

Lebanon - Human Rights Scorecard ¹

Lebanon, officially the Lebanese Republic, is a Middle Eastern country bordered with by Syria to the north and east over 376 km and Israel to the south over 79 km. Lebanon's location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Basin and the Arabian hinterland facilitated its rich history and shaped a cultural identity of religious and ethnic diversity. However, its location has also made Lebanon the site of proxy wars between rival powers in the region. Lebanon achieved independence from the French in the early 1940s, but has often been politically unstable due to the precarious balance among its different ethnic groups and religions.

Official language: Arabic

Ethnic groups: Ethno-religious groups include Shias, Sunnis, Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Melkites, Druze, Protestants and other groups. Due to the fragile ethnic makeup of Lebanon, there has been no official census since 1943.

Government: Unitary parliamentary; multi-confessionalist republic

- No President at the moment, Acting President: Tammam Salam

- Prime Minister: Tammam Salam

- Speaker of the Parliament: Nabih Berri

Death penalty: De facto abolished (Nominally legal but no longer officially carried out)

Population: 5.85 million

Life expectancy: 79.9 years

Under-5 mortality: 8 per 1000

Adult literacy: 93.9 percent



Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Respected²

There are no reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

Freedom from disappearance



Partially respected³

There are no confirmed reports of disappearances in Lebanon. However, Syrians who fled to Lebanon, including political activists and other refugees, allegedly risk being targeted, harassed, and kidnapped by Syrian and Lebanese security services.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Largely disrespected⁴

The law does not specifically prohibit torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and there were reports security officials employed such practices.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Largely disrespected⁵

The law requires judicial warrants before arrests except in cases of active pursuit. Nonetheless, authorities often fail to respect such provisions of Lebanese law.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Largely disrespected⁶

Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the judiciary is often subjected to political pressure, particularly in the appointment of key prosecutors and investigating magistrates.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Largely disrespected⁷

The law prohibits such actions, but authorities frequently interfere with the privacy of persons regarded as enemies of the government.

Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)⁸



Score: 31.81, Rank: 98 / 180 – Highly controlled, limited or intimidated⁹

The constitution provides for press freedom, but vague laws banning news deemed contrary to “national ethics” or “religious feelings” remain on the books. Lebanese journalists complain that media laws are chaotic, contradictory, and ambiguously worded.

Freedom from academic censorship



Largely disrespected¹⁰

The law permits academic censorship if the material is considered a threat to national security or an offense to the dignity of the head of state or foreign leaders. Intimidation and violence also lead to self-censorship among the academics.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Partially respected¹¹

The law provides for the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respects the law. The government has been known to restrict the right of freedom of assembly in previous years.

Freedom of religion



Partially respected¹²

Lebanon is well known for its Constitution providing freedom of religion and establishing a balance of power among the three major religious groups, Christians, Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Largely disrespected¹³

Lebanon has been dealing with a huge influx of Syrian refugees since 2012, and has not been able to meet this challenge adequately, due to lack of funds and international support. Limitations on freedom of movement or arbitrary arrest of Palestinian and Syrian refugees are commonplace.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{14 15}



4 / 7 – Partly free¹⁶

Government and civil society groups struggle to accommodate the influx of millions of Syrian refugees and to ensure public safety, especially in the country’s northern regions, amid rising fears of civil and sectarian violence.

Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)¹⁷



5 / 7 – Partly free¹⁸

The sectarian political system and the powerful role of foreign patrons effectively limit the accountability of elected officials to the public at large. 2015 was marked by the Parliament’s repeated failure to elect a president, which left the country with a presidential void.

Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)¹⁹



Score: 28%, Rank: 123 / 175 – Some corruption²⁰

Although corruption has always existed in Lebanon, its effects were magnified in 1990 after the end of a 15-year civil war. Corruption touches all branches of government and exists in all its forms including bribery, nepotism, favouritism, vote-buying, patronage, etc.

Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Partially respected²¹

Human rights groups generally operated in Lebanon without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. But government officials generally were not responsive to these groups' views.

Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Rights of women (*World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index*)²²



Score: 59.2%, Rank: 135 / 142 – Very unequal rights²³

Aspects of the law and traditional beliefs discriminate against women who, even if they are as educated as men, do not have the same economic opportunities, especially in politics. Also, the law does not criminalize marital rape.

Rights of Children (*KidsRights Index Overall Score*)²⁴



Score: 81%, Rank: 34 / 165 – Protected²⁵

Because citizenship in Lebanon is derived from the father, children in Lebanon can be born stateless. Stateless children lack some rights granted to citizens, such as free and compulsory primary school.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Partially respected²⁶

Although there are some areas in which the Lebanon government's enforcement of laws surrounding the protection of persons with disabilities are applied, there is much room for improvement.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Largely disrespected²⁷

There is a widespread pattern of discrimination against persons who did not appear to be ethnically Lebanese. Foreign Arab, African, and Asian students, professionals, and tourists reported being denied access to bars, clubs, restaurants, and private beaches.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected^{28 29}

There is official and societal discrimination against LGBT persons. The law prohibits "unnatural sexual intercourse," an offense often resulting in a fine. NGOs reported incidents of violence and abuse due to negative social stereotypes.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Partially respected³⁰

Although the law allows for a range of independent union organizations, the rights of unions are greatly restricted in Lebanon.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Largely disrespected³¹

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labour, but the government did not effectively enforce the law, despite some efforts.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Partially respected³²

Laws guaranteeing minimum age of employment and protection of children from child labour are comprehensive, but the government did not always enforce them effectively, in part because of inadequate resources.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Largely disrespected³³

The law provides for extensive protection of workers, including a minimum wage, health and safety standards, etc. but it does not cover adequately domestic workers. The Ministry of Labour enforces regulations unevenly.

Right to employment



6.6% - Reasonable unemployment³⁴

The unemployment rate in Lebanon has climbed somewhat, and is project to further climb.

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Lebanon." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed February 1st, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

³ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁸ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

⁹ "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 1st, 2016. <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.

¹⁰ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Lebanon." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 1st, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

¹¹ "Lebanon." World Report 2014: Lebanon. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 1st, 2016. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/lebanon>.

¹² "Lebanon." International Religious Freedom Report for 2014. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 1st, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

¹³ "Lebanon." World Report 2014: Lebanon. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 1st, 2016. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/lebanon>.

¹⁴ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

¹⁵ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed February 1st, 2016

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁶ "Lebanon." Freedom in the World 2015: Lebanon." January 1, 2015. Accessed February 1st, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/lebanon>

¹⁷ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed February 8, 2016 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2015/methodology>

¹⁸ "Lebanon." Freedom in the World 2015: Lebanon. January 1, 2015. Accessed February 8, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/lebanon>

¹⁹ Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

²⁰ "Lebanon." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2015. Accessed February 9, 2016. <http://www.transparency.org/country#LBN>.

²¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Lebanon." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 9, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

²² This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

²³ "Lebanon." World Economic Forum. January 1, 2015. Accessed February 10, 2016. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=LBN>.

²⁴ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

²⁵ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed February 10, 2016. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

²⁶ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Lebanon." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 10, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

²⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁸ "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2015. Accessed February 10, 2016. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁹ ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

³⁰ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Lebanon." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 10, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

³¹ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³³ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁴ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2014. Accessed February 9, 2016.. http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm.