymous complaints.
12. Recognize the Domestic Workers Union as a legal entity, in line with ILO Conventions 87 and 98, and amend the labor law to permit all workers, regardless of occupation or nationality, to form and join unions.
13. Guarantee migrants non-discriminatory access to healthcare, education, and emergency shelter, regardless of legal status, though a directive aligned with Lebanon's international human rights obligations.
14. Establish a specialized MoL unit to monitor migrant workers' conditions, including domestic workers, with a multilingual complaints mechanism, gender-sensitive staff, and the legal mandate to conduct unannounced workplace inspections, including in private homes where feasible and with privacy safeguards.
15. Strengthen Mediterranean search and rescue operations per international maritime law. Develop safe, legal pathways for migration, including humanitarian corridors and labor mobility schemes, in cooperation with IOM and relevant embassies to reduce irregular, deadly sea crossings.

# RIGHT TO IDENTITY

1. Lebanon's outdated 1951 Civil Events Registration Law excludes stateless persons, irregular migrants, and undocumented individuals. It relies on manual, unsupervised paper-based process and self-reporting, risking document loss, under-registration, and errors.
2. Modernization has been limited; in 2023, the Directorate General of Personal Status (DGPS) launched digital civil status extracts but still lack a digital stamping system.
3. The 2024 war exposed Lebanon's manual registration system's vulnerabilities. Displacement and destruction of homes and registry offices led to document loss, complicating identity verification, even for the deceased. DGPS relocated physical registers under dangerous conditions, underscoring the urgent need for a digitized system. Ad hoc measures were required to register births and war-related deaths, as the current system proved inadequate for emergencies. The GoL enacted a law extending legal and contractual deadlines, including birth and death registrations, helping prevent statelessness among children.
4. Despite its importance, civil registration reform was absent from the 2022 National Recovery Plan, the 2023 National Social Protection Strategy, and the 2025 Government Policy Statement. This neglects civil registration's role in securing legal identity and rights, especially post-conflict. It also overlooks the state's need for comprehensive population data to guide recovery, public services, and long-term governance, something the current outdated fragmented system cannot provide. The issue nonetheless was timidly addressed, in 2023, the Prime Minister formed a National Commission on Undocumented Persons, evolving from a previous civil committee addressing unregistered Lebanese children. However, the Commission has been largely inactive. Meanwhile, a mixed ministerial–civil society Working Group on Statelessness, active since 2012, continues to propose legal and policy reforms to uphold the right to legal recognition and identity.
5. In 2021, a Lebanese NGO<sup>29</sup> submitted a proposal for a universal, automated, and digitized civil registration law through an MP, but Parliament was inactive for most of these four years. This inaction, under the pretext of awaiting government input, reflects resistance to reform within both institutions.
6. Registering vital events for foreigners requires a valid residency permit, leaving many marriages and births among irregular migrants unregistered. A Lebanese man's marriage to an irregular foreign woman cannot often be registered automatically, leading to non-registration of children if he fails to declare the child's birth.

7. Lebanon adopted measures to allow the registration of Syrian children born between 2011 and 2025 regardless of legal deadlines., but didn't extend this to other foreign nationals, leaving their children at risk of statelessness. High costs and complex procedures for foreign documents highlight systemic flaws in the civil registration system.
8. Stateless individuals excluded from the civil registration framework and lacking official records are invisible to the State. Their inability to register vital events, such as marriages, births, or deaths, perpetuates intergenerational non-registration. Furthermore, Lebanon lacks any legal framework and determination procedures for statelessness, leaving thousands of individuals unrecognized and undocumented.

# RIGHT TO IDENTITY

## Recommendations

1. Modernize Lebanon's civil registration system by digitizing vital event records and reforming the legal framework to ensure universal, automatic, and accessible registration. Adopt legal and technical reforms, prioritizing marginalized groups including stateless persons, migrants, and refugees.
2. Issue a circular to reduce barriers to civil registration by waiving or lowering documentation and authentication fees for vulnerable groups, especially migrants and displaced persons, and ensure local registries apply simplified procedures uniformly.



