

Lebanon

The chronic political crisis afflicting Lebanon since the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri continued to cast its shadow over institutions of governance and the rule of law. The sharp political polarization between the March 14 bloc, led by the Sunni Future movement, and the March 8 movement, led by the Shiite Hezbollah and Amal movements, continues to foster a state of political paralysis. This political rivalry came to a head when the March 8 movement succeeded in bringing down the Saad al-Hariri government, which had enjoyed the confidence of the parliamentary majority, and forming a new government led by Najib al-Mikati in mid-July with a majority of 68 of the 128 members of parliament.

The new government took no steps to fulfill its pledges to accept the recommendations of the UN Universal Periodic Review or activate the national human rights plan initiated in late 2010. The most important legislative developments were limited to amendments to the Penal Code to combat violence against women committed as “honor crimes.” The likelihood of impunity for the series of assassinations and bombings in Lebanon since the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005 continued to grow; although the international tribunal on the Hariri assassination issued an indictment and arrest warrants for four suspects affiliated with Hezbollah, the latter challenged the court order and refused to turn over the suspects.

Neither did the country take any serious steps to discover the fate of the thousands of people missing since the civil war that erupted in 1975; the fates of many who have been abducted in recent years remain similarly unknown.

Pressures on freedom of expression and creativity continued to grow, especially in relation to the issues of the Hariri assassination or the status of Syria and Iran, including displays of solidarity with the Syrian people or any examination of the popular Iranian uprising.

Over the past year, violations committed by the army and military intelligence increased. Numerous journalists and rights advocates were questioned by these bodies, and increasing complaints were heard of arbitrary detention and torture in military barracks and the prosecution of civilians before military courts. There were also increasing fears that Syrians escaping the repression of the Syrian regime would be repatriated to Syria. Several instances of the abduction and involuntary disappearance of foreigners were reported; those disappeared were apparently transferred to Syria before being released. Finally, no real change was seen in the conditions of Palestinian refugees, and the amendments to the labor and social solidarity law were not translated into effective measures to improve their status or ability to obtain employment. Restrictions on their freedom of movement remained in place, and armed clashes between Palestinian factions within refugee camps persisted.

The political process and criminal impunity:

The government of Saad al-Hariri, which acquired an exceptional majority in the parliament in December 2009 with 122 of the 128 seats, was nonetheless unable to endure.¹ Over the following year, the Hezbollah-led minority was able to thwart the majority through its shows of military force or escalations of media attacks, threatening to ignite a civil war if the majority continued to raise the issues of the parallel power structure and Hezbollah's arms and if it continued to support the special tribunal looking into the Hariri assassination.²

¹ BBC Arabic, "al-Hukuma al-Lubnaniya bi-ri'asat al-Hariri tanal thiqat al-barlaman," Dec. 10, 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2009/12/091210_ra_lebanon_tc2.shtml>.

² On these campaigns of intimidation, see CIHRS, Roots of Unrest: Human Rights in the Arab Region, 2010 annual report, Mar. 29, 2011, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=1164&lang=en>>.

In January 2011, these campaigns resulted in the collapse of the government after ten ministers from the March 8 bloc withdrew from their posts because of the international tribunal.³

Although the prosecutor of the international tribunal issued an indictment and officially submitted it to the government, along with arrest warrants for four persons affiliated with Hezbollah,⁴ the latter ignored these orders, and the party leader challenged the tribunal in a televised speech, saying, “Not in 30 or 60 days, or 60 or 300 years, will they be able to find or arrest these people.”⁵ The indictment named Mustafa Badreddine, Salim Ayyash, Hassan Oneissi, and Assad Sabra.⁶

Although the leadership of Hezbollah is still determined to block the role of the international tribunal, the political landscape shifted near the end of the year, when the prime minister announced the unexpected allocation of \$33 million to fund the court, via the Higher Relief Fund, which is subject only to the authority of the prime minister. The development reflects the desire of the prime minister to preserve his status as a consensual figure who seeks to avoid clashing with the Sunni majority, which supports al-Hariri and the court. It may also reflect the keen desire of the March 8 bloc to avoid dismantling or obstructing the government while looking for another consensual Sunni partner.⁷ The curtain closed on 2011 leaving Lebanon at a crossroads for the political crisis and the stability of institutions of governance, as the country is held hostage to the challenges of the dual power structure, Hezbollah’s weapons, and the demands of justice and preventing criminal impunity.

