



# Lebanon's role in transnational repression

## Universal Periodic Review

*Report submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council in the context of the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review*

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# 1 Introduction

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This joint stakeholder report is submitted by Cedar Center for Legal Studies and MENA Rights Group to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, in the context of the fourth cycle of Lebanon's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). It examines Lebanon's role in facilitating transnational repression,<sup>1</sup> in law and in practice, and makes concrete recommendations to Lebanese authorities for reform, in line with international human rights standards.

The report analyses Lebanon's legal and institutional framework governing extraditions, and builds upon the case of Abdulrahman al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian peaceful dissident who was extradited by Lebanon to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in January 2025, to concretely identify the legal, institutional and procedural issues conducive to the practice of transnational repression in Lebanon.

The report is based on information from local and international civil society actors, a documented case from the legal representative of a victim of transnational repression, and desk-based research.

## 2 Legal and institutional framework governing extraditions

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### 2.1 International legal framework

Lebanon is a party to several core international human rights treaties which protect the principle of *non-refoulement*, including the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT) under article 3, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) under article 7.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Model Treaty on Extradition<sup>3</sup> of the UN General Assembly,<sup>4</sup> mandatory grounds for refusal of extradition include: if the offence for which extradition is requested is

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<sup>1</sup> Transnational repression is referred to as "acts conducted or directed by a State, or its proxy, to deter, silence or punish dissent, criticism or human rights advocacy towards it, expressed from outside its territory" by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). See: OHCHR, *Transnational Repression*, 18 June 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/transnational-repression> (accessed 30 June 2025).

<sup>2</sup> According to the Human Rights Committee's General Comment on article 7, which prohibits torture, states parties must not expose individuals to the danger of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment upon return to another country by way of their extradition, expulsion or refoulement. See: Human Rights Committee, *CCPR General Comment No. 20: Article 7 (Prohibition of Torture, or Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment)*, 10 March 1992, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/general/hrc/1992/en/11086> (accessed 30 June 2025), para. 9.

<sup>3</sup> The text of the Model Treaty on Extradition is accessible at: [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/model\\_treaty\\_extradition.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/model_treaty_extradition.pdf) (accessed 30 June 2025).

<sup>4</sup> The text was adopted in in 1990 and subsequently amended in 1997. See: General Assembly, *Model Treaty on Extradition*, 14 December 1990, UN Doc. A/RES/45/116, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/105573?ln=fr&v=pdf> (accessed 30 June 2025); General Assembly, *International Cooperation in Criminal Matters*, 4 February 1998, UN Doc. A/RES/52/88, <https://docs.un.org/A/RES/52/88> (accessed 30 June 2025).

regarded by the requested State as an offence of a political nature;<sup>5</sup> if the requested state has substantial grounds for believing that the request for extradition has been made for the purpose of prosecuting or punishing a person on account of that person's race, religion, nationality, ethnic, origin, political opinions;<sup>6</sup> and if the person whose extradition is requested has been or would be subjected in the requesting state to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or if that person has not received or would not receive the minimum guarantees in criminal proceedings, as contained in article 14 of the ICCPR.<sup>7</sup>

The Model Treaty also provides that extradition should be refused if the judgment of the requesting State has been rendered *in absentia*.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2 Regional framework

### 2.2.1 Regional legal framework

In 1999, Lebanon ratified the 1983 Riyadh Arab Agreement for Judicial Cooperation<sup>9</sup> (hereinafter "Riyadh Convention"). The Convention aims to facilitate judicial cooperation between its signatory Arab League countries.

The Riyadh Convention contains several exceptions under which extraditions cannot be carried out, including if "the crime for which extradition is requested is considered by the laws of the requested party as a crime of a political nature".<sup>10</sup> Despite this prohibition, the assessment of the political nature of the crime is left to the discretion of the requested country.

In addition, the Riyadh Convention excludes a number of offences from being defined as political, and allows extraditions for *lèse-majesté*, or acts deemed as offensive to kings or heads of state.<sup>11</sup>

Lebanon is also a party to the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism<sup>12</sup> (hereinafter "Arab CT Convention"), adopted by the League of Arab States (LAS) in 1998. The definition of terrorism contained in the Arab CT Convention has been criticised as many of its elements are undefined and for generally being too broad,<sup>13</sup> leading to the criminalisation of acts falling under fundamental freedoms protected by international law.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Model Treaty on Extradition, article 3 (a).

<sup>6</sup> Model Treaty on Extradition, article 3 (b).

<sup>7</sup> Model Treaty on Extradition, article 3 (f).

<sup>8</sup> Model Treaty on Extradition, article 3 (g).

<sup>9</sup> Council of Arab Ministers of Justice, *Riyadh Arab Agreement for Judicial Cooperation*, 6 April 1983, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/las/1983/en/39231> (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>10</sup> Riyadh Convention, article 41 (a).

<sup>11</sup> Riyadh Convention, article 41 (1) and (3).

<sup>12</sup> League of Arab States, *The Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism*, April 1998, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/las/1998/en/29059> (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>13</sup> See: MENA Rights Group, *Transnational repression in the MENA: the role of regional organisations engaged in counter-terrorism*, 4 July 2024, <https://menarights.org/en/articles/transnational-repression-mena-role-regional-organisations-engaged-counter-terrorism> (accessed 25 June 2025); Amnesty International, *The Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism: A serious threat to human rights*, 9 January 2002, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior51/001/2002/en/> (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>14</sup> MENA Rights Group, *Understanding the Arab Interior Ministers' Council and its role in transnational repression*, 17 August 2023, <https://menarights.org/en/articles/aimc> (accessed 25 June 2025).

Article 5 of the Arab CT Convention foresees the extradition of individuals accused of terrorist offenses to requesting states. Similarly to the Riyadh Convention, article 6(a) of the Arab CT Convention prohibits extradition for political offenses, but article 2(b) excludes attacks on kings, heads of states, crown princes, vice-presidents, heads of government or ministers from being categorised as political offenses.

As such, the restrictive interpretation of political offences found under the Riyadh Convention and Arab CT Convention allows for transnational repression through the extradition of individuals on political grounds, in violation of international human rights standards. Despite all LAS Member States being parties to the UNCAT, these Conventions do not refer to the *non-refoulement* obligation enshrined in article 3 of the UNCAT.

### 2.2.2 Regional institutional framework: the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC)

The Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC) is a specialised Ministerial Council of the LAS.<sup>15</sup> It is tasked with developing and strengthening cooperation and coordinating efforts between Arab countries in the field of internal security and prevention of crime and with monitoring the implementation of the Arab CT Convention.<sup>16</sup>

The AIMC finds its legal basis in the Riyadh Convention, which enables the Council to circulate warrants at the request of state parties to the Convention,<sup>17</sup> thus facilitating the apprehension and extradition of persons notably wanted on terrorism charges.

Through its Department of Criminal Prosecution and Data, the AIMC can circulate extradition requests through its liaison or communication divisions present in LAS Member States.<sup>18</sup>

The AIMC Basic Laws<sup>19</sup> do not make reference to any human rights standards, nor do they grant individuals the right to file an access request or to demand the removal of arrest warrants

<sup>15</sup> Arab Interior Ministers' Council Website, *About the Council*, <https://www.aim-council.org/about/The-terms-of-reference/> (accessed 1 July 2025).

<sup>16</sup> MENA Rights Group, *Understanding the Arab Interior Ministers' Council and its role in transnational repression*, 17 August 2023, <https://www.menarights.org/en/articles/aimc> (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>17</sup> Article 57 of the Riyadh Convention provides that the contracting parties should “undertake coordination of extradition request procedures” with the “Arab Organisation for Social Defense Against Crime (Arab Criminal Police Bureau), through the liaison offices concerned.” This Arab Bureau of Criminal Police was replaced by the Department of Criminal Prosecution and Data within the General Secretariat of the AIMC through the Resolution No. 667 of the Council dated 13 March 2013.