# RIGHT TO FAIR TRIAL BY AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY

1. Although the Lebanese Constitution enshrines<sup>30</sup> both the principle of the separation of powers<sup>31</sup> and the independence of judges and the judiciary<sup>32</sup>, systemic issues undermine these rights for both Lebanese citizens and non-citizens.
2. CCLS has documented numerous cases where individuals face arbitrary detention, such as the case of Rabih Fadel Zakaria<sup>33</sup>, lack of legal representation, and trials in courts failing to<sup>34</sup> meet international standards of independence and impartiality.
3. The existence of exceptional courts - the Military Tribunal, the Judicial Council, the Supreme Court, and the Personal Status Courts – violates the principle of the natural judge.
4. Corruption, political interference, and encroachment undermine Lebanon's judiciary. The current system still allows executive and political actors to exert influence,<sup>35</sup> especially through judicial appointments tied to sectarian interests.<sup>36</sup>
5. The judiciary's institutional independence is contradicted by the executive's control over judge appointments and transfers. For instance, the Beirut Blast investigation, stalled by political pressure, demonstrates how this influence blocks accountability and transparency.
6. Internal and external pressure weaken Judges' individual independence. External pressure persists due to no legal guarantee of judges' immovability, weak safeguards against outside influence, and minimal penalties for interfering with rulings, treated only as minor offenses. Internally, oral components in judicial entry exams along with opportunities offered to some judges to lucrative positions or specialized committees deepens the problem.
7. Ensuring impartial courts in the presence of the Military Court is difficult where only one civilian judge sits alongside military officers – some without legal training and tied to the Defense Ministry. This structure raises doubts about the courts' independence and impartiality, especially when trying civilians. While Parliament is discussing a draft law to reform the Court's mandate, it has yet to be voted on.
8. Judicial accountability processes lack transparency. Besides disciplinary decisions terminating judges, all inspection and discipline proceedings are confidential, increasing litigants' doubts and weakening their trust in the accountability mechanisms, as complainants remain unaware of outcomes. The Disciplinary Council doesn't publish its decisions or issue periodic reports, preventing citizens from monitoring its work.

9. In March 2023, nine MPs introduced two draft laws strengthening judicial independence and preventing political interference.<sup>37</sup> The proposals aim to stop politically connected individuals from using legal loopholes to suspend investigations, especially in high-profile cases like the Beirut port explosion. The bills would require a court decision to pause probes curbing impunity and protecting justice.<sup>38</sup>
10. In August 2022, amid Lebanon's economic collapse, judges went on strike for months to demand higher wages, better working conditions, and judicial independence free from political interference.<sup>39</sup> The strike froze the judiciary, as over 450 out of 560 judges stopped working, leaving many detainees stuck without trial.<sup>40</sup>
11. Prolonged hearing delays and lack of prisoner transport leave many waiting months in pretrial detention. Some detention centers have failed to comply with the Cassation Public Prosecution circular, counting one prison month as 20 days, using 30 instead – unlawfully extending detention. Others keep prisoners beyond their sentences due to unresolved file reports, violating their rights after judgment.
12. Inconsistent administrative fees hinder prisoners as some courts directly waive fees for prisoners' requests while others impose them disproportionately, affecting those with limited resources.
13. Delays in executing arrest warrants and judgments keep detainees in custody long after decisions, awaiting transfer to the DGGS, deportation or release. Indictments face long hold-ups – sometimes over three years- leaving detainees without final judgment.
14. Bail requests are often rejected without proper legal reasoning, and investigation records aren't automatically included in case files. Judges frequently fail to review files unless a trial is scheduled, causing delays. Processing varies by region – cases in Beirut proceed faster, while in Mount Lebanon they can drag on due to administrative inefficiencies, undermining access to justice.
15. Detaining minors in unsuitable facilities, particularly military barracks, violates children's rights under international human rights standards. Growing use of military detention and transfer delays to juvenile centers deny them timely legal, psychological, and social assistance.

# RIGHT TO FAIR TRIAL BY AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY

## Recommendations

1. Adopt and implement legislation guaranteeing institutional independence of the judiciary, including the transfer of authority to appoint and discipline judges from the executive branch to a fully independent authority.
2. Amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to abolish the Justice Council and transfer its jurisdiction to ordinary courts, ensuring all cases are handled by independent civilian courts.
3. Adopt new legislation to regulate the judicial, administrative, and financial judiciaries, in line with international standards of judicial independence and the 1985 UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary.
4. Amend the laws governing judicial governance bodies (e.g. Supreme Judicial Council, State Council Bureau, Court of Audit Bureau) to allow the election of at least a majority of their members.
5. Transfer oversight of judicial institutions, such as the Judicial Inspection Authority and the Institute of Judicial Studies, from the MoJ to the Supreme Judicial Council (SPJ).
6. Establish transparent, merit-based judicial appointment procedures, prohibit political interference, and enshrine immovability in law. Empower the SPJ to manage judicial careers without Cabinet approval and allow judges to appeal career-related decisions.
7. Define judicial misconduct in law and establish proportionate disciplinary sanctions, with due process guarantees at all stages. Mandate the publication of all disciplinary rulings and annual reports by the Disciplinary Council, overseen by an independent inspectorate under the SPJ.
8. Establish a fully funded national legal-aid system accessible to vulnerable groups and ensure timely trial scheduling and verdict issuance by enforcing statutory time limits.
9. Mandate training on international human rights standards for law enforcement, judicial, and military personnel.