³ France 24, “Suqut hukumat Sa’d al-Hariri ba’d istiqalat al-wazir al-hadi ‘ashar,” Jan. 12, 2011, <<http://www.france24.com/ar/20110112-hezbollah-allies-resign-lebanon-unity-government-hariri-un-tribunal-assassination>>.

⁴ al-Mustaqbal, “Ba’d al-haqiqa tabqa al-‘adala wa-l-Hariri yu’akkid intiha’ zaman al-kutla,” July 1, 2011, <<http://www.almustaqbal.net/storiesv4.aspx?storyid=474173>>.

⁵ al-Mustaqbal, “Nasrallah yughatti Miqati wa-l-muttahimin bi-ighiyal al-Hariri,” July 3, 2011, <<http://www.almustaqbal.com/storiesv4.aspx?storyid=474456>>; Asharq al-Awsat, “Nasrallah yattahim al-mahkama a-dawliya bi-l-fasad wa-l-inhiyaz li-Isra’il,” July 3, 2011, <<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11905&article=629338>>.

⁶ Paul Salem, “Lebanon after the Indictments—the Arab World’s Next Crisis?” July 2, 2011, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/07/02/lebanon-after-indictments-arab-world-s-next-crisis/luxr>>; al-Seyassah, “al-Mahkama al-dawliya tanshur tafasil al-qarar al-ittihami fi ighiyal al-Hariri,” Aug. 18, 2011, <<http://www.al-seyassah.com/AtricleView/tabid/59/smld/438/ArticleID/152697/Default.aspx>>.

⁷ Rudy Sassine, “A Turning Tide in Lebanon,” Dec. 15, 2011, Sada, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/12/15/turning-tide-in-lebanon/89zb>>.

Increasing pressures on freedom of expression:

Pressures increased on freedom of expression, including creative freedom and freedom of the media, revealing a growing refusal to tolerate such liberties. Journalists and media figures have increasingly become targets for attacks, fed by the persistence of political and sectarian polarization and state institutions' inability to protect reporters or apprehend and punish those responsible for these attacks. Some of the violations affecting journalists and creative works were linked to perceived infringements on the army or discussion of the Hariri assassination.

In Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon, press workers were the targets of intentional attacks while covering protests that took a violent turn on January 25, 2011, after Najib Mikati's appointment as prime minister was announced. Crews with the Qatari al-Jazeera channel—which protesters considered pro-Hezbollah—were assaulted, along with workers with New TV in Tripoli. Hariri supporters were accused of torching al-Jazeera's mobile live transmission vehicle and setting fire to the office of Public Prosecutor Mohammed al-Safadi, where the journalists had sought shelter. They also attacked Mohammed al-Sahili, a photographer with the National News Agency (NNA), and threw stones at an NBN crew.⁸

Journalists and media professionals faced similar attacks on February 22 while covering a shooting on the Syrian-Lebanese border, which occurred at the same time as people were injured in the Tariq al-Jadida area of Beirut. A correspondent with al-Fajr Radio was prohibited from covering the incident and his cell phone was confiscated. A crew with OTV was attacked, and all audiovisual media were prevented from covering clashes between Syrian and Lebanese students which occurred after Syrian students had staged a sit-in at the Lebanese University demanding an end to administrative procedures they viewed as discriminatory.⁹

In what was considered an act of intimidation, on March 22 unknown persons threw sticks of dynamite at the offices of Free Lebanon Radio, and a sound grenade was also detonated near the offices.¹⁰ Photographer Wael al-

⁸ Reporters Without Borders, "Black Day for Media in Lebanon," Jan. 25, 2011, <<http://en.rsf.org/liban-black-day-for-media-in-lebanon-25-01-2011,39395.html>>; International Freedom of Expression Exchange, "News Teams Attacked while Covering Protests," Jan. 25, 2011, <http://www.ifex.org/lebanon/2011/01/27/aljazeera_attack/>.