<sup>18</sup> As part of the AIMC's framework, liaison divisions are established within each Member State's Ministry of Interior, to ensure coordination with the AIMC's General Secretariat, specialised offices, and other organs, and cooperation with liaison divisions in other Member States. See: Arab Interior Ministers' Council Website, *Organs of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers*, <https://www.aim-council.org/about/council-devices/> (accessed 25 June 2025); Ministry of Interior of Saudi Arabia Website, *Contact people of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers*, [https://www.moi.gov.sa/wps/portal/departments/moi30!/ut/p/z0/04\\_Sj9CPyKssy0xPLMnMz0vMAflj\\_o8ziDTxNTDwMTYy8\\_Z2cnQ0cAy1DAnwDwozcXU31qxOL9AuyHRUB1uPJeg!!/p0/IZ7\\_0I44H142KOBCC0A09TPMPV2GU7=CZ6\\_0I44H142KOBCC0A09TPMPV2GE5=MECTX!QCPgeneralQCPgeneralQCAcontentQCAarQCParabQCAinteriorQCaministersQCAcouncilQCP30thQCAsessionQCPnewsQCParchiv\\_eQCPmoi\\_news\\_13-03-2013n\\_ar=//p0/IZ7\\_0I44H142KOBCC0A09TPMPV2GU5=CZ6\\_0I44H142KOBCC0A09TPMPV2GE5=MECTX!QCPGeneralQCPGeneralQCAContentQCAARQCPArabQCAinteriorQCAMinistersQCACouncilQCP30thQCASessionQCPContactQCADivisionsQCP=//](https://www.moi.gov.sa/wps/portal/departments/moi30!/ut/p/z0/04_Sj9CPyKssy0xPLMnMz0vMAflj_o8ziDTxNTDwMTYy8_Z2cnQ0cAy1DAnwDwozcXU31qxOL9AuyHRUB1uPJeg!!/p0/IZ7_0I44H142KOBCC0A09TPMPV2GU7=CZ6_0I44H142KOBCC0A09TPMPV2GE5=MECTX!QCPgeneralQCPgeneralQCAcontentQCAarQCParabQCAinteriorQCaministersQCAcouncilQCP30thQCAsessionQCPnewsQCParchiv_eQCPmoi_news_13-03-2013n_ar=//p0/IZ7_0I44H142KOBCC0A09TPMPV2GU5=CZ6_0I44H142KOBCC0A09TPMPV2GE5=MECTX!QCPGeneralQCPGeneralQCAContentQCAARQCPArabQCAinteriorQCAMinistersQCACouncilQCP30thQCASessionQCPContactQCADivisionsQCP=//) (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>19</sup> Arab Interior Ministers' Council, *Arab Interior Ministers' Council's Basic Law*, 23 September 1982, <https://www.mohamah.net/law/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/%D9%86%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B5->

diffused against them. Similarly, they do not mention standards of procedure regarding the circulation of arrest warrants, and there is no oversight mechanism filtering out abuses of its systems. These concerns have been highlighted by UN Special Procedures in a communication addressed to the LAS.<sup>20</sup>

In February 2025, the Lebanese Minister of Interior, Ahmad al-Hajjar, participated in the AIMC's 42<sup>nd</sup> annual conference in Tunis.<sup>21</sup> During his speech, he affirmed Lebanon's "readiness, determination and eagerness" for regional cooperation "through the relevant security agencies to safeguard national and Arab security."<sup>22</sup>

## 2.3 Domestic framework

### 2.3.1 Legal framework surrounding extraditions

In Lebanon, the provisions of the ICCPR hold constitutional status and are deemed to supplement the provisions of the constitution.<sup>23</sup> They prevail over the provisions of domestic law and over administrative decisions.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Lebanese Penal Code, extraditions can only take place on the basis of the provisions of the Penal Code or on the basis of a legally binding international treaty.<sup>25</sup> The Code of Civil Procedure provides that the Lebanese courts must comply with the principles of the hierarchy of legislation, whereby the provisions of international treaties prevail over the

[%D9%88-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8.pdf](#) (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>20</sup> Special Procedures, OL OTH 71/2023, 23 June 2023, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=28070> (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>21</sup> National News Agency, *Al-Hajjar arrived in Tunisia to participate in the meeting of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers*, 16 February 2025, <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/759684/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1> (accessed 2 July 2025).