10. Allocate sufficient MoJ funds to ensure timely and non-discriminatory transportation of detainees to court hearings, including vehicles, personnel, and logistics, with judicial oversight to track compliance.
11. Enforce court hearing timelines by establishing case-specific delay limits and requiring quarterly reporting by judges on compliance.
12. Issue directives to ensure uniform application of the Cassation Public Prosecution circular calculating one month of detention as 20 days.
13. Adopt a unified MoJ fee schedule to standardize legal fee and stamp costs, ensure equal treatment for all litigants.
14. Redistribute court caseloads across jurisdictions based on case volume and judicial capacity.
15. Issue a binding circular requiring juveniles to be transferred to juvenile facilities within 48 hours of arrest.

# RIGHT TO FAMILY LIFE

1. In Lebanon, religious laws govern personal status matters such as marriage, spousal rights, kinship, and inheritance, while civil law handles their registration. This creates challenges, including cases where religiously valid marriages cannot be legally registered.
2. This fragmented system enables legal maneuvering, complicating family rights governance. For instance, individuals may change denominations to remarry, even if their original faith prohibits polygamy and the first marriage is registered.
3. These loopholes disproportionately affect women and children. Women often lack legal recourse against polygamous marriages contracted without their knowledge or consent. Most religious laws grant men greater rights and authority in marriage and dissolution, with primary control over family matters and children. In many Muslim laws, men can unilaterally divorce or through religious courts, while women face limited access to divorce and must often forfeit financial rights or rely on narrow, court-approved grounds. In practice, women are pressured to abandon custody or financial claims to obtain divorce, undermining their autonomy.
4. Children from such unions may struggle to access civil registration, depriving them of legal identity and essential services like healthcare and social care, while increasing their risk of statelessness and marginalization.
5. Lebanon's personal status system operates across multiple religious laws, each setting distinct rights based on religious affiliation. This creates disparities in marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance, and kinship, undermining equality and reinforcing sectarian divides. Legal protections and obligations vary by religion rather than being governed by universal human rights standards.
6. A major legislative gap is the absence of accessible domestic civil marriage system. Citizens must marry abroad to have civil marriages, which are then recognized for registration. This two-tiered system favors those who can afford to travel, while denying other alternatives to unsuitable religious marriage frameworks.
7. In 2022, a Lebanese NGO<sup>41</sup> submitted a civil marriage and personal status law to Parliament, supported by nine Members of Parliament. However, the proposal remains unexamined, highlighting the persistent institutional resistance to reform and the deeply entrenched discriminatory systems governing family life.
8. Lebanon lacks a unified minimum legal age for marriage, with each religious community setting its own, many below international standards, enabling child marriage, especially for girls. The 2021 Sunni law sets it at 18, with exceptions for ages 15-18, but early informal marriages still occur and are later registered.

9. Without a unified civil law, loopholes facilitate child and forced marriage, exposing girls to harm, and undermining Lebanon's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW. A 2017 NGO<sup>42</sup> bill to raise the marriage age remains unpassed in Parliament.
10. Child custody laws set low custody ages for mothers, varying by religious group. Once children exceed this age, custody typically shifts to the father, reflecting patriarchal interpretations of the child's "best interest", often overlooking the mother's rights and the child's needs. In mixed-faith marriages, religious courts often favor the Muslim parent (usually the father).
11. High-profile custody disputes in recent years<sup>43</sup> have exposed deep flaws in Lebanon's personal status system, highlighting the urgent need for a unified, child-centered framework that ensures equal parental rights and prioritizes the child's welfare.
12. Another concern is the frequent risk of family separation involving migrant workers, mainly women, married to Lebanese nationals. The right to family unity is often ignored, especially when marriages aren't registered or officially recognized. Deportation decisions usually ignore family ties and children's well-being, violating the state's duty to protect family life.



# RIGHT TO FAMILY LIFE

## Recommendations

1. Adopt a unified civil personal status law that guarantees equal rights in family matters regardless of religion or gender, in line with Lebanon's international human rights obligations.
2. Pass legislation to set a unified minimum legal marriage age at 18 for all individuals, without exception, in alignment with international child protection standards.
3. Reform custody laws to prioritize the child's best interests, regardless of sect, by amending existing religious court practices and adopting interim protective measures, until a unified personal status law is enacted.
4. Withdraw Lebanon's reservation to Article 16 of CEDAW to affirm legal equality in marriage, divorce, and custody, with national legal reforms initiated thereafter.

