



Genocide Watch  
The Alliance Against Genocide

## Country Report: Lebanon January 2022

Lebanon faces a severe [economic crisis](#) that threatens to tear apart the delicate social fabric maintained since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war. The economic implosion has resulted from the August 2020 [Beirut port blast](#), which killed 200 people, destroyed the Beirut port and electrical infrastructure, and plunged Beirut into darkness. Eighty percent of the population has [fallen into poverty](#), struggling to procure food, water, and medicine.

Lebanon has suffered from years of political mismanagement. Protests calling for an end to government corruption accelerated following the port explosion. The protests have been met with an increase in violence as security forces arbitrarily detain and torture protestors.

Lebanon's economic crisis threatens to revive sectarian divisions. In August, a dispute over gasoline led to a [sectarian standoff](#) between Christian and Shiite villagers, wounding six people. In October, the Shiite political party and militant group Hezbollah organised protests against the investigators of the Beirut blast, accusing them of unfairly targeting Shia officials. The protests turned violent as [shootings](#) killed six people and injured a dozen more. All the victims were Shia Muslims. Hezbollah accused the Christian Lebanese Forces Party of ordering the shootings to rekindle civil war. The Lebanese Forces Party denied these accusations. [The violence](#) revealed the same sectarian fault lines between Christians and Shia Muslims that divided Lebanon during its civil war.

The fifteen-year Lebanese civil war resulted in the deaths of at least 150,000 people and the “disappearances” of 17,000 more. The government has failed to hold perpetrators of mass atrocities during the war accountable due to its enactment of a blanket [General Amnesty Law in 1991](#), pardoning all crimes committed. Many of the militias and their leaders during the war have transformed themselves into the political parties and politicians of today. This culture of impunity and sectarianism has bred corruption and political instability.

Lebanon houses sizeable populations of Syrian and Palestinian refugees. During the 1982 [Sabra and Shatila Massacre](#), the Lebanese Forces militia, also known as Phalangist militia, raped and murdered over 800 Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Some estimates put that number at over 3,000 killed.

Only 15 percent of Syrian refugees have legal residency in Lebanon, blocking refugees' access to housing and [childrens' enrollment in schools](#). Nearly two million Palestinians live in camps across the country. Palestinians are not allowed to register births, marriages and deaths unless they can present official Lebanese identity documents, which most cannot obtain. They are excluded from public education, health services and ownership of property. The Lebanese economic collapse has made it difficult for refugees to work and support their families.

Discrimination against Syrian and Palestinian refugees places Lebanon at **Stage 3: Discrimination**. Due to its failure to try perpetrators of atrocities committed during the civil war, Lebanon is at **Stage 10: Denial**. With the threat of deepening sectarian violence, Lebanon is at **Stage 5: Organization and Stage 6: Polarization**.

### Genocide Watch recommends:

- The Lebanese government should dismantle sectarian militias and create a united Lebanese national army.
- The Lebanese Forces Party and Hezbollah militias should negotiate an end to their sectarian warfare.
- Lebanon should repeal the General Amnesty Law of 1991 and enact laws to prevent perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity from holding public office.
- The EU, U.S., and Islamic nations should donate massive aid for Lebanese recovery and refugee support.