⁹ SKEYES, "SkYZ yastankir man' idha'at al-fajr min al-taghtiya wa-l-i'tida' 'ala fariq mahattat u ti fi fi mustashfa al-maqasid wa man' al-i'lam min taghtiyat ashkal al-ihitaj fi-l-jami'a al-Lubnaniya," Feb. 23, 2011, <<http://skeyes.wordpress.com/2011/02/23/inth8j/>>.

¹⁰ SKEYES, "SkYZ yastankir muhawalat tarhib idha'at Lubnan al-hurr," Mar. 22, 2011, <<https://skeyes.wordpress.com/2011/03/23/546532132134654/>>.

Ladqi was physically assaulted by a group of young people during a demonstration on March 27 calling for the end of sectarianism in Lebanon. During the same demonstration, Nadine al-Ali, a journalist with Now Lebanon, was also harassed.¹¹

According to Nadim Qatish, a media worker with Future News, he received explicit threats against himself and his child over Facebook. He believed that the threats came in response to statements he had signed in solidarity with the Syrian people's right to freedom and a video he posted online documenting Syrian popular protests.¹²

Ali Hamadi, a media worker with Future News, received death threats over Facebook in October 2011, the second such threat he received in four months against the background of his support for the Syrian revolution.¹³

On April 22, unknown persons attempted to burn a vehicle with New TV, drenching it with gasoline, while the television crew covered a demonstration organized in solidarity with the Syrian uprising.¹⁴

In August, the crackdown on acts of solidarity with the Syrian people escalated, and security forces paid "visits" to media offices to influence their media coverage of the practices of the Syrian regime. Lebanese rights activists and bloggers were also assaulted by *shabiha* (thugs) of both Lebanese and Syrian nationality, while taking part in a peaceful sit-in in front of the Syrian embassy on August 2.

Stories by the NNA, the official news agency, were redacted to remove statements by Lebanese political figures sympathizing with the Syrian people, and the website of Free Citizens was hacked by a group from the

¹¹ International Freedom of Expression Exchange, "Protestor Assaulted, Journalist Harassed during Peaceful Demonstration," Mar. 30, 2011, <http://ifex.org/lebanon/2011/03/30/photographer_journalist_targeted/>.

¹² Catholic Information Center, "al-Haqq al-insani wa Skyz yastankiran tahdidat li-l-i'lami Nadim Qatish wa tiflih," Apr. 18, 2011, <<http://www.centre-catholique.com/newsdetails.asp?newid=48635>>; Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Skyz yudin tahdid al-i'lami Nadim Qatish wa yutalib al-sultat al-ma'niya bi-l-taharruk al-fawri," Apr. 18, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=29415>>.

¹³ SKEYES, "Skyz yastankir tahdid al-i'lami 'Ali Hamada bi-l-qatl wa qarسانat mawqa'ih al-ilaktruni," Oct. 12, 2011, <<http://skeyes.wordpress.com/2011/10/11/6546546546546545-4/>>.

¹⁴ SKEYES, "Skyz yastankir sabb al-banzin 'ala sayyarat al-naql al-mubashir li-qanat al-jadid fi Tarabulas," Apr. 26, 2011, <<http://skeyes.wordpress.com/2011/04/26/8765456456465/>>.

“electronic Syrian army,” which placed a photo of the Syrian president on the main page of the website.¹⁵

In September, the bureau chief of *Time* and a journalist at the magazine were referred to questioning before the Public Prosecutor after the magazine interviewed one of the suspects wanted in connection with the Hariri assassination. Maria al-Maalouf, the managing editor of the Lebanese *al-Ruwad* was also referred to questioning after an interview with a suspect in the assassination of President Bashir Gemayel.¹⁶

Security authorities revoked permission to screen “Green Days,” a film by Iranian director Hana Makhmalbaf about the protests in Iran.¹⁷ In October, authorities denied Iranian director Nader Daoudi entry to the country and removed his documentary, “Red, White, and Green,” from the official competition of the Beirut International Film Festival and cancelled all screenings. The film looks at developments in Iran in the three weeks leading up to the presidential elections won by Ahmadinejad.¹⁸

In November 2011, pressure by the General Security Censor led to the elision of an entire scene from “Rue Huvelin” before it was screened. The film looks at student protest movements in Beirut against the Syrian military presence prior to its withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005. The deleted scene showed students chanting against Syria while they burned the Syrian flag and raised the Lebanese flag.¹⁹

The authorities also banned a film by director Daniel Arbid entitled “Beirut at Night,” as the film implicitly touched on the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri. The film censorship committee, part of the General Security Agency, announced that the film constituted a danger to Lebanon’s security, but the agency’s media bureau denied this claim and explained that the

¹⁵ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “Taqrir Skyz al-shahri ‘an al-intihakat ‘ala-l-saha al-i’lamiya wa-l-thaqafiya fi Lubnan wa Suriya wa Filistin wa-l-Urdun,” Sep. 8, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=38891>>.