# RIGHT TO HAVE A PRIVATE LIFE

1. Lebanon has ratified major international treaties that uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The Constitution guarantees equality before the law. However, Lebanon hasn't ratified any convention explicitly addressing sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIESC), and LGBTQ+ rights. Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals persists.
2. Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code criminalizes "sexual intercourse contrary to nature," enabling the criminalization and persecution of LGBTQ+ persons. This has led to arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment, invasive bodily searches, and psychological abuse. Although several courts, including military tribunals, have issued rulings disregarding Article 534, these remain a minority and lack national consistency. Judges have occasionally suspended penalties but left marks on civil records, further stigmatizing the accused. The law's vague wording allows broad interpretation and misuse by security forces and prosecutors.
3. In 2023, Proud Lebanon submitted a draft law to repeal Article 534, backed by nine MPs. The initiative sparked major backlash from political and religious figures who condemned it as a threat to "family values." Former Minister Mohammad Murtada countered with a law criminalizing the "promotion" of homosexuality, proposing up to five years of imprisonment. This legislative retaliation was supported by anti-LGBTIQ+ campaigns led by religious and political institutions. Murtada sponsored and took part in anti-LGBTIQ+ events organized by groups such as the Lebanese Council of Women, who hosted conferences in Beirut and Tripoli in 2023 and 2024.
4. Over the past 5 years, hate speech has intensified, with judges, clerics, and conservative media framing LGBTQ+ identities as perversions. State institutions, like the ministry of culture, have amplified this rhetoric by sponsoring anti-LGBTIQ+ events, further legitimizing institutional discrimination.
5. Anti-LGBT activists like Jnoud El Rab and Jnoud El Fayhaa have spread anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric, intimidated providers, and suppressed advocacy, severely limiting safe spaces and essential services, particularly in northern Lebanon.
6. Digital platforms have been weaponized for blackmail, with individuals targeted on dating apps, harassed, and extorted. Fear of prosecution under Article 534 discourages complaints, as law enforcement often exploits private data on personal devices without judicial warrants, using them to extract confessions.
7. Meanwhile, anal probe tests, though discouraged by the Lebanese Order of Physicians, remain legally permissible. In the absence of a legislative ban, detainees remain vulnerable to torture and invasive procedures.

8. LGBTIQ+ individuals are systematically subjected to HIV and drug testing upon arrest by the morality police in Ras Beirut and are sometimes transferred to the overcrowded Ramlet El Bayda station. Those who test HIV-positive are segregated in the Blue Building of Roumieh prison, a facility associated with mental illness, contributing to further stigmatization.
9. Transgender and HIV-positive individuals are often denied services or treated unethically. Post-crisis, WHO suspended support for the National AIDS Program (NAP), which was merged with the TB program. In early 2024, ART shortages led to expired medications being distributed. Essential services for vulnerable populations have been severely disrupted. In Tripoli, key community centers cut access to critical HIV and SRHR services.
10. LGBTIQ+ students in Lebanon face bullying, exclusion, and a lack of institutional protection. Academic freedom is increasingly under threat, especially on gender and sexuality topics —illustrated by a recent case where a thesis on LGBTIQ+ mental health was blocked at Lebanese University under religious pressure, highlighting unethical interference in academic standards and growing censorship.
11. Discrimination in employment is widespread, particularly for transgender individuals who face systemic exclusion from the labor market. LGBTIQ+ persons are frequently denied job opportunities, harassed in the workplace, or forced to conceal their identities to avoid discrimination and retaliation.
12. LGBTIQ+ individuals arrested under suspicion of drug use or other charges often face added abuses tied to their perceived sexuality, including coerced confessions, invasive searches, and extortion.
13. In 2023, the Beirut Bar Association hosted and sponsored the launch of an anti-LGBTIQ+ book, endorsed by its then-president. The book used derogatory terminology and presented LGBTIQ+ persons as a threat to societal values, reflecting the normalization of institutional discrimination.

# RIGHT TO HAVE A PRIVATE LIFE

## Recommendations

1. Ensure that Article 534 of the Penal Code isn't used to criminalize consensual same-sex relations by issuing binding guidance from the Public Prosecution Office affirming its interpretation in line with the rights to privacy and non-discrimination, in accordance with Lebanon's international human rights obligations.
2. Adopt and enforce a national law against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, with implementation across employment, education, health, and housing sectors.
3. Secure consistent funding for HIV and SRHR services, especially in high-risk areas, and scale up LGBTIQ+-inclusive healthcare and psychosocial support.
4. Condemn and sanction hate speech by public officials, including anti-LGBTIQ+ incitement.