<sup>22</sup> Elnashra, *Al-Hajjar, at the meeting of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers: Lebanon looks forward to the support of its brothers, and we are determined to pursue the path of reform*, 16 February 2025, <https://www.elnashra.com/news/show/1711159/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8E-%D9%8A%D8%AA> (accessed 2 July 2025).

<sup>23</sup> See: Lebanese Constitution, Preamble, para. b; Lebanon, Replies of Lebanon to the list of issues, 16 May 2018, UN Doc. CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/Add.1/Rev.1, <https://docs.un.org/CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/ADD.1/REV.1> (accessed 3 July 2025), para. 6.

<sup>24</sup> See: Lebanese Constitution, Preamble, para. b; Lebanon, Replies of Lebanon to the list of issues, 16 May 2018, UN Doc. CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/Add.1/Rev.1, <https://docs.un.org/CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/ADD.1/REV.1> (accessed 3 July 2025), para. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, article 30.

provisions of domestic law,<sup>26</sup> and whereby international treaties take precedence where there is a conflict between international treaties ratified by Lebanon and national law.<sup>27</sup>

Lebanon's domestic legal framework governing extraditions can be found in articles 30 to 36 of the Penal Code.<sup>28</sup> Similarly to regional treaties, Lebanese legislation does not enshrine the principle of *non-refoulement*.

According to article 31 of the Penal Code, extradition is permitted for offences committed in the territory of the requesting state, for offences committed by one of its nationals, or for "offences that adversely affect [the requesting state's] security or financial status".

Article 34 of the Penal Code enshrines the grounds for refusal of extradition requests, which include when the extradition is requested in connection with a political offence or seems to serve a political aim, or if the penalty applicable under the law of the requesting state is contrary to the established "social order".<sup>29</sup> The Penal Code specifies that "political offences" are to be understood as offences committed with a political motive,<sup>30</sup> and excludes the "most serious offences", including murder, grievous bodily harm and arson.<sup>31</sup>

### 2.3.2 Extradition procedure

In Lebanon, decisions on extradition proceedings lie largely within the discretion of the executive branch and lack effective judicial review or safeguards to ensure compliance with international human rights obligations, including the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Extradition requests are received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and referred to the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation. The latter examines the request by assessing whether the legal conditions set out in articles 31-34 of the Penal Code have been fulfilled and whether the charge has been adequately established.<sup>32</sup>

When an extradition request is circulated through the General Secretariat of the AIMC, the Public Prosecution Office at the Court of Cassation acts on the AIMC warrant through the International Communications Division of the Internal Security Forces, Lebanon's AIMC liaison

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<sup>26</sup> Code of Criminal Procedure, article 2. See also: UN Human Rights Committee, *List of issues in relation to the third periodic report of Lebanon*, 16 May 2018, UN Doc. CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/Add.1/Rev.1, <https://docs.un.org/CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/ADD.1/REV.1> (accessed 25 June 2025), para. 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> See: UN Human Rights Committee, *List of issues in relation to the third periodic report of Lebanon*, 16 May 2018, UN Doc. CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/Add.1/Rev.1, <https://docs.un.org/CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/ADD.1/REV.1> (accessed 25 June 2025), para. 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Lebanese Penal Code (selected articles) accessible at: [http://menarights.org/sites/default/files/2016-11/LBN\\_Penal%20Code\\_selected%20articles\\_EN.pdf](http://menarights.org/sites/default/files/2016-11/LBN_Penal%20Code_selected%20articles_EN.pdf) (UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon official translation).

<sup>29</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, article 32.

