



CLDH – UPR Pre-Session Statement for Lebanon (5 minutes)

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Distinguished delegates, colleagues, and human rights defenders,
My name is Fadel Fakih, Executive Director of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights – CLDH.

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Lebanon enters this UPR cycle in one of the most severe human rights crises in its modern history.

Today, we want to bring your attention to **six areas** where the human rights situation is deteriorating, and where international engagement is urgently needed.

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1. A Collapsing Justice System and the Absence of Judicial Independence

Lebanon's judiciary is not only slow and dysfunctional—it is **not independent**.

Judges face political interference, pressure from security agencies, and retaliation when they attempt to investigate corruption or human rights violations.

Key positions in the judiciary remain vacant or filled through political bargaining rather than merit.

The failure to appoint members of the Supreme Judicial Council and the obstruction of major judicial investigations—most notably the Beirut Port explosion—show clearly that

Lebanon's judiciary cannot operate freely.

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At the same time, more than **60% of detainees are held pre-trial**, many languishing for years due to systemic delays and the judiciary's inability to function.

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For children, violations of **Law 422** are widespread:

- Children under 12 are detained illegally;
- Juveniles wait months without being interrogated;
- Many are placed with adult detainees;
- And non-Lebanese children face discriminatory treatment.

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Our ask:

- Guarantee the independence of the judiciary by completing judicial appointments, protecting judges from political influence, and ensuring transparent, merit-based selection.
- Enforce strict trial timelines and end arbitrary detention.
- Amend Law 422 to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 7 to 14, guarantee access to lawyers, abolish deportation of children, and expand alternatives to detention.

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2. The Right to a Fair Trial: Violated at Every Stage

Lebanon routinely fails to uphold basic fair-trial guarantees.

Detainees are frequently denied:

- Access to lawyers during interrogation,
- Prompt appearance before a judge,
- Independent medical examinations,
- The presumption of innocence.

Article 47 safeguards remain more theory than practice. Security agencies continue to block lawyers from accessing detainees—particularly refugees and migrant workers—leaving individuals vulnerable to torture and coerced confessions.

The **recent case of Bashar Al Saoud**, a Syrian refugee tortured to death, illustrates the problem: one court recognised torture, while a military court later ignored the evidence. This contradiction exposes a system incapable of ensuring justice or accountability.

Lebanon continues to prosecute civilians—including activists, journalists, and refugees—before **military courts** lacking independence, transparency, and due process.

Military courts should *never* have jurisdiction over civilians.

Their continued use is incompatible with Lebanon’s human rights obligations and undermines every principle of fair justice.

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CLDH calls for:

- Completely ending military court jurisdiction over civilians,
- Ensuring all civilians are tried before ordinary, independent, and competent courts.
- Full implementation of Article 47,
- Independent investigations into all allegations of torture,
- Removal of any statute of limitations on torture,
- Ensuring that no confession obtained under duress is ever admissible.

Fair trials are impossible without structural reform.

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3. Enforced Disappearances: Still No Truth

More than **17,000 families** still wait for answers.

The National Commission for the Missing Persons and enforcibly disappeared exists in law but is **not operational**.

No data has been released, and no cooperation has taken place to uncover the truth.

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Our ask:

- Immediately activate the National Commission and grant it full access to all archives and security agency records.
- Lebanon must ratify the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

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4. Freedom of Expression: A Shrinking Space for Public Debate

Since 2019, Lebanon has witnessed a **relentless crackdown on journalists, activists, and human rights defenders**.

Authorities increasingly use criminal defamation and broadly worded security laws to silence criticism.

Journalists covering corruption, security agencies, or political actors face:

- Investigations and arbitrary summons,
- Online censorship and content takedowns,
- Physical attacks—some even killed in the South without accountability.
- LGBTIQ+ activists and organizations are also targeted through bans on gatherings and moral panic campaigns designed to shut down civic space.

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CLDH calls for:

- Revoke criminal defamation laws,
- Modernise media legislation,
- End all restrictions on peaceful assemblies,
- Ensure accountability for attacks on journalists—no exceptions.

Freedom of expression must not be a privilege granted selectively; it is a right.

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5. European Border-Externalisation and International Complicity



Finally, we must address an uncomfortable truth which is contributing to Lebanon's lack of abiding by some of the UPR recommendations:

European states are **actively reinforcing** Lebanon's ability to intercept, detain, and deport refugees and migrants—including to Syria.

Their funding, training, and equipment to Lebanese security agencies:

- Enable illegal pushbacks at sea and land borders.
- Facilitate arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances.
- Support a system that returns refugees to a country where torture, disappearance, and death are well-documented.

This is not border management. This is **outsourcing violations**.

Our ask to the international community:

- Suspend all support that enhances interception and detention capacities until safeguards exist.
- Recognise Lebanon and Syria as unsafe for returns.
- Ensure that all rescued persons are disembarked in safe territories.
- Halt data-sharing agreements that put refugees at risk.

Conclusion on the human rights section.

Lebanon is at a crossroads.

Human rights violations are not isolated—they are structural, widespread, and worsening. Yet meaningful change is still possible **if international partners condition support on reforms**, and if Lebanon is held accountable to its obligations.

CLDH urges all states to make **strong, specific, and measurable recommendations** addressing:

- Judicial independence
- Fair trials and detention conditions
- Activation of national human rights related institutions

The credibility of this UPR cycle depends on it.

Additionally, on behalf of the Lebanese Humanitarian and Development NGOs Forum, I would like to state the following:

LHDF – Draft Key Messages for the UPR Pre-Session

The Lebanon Humanitarian and Development NGOs Forum (LHDF), representing 90+ Local and national organizations across all regions, plays a central role in advocacy and in



coordinating humanitarian and development action. Despite this, LHDF was not consulted at any stage during the preparation of Lebanon's national report for this UPR cycle.

LHDF takes advantage of this opportunity to reiterate its commitment to contributing constructively to human-rights processes and emphasizes the need for institutionalized, transparent, and inclusive mechanisms that ensure the systematic involvement of local and national organizations in all UPR-related consultations, reporting, and follow-up.

1. Recognition of the Role of Local and National NGOs

Local and national NGOs remain central to the humanitarian and development response in Lebanon. LHDF calls on Member States to support their recognition as equal partners through access to policy dialogue, direct funding, and shared decision-making.

2. Inclusive and Meaningful Participation in Policy Processes

LHDF urges the institutionalization of regular consultations with civil society and meaningful engagement with grassroots organizations whose evidence and field realities must inform national reporting and reform processes.

3. Ensuring Clarity and Accountability in Coordination Structures (OCG)

Lebanon is moving toward a new national coordination structure for humanitarian response. However, the process remains under-resourced, which will hinder meaningful participation for local and national organizations.

LHDF calls on Member States to recommend that Lebanon:

- Allocate **sufficient resources** to enable effective participation
- Guarantee **shared leadership**, equitable representation, and clear roles within the structure

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Closing Message

Lebanon stands at a critical juncture. The UPR process is an opportunity to reinforce human dignity, accountability, and local leadership. LHDF remains committed to evidence-based advocacy and to ensuring that the voices of communities and local organizations are reflected in national and international policy processes and frameworks

Thank you for listening, and until we meet in better human rights conditions.