# MISSING PERSONS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

1. Since the Lebanese civil war, thousands of enforced disappearances remain without justice. While most cases date to then, disappearances continued, notably by Israeli forces (until 2000) and the Syrian Army (until 2005).
2. Of the 17,415 Lebanese citizens reported disappeared,<sup>44</sup> approximately 2,300 were officially registered with the ICRC.<sup>45</sup> The GoL has still failed to assess the scale of enforced disappearances, passing only a 1995 law declaring the missing dead.<sup>46</sup> Since 2012, the ICRC identified 5,000-8,000 missing, a fraction of the total as data still emerges.
3. Lebanon signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2007 but has yet to ratify it.<sup>47</sup>
4. After Parliament approved Law 105 on the missing and forcibly disappeared in 2018, the Cabinet established the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared (NCMFD) in 2020. However, four members resigned in 2021 in protest to internal elections, revealing that the election procedures weren't abided by.
5. Governmental inertia has stalled the implementation of Law 105. The Commission faces challenges in operationalizing its mandate, including investigating mass graves and DNA testing. Lack of political will and resources fails to answer families who have waited decades for information<sup>48</sup>. With its mandate expiring in July, calls to renew appointments have mounted.
6. Since the last UPR, Lebanon hasn't made progress on the fate of thousands of disappeared. Mass graves remain unexamined, investigations stalled, and families still await truth, reparations and a centralized database.
7. Women whose loved ones have disappeared face legal, economic, and social challenges. Without legal recognition of the status of the disappeared, they're often denied inheritance rights, guardianship, and social protections —forcing many to declare relatives dead.
8. The fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 hasn't led to the hoped-for disclosure of information. Despite testimonies from released detainees and defectors indicating potential locations of mass graves and detention centers, no joint Syrian-Lebanese investigations have occurred. The Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon confirmed one identity and a Lebanese man imprisoned since 1992 was freed by Syrian rebels.<sup>49</sup>

9. Then-caretaker Minister of Justice coordinated efforts with the ISF, DGGS, and the State Security to gather information the authorities might have.<sup>50</sup> Caretaker Minister of Interior also announced 9 Lebanese inmates were freed from Syrians prisons following the regime's fall and returned home safely.<sup>51</sup> Although the government was coordinating with different groups working on the issue, a formal institution in Syria to collaborate with and provide information to the GoL remains non-existent.<sup>52</sup>
10. Since 2023, CCLS has submitted 12 complaints to the Public Prosecutor of the Cassation Court and referred these cases to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID). Among these are the cases of Rafaat Falih<sup>53</sup>, a Syrian refugee who disappeared after being detained by Lebanese authorities in January 2024; M.A., a young Syrian man last seen in the custody of military intelligence in May 2024<sup>54</sup>; and Abdullah Al Zohouri<sup>55</sup>, who was forcibly disappeared after his arrest in Bekaa in May 2024. These cases highlight ongoing enforced disappearances in Lebanon and the urgent need for accountability and transparency —especially in protecting refugees. Impunity continues to block justice for victims and families.



# MISSING PERSONS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

## Recommendations

1. Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and recognize the competence of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances.
2. Fully implement Law 105/2018 by giving the NCMFD proper funding, staff, and authority, with a dedicated state budget line, full member appointments, and public activity plan to enable the Commission to fulfil its mandate.
3. Consolidate existing ICRC, security agency, and civil society records in a unified and protected database, under the NCMFD's mandate, and operationalize a national forensic identification program to assess all missing and forcibly disappeared persons in Lebanon, including civil war and post-war cases.
4. Develop and adopt a national action plan on mass graves with a clear timeline, budget, and coordination mechanism to protect grave sites, identify remains, and fulfil families' right to know.
5. Develop a coordination mechanism with the Syrian government, Syrian civil and humanitarian actors, and international bodies, for cooperation on enforced disappearance cases, especially in tracking and verifying the fate of the Lebanese disappeared in Syria.
6. Ensure that the investigation and documentation of disappeared persons' fate and hold perpetrators accountable in accordance with international standards.
7. Adopt a transitional justice and truth-telling policy framework, including a national Remembrance Day, public archives, and non-recurrence guarantees.
8. Ensure full cooperation with international mechanisms by providing timely and substantive responses to all communications from the UNWGEID.

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