¹⁶ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “Taqrir Skyz al-shahri ‘an al-intihakat ‘ala-l-saha al-i’lamiya wa-l-thaqafiya fi Lubnan wa Suriya wa Filistin wa-l-Urdun,” Oct. 11, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=41287>>.

¹⁷ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “al-Shabaka al-‘Arabiya tastankir man’ ‘ard al-film al-Irani ‘ayyam khadra’ fi Lubnan,” June 21, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=34003>>.

¹⁸ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “al-Shabaka al-‘Arabiya: ‘ala-l-sultat muraja’at al-anzima al-raqabiya wa waqf al-tadakhkhul al-amni,” Oct. 9, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=41066>>.

¹⁹ SKEYES, “al-Amn al-‘amm al-Lubnani yahdhif mashhadan min film ‘shari’ hufilan’ qabl al-samah bi-‘ardih,” Nov. 29, 2011, <<http://skeyes.wordpress.com/2011/11/29/1121323232656565/>>.

security agency prohibited discussion of the assassination since the case was still pending before the judiciary.²⁰

Based on a complaint from the Defense Ministry, George al-Alam, who wrote *The Press* in which he discusses his imprisonment and torture for two and a half years in a Defense Ministry prison after his arrest in 1996, was summoned for questioning by criminal investigations. The writer was released on his own recognizance on December 7, 2011.²¹

On July 27, the authorities arrested musician Zeid Hamdan on charges of libeling and slandering the president, after he released the song “General Suleiman” criticizing the Lebanese president and demanding his ouster.

The authorities evinced a desire to pressure websites and limit their role. The National Media Council established a special register for websites, saying it would issue a list of documents to be appended to all applications to create websites pending the issuance of a law on electronic media, thus allowing conditions to be imposed on licensing renewals.²²

The electronic media also witnessed more cyber attacks, including the hacking of Janubiya, an independent website focusing on news from southern Lebanon. According to the editor of the site, the site was repeatedly attacked over the nine months following its establishment due to its coverage of events in Syria and content critical of some Lebanese parties loyal to the Syrian regime.²³

On March 13, the Future Forum website was hacked, as was the official site of Saad al-Hariri, the head of the Future bloc, and the Hariri Foundation website, and the databases of all three sites were destroyed. A group calling itself “the electronic resistance” claimed responsibility for the attacks in an aired statement titled “At your command, Nasrallah,” reinforcing the belief

²⁰ SKEYES, “al-Amn al-‘amm al-Lubnani yamna’ filman yatadamman ishara ila ightiyal al-Hariri,” Dec. 13, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/m71Th>>.

²¹ SKEYES, “Ikhla’ sabil sahib kitab ‘al-ma’sara’ Jiyurj al-‘Alam bi-sand al-iqama,” Dec. 8, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/hngbG>>; Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, “Lubnan: al-shabaka al-‘Arabiya tudin al-tahqiq ma’ sahib kitab ‘al-mi’sara’,” Dec. 6, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=44457>>.

²² SKEYES, “Skysz yastaghrib qarar al-majlis al-watani li-l-i’lam fath sijjil bi-l-mawaqi’ al-ilaktruniya wa rabt tajdid tarakhis al-mu’assasat bi-l-mukhalafat,” Oct. 23, 2011, <<http://skeyes.wordpress.com/2011/10/21/685467897894765468798798798/>>.