<sup>30</sup> As international law does not provide a precise definition of a political offence, when an extradition is requested, it is up to the requested state to assess whether or not a political offence has been committed.

<sup>31</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, articles 196 and 197.

<sup>32</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, article 35; Lebanon, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention: Initial reports of States parties due in 2001: Lebanon*, 14 April 2016, UN Doc. CAT/C/LBN/1, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2F1%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2F1%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en) (accessed 30 June 2025), para. 188.

division,<sup>33</sup> which it instructs to carry out investigations and gather information on the offence allegedly committed by the person whose extradition is requested.<sup>34</sup>

After investigating the facts of the case and the requested person, the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation refers the file, together with their report, to the Minister of Justice. In their report, the Public Prosecutor must include a proposal as to whether the extradition request should be accepted or rejected.<sup>35</sup> The Public Prosecutor may notably propose that a request for the extradition of any foreign national to a country where they are in danger of being subjected to torture should be rejected.<sup>36</sup>

Subsequently, the Minister of Justice examines the file received from the Public Prosecutor, together with the latter's report and proposal as to whether the extradition request should be granted or rejected, and presents their own proposal to the Cabinet (or Council of Ministers).<sup>37</sup> The Minister of Justice may notably propose that an extradition request should be rejected if they are in possession of information that the person whose extradition is requested may be subjected to torture in their country of origin.<sup>38</sup> The decision to grant or reject the request for extradition is taken pursuant to a decree adopted on the basis of the Minister of Justice's proposal.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See: Ministry of Interior of Saudi Arabia Website, *Contact people of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers*,

[https://www.moi.gov.sa/wps/portal/departments/moi30!/ut/p/z0/04\\_Sj9CPyKssy0xPLMnMz0vMAflj\\_o8ziDTxNTDwMTYy8\\_Z2cnQ0cAy1DAnwDwozcXU31qxOL9AuyHRUB1uPJeg!!/p0/IZ7\\_0I44H142KOBCC0AQ9TPMPV2GU7=CZ6\\_0I44H142KOBCC0AQ9TPMPV2GE5=MECTX!QCPgeneralQCPgeneralQCAcontentQCAarQCParabQCAinteriorQCAministersQCAcouncilQCP30thQCAsessionQCPnewsQCParchiv\\_eQCPmoi\\_news\\_13-03-2013n\\_ar=/p0/IZ7\\_0I44H142KOBCC0AQ9TPMPV2GU5=CZ6\\_0I44H142KOBCC0AQ9TPMPV2GE5=MECTX!QCPGeneralQCPGeneralQCAContentQCAARQCPArabQCAInteriorQCAMinistersQCACouncilQCP30thQCASessionQCPContactQCADivisionsQCP=/](https://www.moi.gov.sa/wps/portal/departments/moi30!/ut/p/z0/04_Sj9CPyKssy0xPLMnMz0vMAflj_o8ziDTxNTDwMTYy8_Z2cnQ0cAy1DAnwDwozcXU31qxOL9AuyHRUB1uPJeg!!/p0/IZ7_0I44H142KOBCC0AQ9TPMPV2GU7=CZ6_0I44H142KOBCC0AQ9TPMPV2GE5=MECTX!QCPgeneralQCPgeneralQCAcontentQCAarQCParabQCAinteriorQCAministersQCAcouncilQCP30thQCAsessionQCPnewsQCParchiv_eQCPmoi_news_13-03-2013n_ar=/p0/IZ7_0I44H142KOBCC0AQ9TPMPV2GU5=CZ6_0I44H142KOBCC0AQ9TPMPV2GE5=MECTX!QCPGeneralQCPGeneralQCAContentQCAARQCPArabQCAInteriorQCAMinistersQCACouncilQCP30thQCASessionQCPContactQCADivisionsQCP=/) (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>34</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, article 35; Lebanon, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention: Initial reports of States parties due in 2001: Lebanon*, 14 April 2016, UN Doc. CAT/C/LBN/1,

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en) (accessed 30 June 2025), para. 207.

<sup>35</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, article 35; Lebanon, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention: Initial reports of States parties due in 2001: Lebanon*, 14 April 2016, UN Doc. CAT/C/LBN/1,

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en) (accessed 30 June 2025), para. 190.

<sup>36</sup> Lebanon, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention: Initial reports of States parties due in 2001: Lebanon*, 14 April 2016, UN Doc. CAT/C/LBN/1,

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en) (accessed 30 June 2025), para. 191.

<sup>37</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, article 35; Lebanon, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention: Initial reports of States parties due in 2001: Lebanon*, 14 April 2016, UN Doc. CAT/C/LBN/1,

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en) (accessed 30 June 2025), para. 197.

<sup>38</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, article 35; Lebanon, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention: Initial reports of States parties due in 2001: Lebanon*, 14 April 2016, UN Doc. CAT/C/LBN/1,

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en) (accessed 30 June 2025), para. 198.

<sup>39</sup> Lebanese Penal Code, article 35; Lebanon, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention: Initial reports of States parties due in 2001: Lebanon*, 14 April 2016, UN Doc.

The Cabinet makes the final decision to grant or reject the request for extradition.<sup>40</sup> An extradition order must then be signed by the President.<sup>41</sup>

The extradition order may be appealed before the highest administrative court, the Council of State (or State Shura Council).<sup>42</sup>

## 3 Transnational repression in practice: the case of Abdulrahman al-Qaradawi

During its last UPR, Lebanon supported two recommendations made by the Netherlands and Norway to uphold the principle of *non-refoulement*.<sup>43</sup>

However, the details of the case presented below provide a clear picture of the flaws in Lebanon's implementation of its legal, institutional and procedural framework governing extraditions, which have allowed the country to participate in transnational repression.

Abdulrahman al-Qaradawi is a Turkish-Egyptian poet and prominent voice of the Arab Spring who was extradited from Lebanon to the UAE on 8 January 2025, in violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*.<sup>44</sup>

On 28 December 2024, as al-Qaradawi was returning from a trip to Syria, he was arrested by Lebanese General Security officers at the Syrian-Lebanese border, based on an extradition request issued by Egypt, where he had notably been sentenced *in absentia* to five years in prison on charges of spreading "false news", among others, in a case criticised by civil society organisations as politically motivated.<sup>45</sup> Upon arrest, he was transferred to the Procedure and Investigation Department of the General Security Directorate in Beirut, and detained.

On 29 December 2024, another request for this extradition was issued, this time by the UAE, on the basis of a warrant issued by the Emirati Federal Public Prosecution for Combating Rumours and Cybercrimes, and circulated by the AIMC. He was reportedly wanted for

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CAT/C/LBN/1,

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2F1&Lang=en) (accessed 30 June 2025), para. 189.

<sup>40</sup> However, there have also been cases where the President has independently approved extradition without a prior decision by the Cabinet, after consulting the extradition committee that assists the Public Prosecutor in assessing extradition requests.

<sup>41</sup> See: Government of the Netherlands, *Short thematic country of origin information report on Lebanon: extradition*, February 2023, <https://www.government.nl/documents/directives/2023/02/28/short-thematic-country-of-origin-information-report-on-lebanon-extradition-february-2023> (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>42</sup> See: Government of the Netherlands, *Short thematic country of origin information report on Lebanon: extradition*, February 2023, <https://www.government.nl/documents/directives/2023/02/28/short-thematic-country-of-origin-information-report-on-lebanon-extradition-february-2023> (accessed 25 June 2025).

<sup>43</sup> Recommendations 150.105 and 150.106.

<sup>44</sup> MENA Rights Group, *Egyptian poet arrested by Lebanese authorities and extradited to the UAE after criticising Gulf countries online*, 21 January 2025, <https://menarights.org/en/case/abdelrahman-youssef-al-qaradawi> (accessed on 23 June 2025).

