



JUST ATONEMENT INC.

justice
hope peace unity equal opportunity
golden age
progress sustainability democracy freedom
human rights harmony civilization

Just Atonement Inc.

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Just Atonement Inc. (JAI) incites transformative social change by empowering lawyers and law students with the opportunities, training and means to defend democracy, human rights, and a livable planet. JAI was founded in the United States of America in 2017.

JAI invites and organizes legal professionals globally into a single order and aligns a vision of a peaceful, sustainable world, governed by the democratic rule of law; litigates in courts all over the world on cutting edge human rights cases to build peace and sustainability, and to defend democracy; and advocates for a vision of a true Golden Age for humanity: a world where countries settle their disputes peacefully, manage social and economic systems that are in harmony with the planet, and govern themselves through the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

JAI submits this written submission with respect to the Universal Periodic Review of the Lebanese Republic.

Summary of Conclusions

1. **The breakdown and collapse of the Earth's climate system is imminent and may have already commenced**, and Lebanon is plainly not prepared for this change and the lives of its people are in grave jeopardy as a result; climate change affects the enjoyment of fundamental rights such as the rights to life, social security, an adequate standard of living, health, and the justice system. It is critical for Lebanon to adopt a comprehensive human rights-based approach with respect to climate change and implement national policies under this framework.
2. Refugees' rights are continuously violated in Lebanon. The challenges confronted by refugees include meeting their most basic needs amid hostile government actions and the risk of refoulement after deportation without sufficient due process. Lebanon is urged to fully adopt and comply with the international human rights regime.



Impacts of Climate Change on Human Rights

3. Projected climate changes in Lebanon include: increases in mean annual temperatures between 1.2–1.7°C by mid-century; 30–60 cm rise in sea levels by 2040; decreased total precipitation; and more frequent heatwaves and drought.¹
4. As more than 85 percent of Lebanon’s residents live in urban areas concentrated along a coastline that is vulnerable to sea-level rise, the impact of climate change will become particularly acute and pronounced. Climate change is and will continue to be one of the root causes of human rights violations in the country.

Right to Life Violations

5. Climate change negatively impacts on the water supply. “Saltwater intrusion into coastal aquifers is already occurring and will continue with rising seas. In coastal cities, such as Beirut, saltwater intrusion is already forcing residents to install desalinization equipment, purchase water from private tankers, and abandon wells.”²
6. Through Resolution 64/292, the UN General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and acknowledged that clean drinking water is essential to the realization of all human rights. Without further government actions to guarantee this right, people will inevitably suffer the consequences of climate change and will not be able to maintain their life with dignity as human beings.
7. In late 2019, unreasonable heatwaves and high winds caused over 100 wildfires in Lebanon’s southern forests, forcing families to flee from their homes and causing damages that could have been prevented. Government inaction exacerbated these incidents as fire equipment sat grounded at the Beirut airport because no budget was set aside for maintaining it.
8. Such a failure in performing government duties amounts to violating the right to be free from arbitrary interference with one’s home, privacy and family, which is protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This failure also constitutes a violation of Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which guarantees an adequate standard of living.
9. Climate change threatens environmental safety by accelerating deforestation and disrupting the country’s biodiversity. This environmental degradation precipitates wildfires, drought, infestations, and air pollution among many other risks, thereby compromising the right to life inherent in every human being.
10. Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the right to life, and this right implies the duty by States to “take appropriate measures to address

¹ <https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-change-risk-profile-lebanon>

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/climate-change-profile-lebanon>



the general conditions in society that may give rise to direct threats to life or prevent individuals from enjoying their right to life with dignity.” Such general conditions include degradation of the environment.³

11. As the majority of the Lebanese people are at the direct risk of climate change and remain vulnerable to environmental hazards, the government’s failure to prevent and mitigate dangers resulting from environmental degradation ultimately poses serious threats to the ability of present and future generations of Lebanon to enjoy their human rights.
12. Adverse environmental conditions due to climate change also intensify ongoing anti-government protests in Lebanon as people are feeling the pressure from having no clean water and no safe, habitable homes. With civil and political rights on the verge of a breakdown amid protests, the effects of climate change further threaten the right to life and call for an immediate government recognition.

Disproportionate Impact on Poor and Other Suspect Classes

13. Climate change will most severely impact people in poverty. Their livelihoods and assets are more exposed to the effects of climate change because they tend to live in area more susceptible to climate change, and they have fewer resources to mitigate the risks; Lebanon’s richest 1% controls nearly a quarter of the country’s wealth while the poorest 50% of Lebanese—more than 2 million people—only control 10%.
14. Rural populations are relatively poorer than urban populations and mainly dependent on the agriculture sector for their income. The adverse effects of climate change on agricultural yields will exacerbate existing poverty and inequality in the country.
15. There are about 1.5 million refugees—30% of the country’s population—in Lebanon, many of whom are in urban areas and reside in unfinished, substandard, or nonresidential buildings. Without much-needed protection from the government, these refugees face greater risks of climate change as they often lack access to proper work, education, healthcare, and shelter.

Impacts of Conflict on Human Rights

16. As Lebanon shares its border with Syria, it has been one of the countries most affected by the large numbers of refugees since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Lebanon hosts about 1.5 million refugees, and many of them are not registered and have no legal residency. This circumstance compounds human rights issues persistent in the country.

Deprivation of the Most Basic Needs

17. The government of Lebanon banned Syrian refugees in early 2015. It also launched campaigns that limited refugees’ ability to reside or work in the country. For example, the

³ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CCPR_C_GC_36_8785_E.pdf



Higher Defense Council issued an order calling for more stringent enforcement of building codes in 2019, which essentially forces refugees out of their only sanctuary and leaves them homeless.

18. Under these hostile government policies, refugees are deprived of their fundamental rights and unable to cover their most basic needs. Labor laws target businesses employing refugees who are working without authorization. Forced compliance with building codes result in the eviction of Syrian refugees from informal settlements and the destruction of thousands of refugee shelters.

Refoulement

19. Although Lebanon reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of nonrefoulement with respect to Syrian, it has been deporting Syrian refugees who are facing the risk of arbitrary detention and torture. For example, the Higher Defense Council requires the deportation of anyone arrested and found to have entered the country illegally without sufficient due process.
20. From 2017 to 2019, Lebanon facilitated the voluntary return of approximately 16,000 Syrian refugees. Despite government claims that their returns were entirely voluntary, some human rights organizations stated that there was a credible risk that those refugees would face persecution or other human rights violations upon their return to areas controlled by the Syrian regime.
21. These government actions amount to a clear violation of Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which forbids refoulement.

Status of Democratic Mechanisms

Lack of a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change

22. During the Second Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in 2015, the national report submitted by Lebanon affirmed that Lebanese public institutions should endeavor to “provide for safe sewage and waste disposal and for supplies of safe drinking water, and seek to address air pollution problems stemming from technological progress and climate change.”⁴ Additionally, Lebanon signed on to the Paris Agreement in 2016 and ratified it in 2020. While these efforts are commendable, the country still lacks a comprehensive human rights-based approach to climate change.
23. Documents submitted and published during the last two cycles of the Universal Periodic Review of Lebanon did not take note of the effects of climate change as grave threats to a wide range of human rights. The rights to life, social security, an adequate standard of living, health and the justice system were considered entirely independent of climate

⁴ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/197/60/PDF/G1519760.pdf?OpenElement>



change, and the discussion of relevant human rights issues did not include implications of climate change on the overall Lebanese society and its human rights regime.

Lack of Protection for Syrian Refugees

24. Lebanon has not signed on to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol as well as the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.
25. Lebanese law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status. The government of Lebanon has not permitted the “refugee” term to be applied to Syrian displaced persons in Lebanon. As a result, many of Syrian refugees are likely to be treated as illegal migrants who face more stringent government regulations which often lack sufficient due process.
26. Lebanese law requires a court hearing on all deportation cases, but with its strained public resources, the government is unable to process the existing caseload. This makes it harder for Lebanon to provide for a judicial or independent administrative review before carrying out deportations of refugees who may face arbitrary detention or torture upon their return.
27. Although Syrian refugees who had registered with UNHCR prior to 2015 do receive some public assistance—e.g. the waiver of fees for obtaining and renewing legal residency—the vast majority of refugees are still left out of jurisdictional protection as they are unable to obtain legal status.

Recommendations

28. Adopt a comprehensive human rights-based approach with respect to climate change and implement it as one pillar of the country’s human rights regime since Lebanon is plainly not prepared for the effects of climate change and the imminent climate breakdown.
29. Recognize the disproportionate effects of climate change on poor, refugees, stateless persons as well as other suspect classes with respect to the full enjoyment of their rights and incorporate protection measures for vulnerable people in carrying out national policies.
30. Sign on to and ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its Protocol, and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and comply with the international human rights regime to provide refugees with the most basic needs and required protection.
31. Collaborate with other international actors to allow sufficient due process to those who are at the risk of deportation so that no person would face unlawful prosecution, arbitrary detention, torture, and/or human rights violations upon his/her return.



Acknowledgement

This submission was prepared by Dave Inder Comar (Stanford 2001, Stanford 2002, NYU School of Law 2005) and Geesu Lee (Middlebury College 2012; Princeton University 2019; Columbia Law School 2022)