²³ SKEYES, “Skysz yastankir qarsanat mawqa’ ‘janubiya’ li-l-marra al-rabi’a khilal shahr,” Dec. 8, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/Y90FK/>>.

that the attacks were a response to calls from prominent Future movement members for Hezbollah's disarmament.²⁴

Arbitrary detention, torture, and involuntary disappearance:

The fate of thousands of people who disappeared during the civil war remains unknown, and the authorities have taken no serious steps to expose the truth. At the same time, torture and arbitrary arrest continued, especially in detention facilities of the Defense Ministry, and a number of people were prosecuted before military courts lacking guarantees of due process. Additionally, it was increasingly feared that the Lebanese authorities were forcibly repatriating Syrians who had fled the repression of the Syrian regime.

On July 12, 2010, Lebanese national Tareq Rabaa was arrested and detained in a detention center of the Defense Ministry, where he was subjected to torture and degrading treatment for 108 days; he had been summoned for questioning on suspicion of receiving phone calls from the Israeli Mossad. After being questioned, Rabaa was forced to strip and his hands were cuffed. He was forced to stand for 20 days, during which time he was subjected to electroshocks and beaten brutally on his ears. He was not permitted to meet his sister or his lawyers until 32 days after his arrest. His trial began before the military judiciary on February 7, 2011, on charges of dealing with Israel. Although Rabaa was examined by a forensic physician whose report confirmed that he had been exposed to torture, the court did not take the report into consideration. It is feared he will be convicted based on confessions extracted from him under duress, even though he refused to sign them.²⁵

Similar fears have been voiced regarding the military trial of Mohammed Dib Oeiza on charges of telephone contact with the Israeli authorities. During the trial, the defendant repudiated the confessions exacted from him during preliminary questioning at the Ministry of Defense after his arrest by military intelligence in April 2010. He was then detained incommunicado for 12 days, after which he was referred to a military court. While detained by the Defense Ministry before his transfer to the Roumieh Prison, he was

²⁴ SKEYES, "Skyz tastankir tadmīr qa'idat bayanat 'muntada al-mustaqbal' wa 'Sa'd al-Hariri' wa 'mu'assasat al-Hariri'," Mar. 14, 2011, <<http://skeyes.wordpress.com/2011/03/14/55669698/>>.

²⁵ Alkarama, "Lebanon: Promptly investigate torture and arbitrary detention allegations in the case of Mr. Tarek Rabaa," Nov. 9, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/iwGqo>>.

reportedly brutally beaten, tortured, hung from his wrists, forced to stand for long periods in painful positions, and denied sleep.²⁶

Four other persons would face death sentences on charges of committing terrorist acts if convicted by a military court that first convened in June 2011. The four were tortured after being arrested in June and July 2009. They were then taken to the Defense Ministry and held incommunicado in a series of military police facilities for eight months, during which time they were brutally beaten, suspended for days, forced to stand for hours, and threatened and humiliated. They were also forced to sign incriminating confessions and threatened lest they change their statements before the judge.²⁷

Two prisoners died and 45 were injured in the Roumieh Prison, after joint security-military forces stormed the prison in April 2011 to end rioting by prisoners demanding better prison conditions and reduced pre-trial detention times. Security forces used rubber bullets, sound grenades, and tear gas. According to the Defense Ministry, the prison holds 3,700 inmates, or about twice its intended capacity.²⁸

Some 101 Syrian refugees in Lebanon were detained last year, after having escaped the violence and repression inside Syria; this raised fears of that they may have been forcibly repatriated to Syria.²⁹

The fate of numerous Syrian activists is also unknown. Some were reportedly abducted in Beirut in March 2011, among them Jasem Marei Jasem and his brothers.³⁰ Syrian human rights groups noted that veteran Syrian politician Shibli Alayssami, age 87, was abducted on May 24, 2011, in the city of Aliya by a Lebanese security patrol led by an officer known for his affiliation with allies of the Syrian regime.³¹

²⁶ Alkarama, "Lubnan: muhakamat najl asir muharrar bina'an 'ala i'tirafat taht al-ta'dhib," Mar. 22, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/SQ6J5>>.

²⁷ Alkarama, "Lebanon: Four Individuals at Risk of Death Penalty following Confessions Extracted under Torture," May 30, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/H7G40>>.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Prison Deaths, Injuries Need Independent Investigation," Apr. 8, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/04/08/lebanon-prison-deaths-injuries-need-independent-investigation>>.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: Stop Detaining Syrian Refugees," May 20, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/20/lebanon-stop-detaining-syrian-refugees>>.

³⁰ SKEYES, "SkYZ wa 'maharat' tunashidan wazir al-dakhiliya wa-l-sultat al-amniya al-taharruk al-sari' li-l-kashf 'an masir al-nashitin al-Suriyin al-ladhin khutifu fi Bayrut," Mar. 9, 2011, <<http://skeyes.wordpress.com/2011/03/10/455696/>>.

³¹ Syrian Human Rights Committee, "Mutaba'at tafasil ikhtitaf Shibli al-'Aysami min Lubnan," July 27, 2011, <<http://www.shrc.org/data.aspx/d15/4525.aspx>>.

In addition, seven Estonian nationals were kidnapped in the Lebanese plains of al-Beqaa on March 23, 2011; their fate remained unknown until they were released on July 14 thanks to French mediation. It emerged that they spent most of this time detained in Syria; the identity and motives of the kidnappers remains unknown.³²

The fates of thousands of people who disappeared during the civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990) remain unknown as well, and the authorities took no serious steps to establish an independent commission to find and expose the truth of what happened to them.³³ Nor was any progress made to resolve several cases of abductions which took place over the past few years, such as that of Joseph Sader, who was kidnapped on the airport road in Beirut on February 12, 2009, and is still missing.

The status of human rights defenders:

Human rights defenders came under increasing pressure. On July 25, 2011, military intelligence summoned rights activist Saad al-Din Shatila, a member of Alkarama for Human Rights, after he documented cases of torture. He was questioned for more than seven hours before being released.

This came in the wake of a series of acts of harassment against several rights activists. On March 22, the Public Prosecutor opened a criminal investigation into the Lebanese Center for Human Rights, after the Amal movement filed a complaint against the center for publishing a report of torture of detainees by persons affiliated with the movement. During the investigation, representatives of the center asked for a copy of the complaints brought against them but were denied.

Pressures which had begun in 2010 continued to target the Palestinian Human Rights Organization (Huquq), following a report issued by the group on conditions in the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp. The organization's director, Ghassan Abdullah, was questioned by military authorities, while the program coordinator in Nahr al-Barid, Hatem Miqdadi, was detained for five days in November 2010 without charge. During this time, Miqdadi was questioned about the organization's programs and meetings held between its director and representatives from foreign embassies. During his detention in

³² al-Balad, "al-Ifraj 'an al-Istuniyin fi Lubnan: injaz man?" July 14, 2011, <<http://kw.albaladonline.com/ar/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=9701>>.

³³ Amnesty International, "Lebanon Urged to Investigate Civil War Missing," Apr. 14, 2011, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/lebanon-urged-investigate-civil-war-missing-2011-04-14>>.

a military barracks, Miqdadi suffered humiliating treatment; he was stripped of his clothes and denied sleep. As a result of the pressure on the organization and the restrictions impeding its representatives' entry to Nahr al-Barid, the organization was forced to shut down its site in the camp.

When Ghassan Abdullah visited the camp on May 11, 2011, he was asked to leave by military intelligence. Every time he seeks a new permit to visit the camp, Abdullah must first visit military intelligence.³⁴

Limited developments on the legislative front:

The year 2011 was characterized by a state of legislative stasis given the difficulties of forming a new government after Hezbollah succeeded in bringing down the Saad al-Hariri government early in the year.

The most important development came in addressing gender-based violence. The Lebanese parliament abolished Article 562 of the Penal Code, which had previously imposed reduced penalties for those condemned of murder or violence in what is known as "honor crimes" against women in their own families. However, the new government contained no female representatives and took no further steps to end discrimination against women enshrined in other sections of the Penal Code. The law remains prejudicial against women in penalties related to crimes of adultery.

Although the former government had prepared a draft law on domestic violence in May 2010, the bill, which criminalizes physical, psychological, and sexual abuse against women, including marital rape, is still under review by the competent parliamentary committee, having met with objections from both Sunni and Shiite religious institutions. On June 28, the Fatwa Office announced its rejection of the law, stating that Islamic law is the adequate framework for addressing problems of domestic violence and warning that the law would lead to the disintegration of the family and undermine the authority of the father and his ability to raise his children.³⁵

³⁴ Alkarama, "Lubnan: munazzamat huquqiya tatalib al-hukuma al-Lubnaniya bi-l-kaff 'an al-ta'arrud li-l-mudafi' in 'an huquq al-insan bi-sabab tawthiqihim li-halat al-ta'dhib," Aug. 4, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/752jp>>.

³⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: Law Reform Targets 'Honor' Crimes," Aug. 11, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/11/lebanon-law-reform-targets-honor-crimes>>; Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: Enact Family Violence Bill to Protect Women," July 6, 2011, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/06/lebanon-enact-family-violence-bill-protect-women>>.

Status of Palestinian refugees:

The status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon witnessed no marked improvement. The amendments introduced to the labor and social security law to partially permit Palestinians to work in Lebanon were not effective. During the UN Universal Periodic Review of human rights in Lebanon, representatives of the Lebanese government announced in March 2011 their acceptance of recommendations related to improving employment opportunities and work conditions of Palestinian refugees and to issuing identity documents for Palestinians without them. However, crucial recommendations related to Palestinian ownership rights, their right to work in the free professions, and ending restrictions on their freedom of movement were rejected, as the government representatives denied the existence of any restrictions on Palestinian refugees' movements.³⁶

At least six people were killed and 120 injured by Israeli soldiers who opened fire on a march organized by civic groups, Palestinian factions, and Lebanese political parties on the anniversary of the 1948 Palestinian dispossession ("*an-Nakba*") on May 15 in Maroun al-Ras in southern Lebanon. Field reports stated that the soldiers sought to inflict lethal injuries on the demonstrators.³⁷

It was reported that UNRWA intentionally reduced its services to refugees in Lebanese camps, and several sick people died after they were denied the permits necessary for hospital admittance.³⁸

In June, the mufti of Lebanon made racist statements when meeting with a Palestinian delegation to discuss the issue of construction on *waqf* property. "You've trespassed and usurped *waqf* land," the mufti said. "We hosted you here and we don't want you as guests anymore. You're trash and your cause will not be victorious."³⁹

The Ain Helwa refugee camp in August 2011 saw armed clashes between Fatah and militants affiliated with the Jund al-Sham organization; 10 people

³⁶ CIHRS, "Istimrar al-fashal al-Lubnani fi-l-ta'amul ma' huquq al-laji' in al-Filistiniyin min manzur huquq al-insan 'ala-l-raghm min ihraz ba'd al-taqaddum," Mar. 22, 2011; on the amendments to the labor and social security law, see CIHRS, 2010 annual report.

³⁷ Alkarama, "Isra'il tuwasil tanfidh 'amaliyat i'dam kharij nitaq al-qada' bi-haqq al-mutazahirin wa-l-nushata' al-silmiyin," July 1, 2011, <<http://goo.gl/WmfYH>>.

³⁸ Palestinian Association for Human Rights, "Rasid tudin siyasad unrawa tujah al-laji' in al-Filistiniyin fi Lubnan," Mar. 30, 2011, <<http://www.pal-monitor.org/Portal/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=597>>.

³⁹ "al-Jam'iya al-Filistiniya li-huquq al-insan-rasid: tasrihat al-mufti bi-haqq al-Filistiniyin fi Lubnan 'unsuriya wa marfuda wa 'alayhi al-i'tidhar fawran," June 16, 2011, <<http://www.atarakji.com/pal/news.php?action=view&id=459>>.

were injured and homes and shops were severely damaged. The clashes erupted after the discovery of an explosive device targeting Col. Mahmoud Eissa al-Nino, a leader of the Palestinian armed resistance in Lebanon; two suspects, who confessed to planting the bomb, were turned over to Lebanese intelligence.⁴⁰ In December, Ashraf al-Qadiri of the Fatah movement was assassinated in the same camp, and it was strongly suspected that the responsibility lied with elements of Jund al-Sham and Fatah al-Islam.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, "Rasid tudin al-ahdath al-akhira fi 'Ayn al-Hulwa," Aug. 10, 2011, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=37328>>.

⁴¹ Palestinian Association for Human Rights, "Rasid tudin jarimat ightiyal 'anasir fath fi 'Ayn al-Hulwa," Dec. 17, 2011, <<http://www.pal-monitor.org/Portal/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=662>>.