<sup>45</sup> Amnesty International, *Lebanon: Poet Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi must not be extradited to Egypt or UAE*, 7 January 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/01/lebanon-poet-abdul-rahman-al-qaradawi-must-not-be-extradited-to-egypt-or-uae/> (accessed 1 July 2025).

“publishing false news and rumours using an information network that would incite public opinion and disturb public security” and “incite sedition that would disturb public order or commit acts that would incite hate speech”, acts that are punishable under the UAE’s cybercrime law.<sup>46</sup> While in Syria, al-Qaradawi had published a video of himself on X (formerly Twitter) criticising the authorities of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.<sup>47</sup>

On 30 December 2024, al-Qaradawi was interrogated by a Lebanese security officer in relation to his 2017 *in absentia* sentencing in Egypt, as well as the UAE’s extradition request.

On 2 January 2025, the Ministry of Justice reportedly received the UAE’s request for the extradition of al-Qaradawi, through the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and referred the case to the Office of the Public Prosecution of the Court of Cassation. The Public Prosecutor interrogated al-Qaradawi in the presence of his legal representative.

Al-Qaradawi’s legal representative submitted a memorandum to the Public Prosecutor, urging him to issue a recommendation rejecting both extradition requests.<sup>48</sup> He notably raised the risk of Lebanon’s violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*, citing article 3 UNCAT.

On 3 January 2025, the Public Prosecutor submitted its report to the Ministry of Justice, recommending that al-Qaradawi’s extradition request to the UAE be accepted.<sup>49</sup> He notably held that the alleged offense committed by al-Qaradawi “harmed the security of the requesting State or its financial standing”, fulfilling the requirement set forth by article 31 of the Penal Code. The Public Prosecutor asserted that the facts of the case did not suggest that the alleged offence was political in nature and noted that “the extradition decision is not a purely judicial matter, but rather a sovereign decision taken by the executive authority in consideration of the supreme interest of the state.”

On 6 January 2025, UN human rights experts sent an urgent appeal to the Lebanese authorities concerning the imminent extradition of al-Qaradawi from Lebanon to Egypt or to the UAE, highlighting that, if extradited, he would “face a significant risk of being subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment and to enforced disappearance.”<sup>50</sup>

On 7 January 2025, Lebanon’s Cabinet approved al-Qaradawi’s extradition to the UAE.<sup>51</sup> Among other elements, the Cabinet claimed it took into account that the UAE had “won membership in the United Nations Human Rights Council for the third time”, which

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<sup>46</sup> See: UAE, *Federal Decree-Law No. (34) of 2021 On Countering Rumours and Cybercrimes*, 26 September 2021, <https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/1526> (accessed 30 June 2025).

<sup>47</sup> The video has since been removed from X.

<sup>48</sup> Cedar Center for Legal Studies, *Arrest and Risk of Forced Extradition of Poet Abdulrahman Al-Qaradawi*, 4 January 2025, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/arrest-and-risk-of-forced-extradition-of-poet-abdulrahman-al-garadawi/> (accessed 1 July 2025).

<sup>49</sup> Copy of the minutes of the Cabinet decision on file at Cedar Center for Legal Studies and MENA Rights Group.

<sup>50</sup> The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, *UA LBN 1/2025, 6 January 2025*, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=29612> (accessed 3 July 2025).

<sup>51</sup> Copy of the minutes of the Cabinet decision on file at Cedar Center for Legal Studies and MENA Rights Group.

“undoubtedly confirms” the country’s “efforts to promote and protect human rights at the national, regional, and international levels.”

On 8 January 2025, al-Qaradawi’s legal representative filed an appeal to the extradition decision to the Council of State (or State Shura Council), requesting the suspension of the decision. The same day, UN human rights experts urged the Lebanese authorities not to extradite al-Qaradawi to the UAE, expressing deep concern over risks of torture, ill-treatment or enforced disappearance if he were to be deported, and the unlikelihood that he would receive a fair trial.<sup>52</sup>

However, on 8 January 2025, al-Qaradawi was extradited from Lebanon to the UAE. According to his legal representative, his extradition was one of the fastest of such cases in Lebanon’s history. While extradition orders normally require the signature of the President before implementation, the extradition was executed during the country’s presidential vacancy, just one day before the election of President Joseph Aoun on 9 January 2025. The appeal remains pending before the State Shura Council to date.

On 10 January 2025, the Emirates News Agency (WAM) confirmed that the UAE had taken al-Qaradawi into custody pursuant to an AIMC arrest warrant on charges of “engaging in activities that aim to stir and undermine public security.”<sup>53</sup>

There, he was subjected to enforced disappearance, and currently remains detained *incommunicado*. UN human rights experts later stated that their “worst fears that Mr. Al-Qaradawi would face grave human rights violations if he was extradited to the UAE, appear to have been justified.”<sup>54</sup> His case is currently pending before the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.<sup>55</sup>

## 4 Recommendations

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- Cease participation in transnational repression, including by refraining from carrying out extraditions requested on political grounds and violating *non-refoulement*;
- Suspend the execution of extradition requests issued on the basis of arrest warrants circulated by the AIMC, as long as its framework and systems are not reformed in line with international standards;
- Ensure that the Lebanese authorities charged with examining, assessing and deciding on extradition requests exercise their powers independently and freely from any political pressure from foreign governments;

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<sup>52</sup> UN Special Procedures, *Lebanon must stop extradition of Abdulrahman Al-Qaradawi to the United Arab Emirates, experts say*, 8 January 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/01/lebanon-must-stop-extradition-abdulrahman-al-qaradawi-united-arab-emirates> (accessed 1 July 2025).

<sup>53</sup> WAM, *UAE takes Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi into custody from Lebanon*, 10 January 2025, <https://www.wam.ae/en/article/15d15hu-uae-takes-abdul-rahman-al-qaradawi-into-custody> (accessed 1 July 2025).

<sup>54</sup> UN Special Procedures, *Experts say UAE must reveal fate of forcibly disappeared poet and activist Abdulrahman Al-Qaradawi*, 5 March 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/03/experts-say-uae-must-reveal-fate-forcibly-disappeared-poet-and-activist> (accessed 2 July 2025).

<sup>55</sup> Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, *Communications transmitted, cases examined, observations made and other activities conducted by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances\* 135th session (27–31 January 2025)*, 10 April 2025, UN Doc. A/HRC/WGEID/135/1, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WGEID/135/1> (accessed 3 July 2025), para. 156.

- Ensure that international human rights conventions, including the UNCAT, prevail over Lebanese domestic law in practice;
- Codify the principle of *non-refoulement* in line with article 3 UNCAT and article 7 ICCPR;
- Ensure the effective application of the prohibition of extraditions on political grounds enshrined in article 34 of the Penal Code;
- Undertake individual, impartial and independent investigations of each case when considering extradition requests, in compliance with the principle of *non-refoulement*;
- Ensure the right of appeal against the enforcement of an extradition order, with suspensive effect;
- Align the Penal Code's provisions governing extradition (particularly articles 31 and 34) with the Model Treaty on Extradition (particularly articles 3 (b)(f)(g), and article 4 (d));
- Accept the Committee against Torture's individual complaints procedure under article 22 of the UNCAT to ensure individuals at risk of extradition have access to international protection mechanisms.

MENA Rights Group is a Geneva-based legal advocacy NGO defending and promoting fundamental rights and freedoms in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Adopting a holistic approach, we work at both the individual and structural level. We represent victims of human rights violations before international law mechanisms. In order to ensure the non-repetition of these violations, we identify patterns and root causes of violations on the ground and bring key issues to the attention of relevant stakeholders to call for legal and policy reform.

The Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) is a Lebanese independent, non-profit organization founded in 2013 that promotes human rights, the rule of law, and social justice. It provides legal aid, documentation, and rehabilitation services to vulnerable groups such as torture survivors, refugees, detainees, and victims of enforced disappearance. In December 2024, CCLS launched a Rehabilitation Centre in northern Lebanon offering integrated legal, psychosocial, and medical support to victims of torture.