



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Country Report: Lebanon February 2021

Before gaining independence from France, Lebanon conducted a census in 1932 and established its representative confessionalism system. The system mandates proportional representation between Christians and Muslims by requiring a Maronite Christian President, a Sunni Muslim Prime Minister, and a Shi'a Muslim Speaker of Parliament. The 1989 Taif Agreement, which ended Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, solidified the representative confessionalism system.

From 1975-1990, Lebanon was embroiled in a bloody civil war between the Christian Lebanese Front and the Muslim and Arab National Movement, supported by Palestinian groups. The war resulted in the disappearance of 17,000 and the loss of over 150,000 lives. 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, which pardoned all political crimes committed before that year.

Many militias from the war have turned into political parties, and their leaders into politicians. During the 1982 Sabra and Shatila Massacre, the Lebanese Forces militia, also known as Phalangist militia, raped and murdered over 800 civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

Lebanon is vulnerable to spillover conflict from neighboring Israel and Syria, such as clashes and mass violence in 2012-2013 between Syrian opposition Sunni Muslims and Syrian government Alawite and Hezbollah forces.

Protests began in October 2019 against new tax and austerity measures. They were reignited after the August 4, 2020 Beirut port explosion. Protesters call for an end to rampant government corruption. Security forces use torture against protestors. A report by Amnesty International revealed that former detainees experienced beatings, electric shocks on their genitals, and hanging in stress positions for long durations.

Syrian and Palestinian refugees experience discrimination in Lebanon. Human Rights Watch reports that 73% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon lack legal status, so they cannot access healthcare, work or education. Lebanon also violates its non-refoulement obligations by deporting refugees, demolishing structures in unofficial refugee camps, and forcing refugees out of unused buildings. Discrimination against long-term Palestinian refugees is widespread, including denial of rights to register births, marriages and deaths for those without official identity documents, exclusions from public education and health services, restrictions on work eligibility, and exclusion from owning or inheriting property.

The LGBTQ community in Lebanon suffers discrimination. Security forces are cracking down on LGBTQ individuals and organizations. Article 534 of the Penal Code criminalizes any sex which "contradicts the laws of nature", making homosexual sex punishable by up to one year in prison. Lebanon criminalizes sex work.

Women, especially migrant women, face systematic discrimination and violence under the "kafala" (sponsorship) system. This system restricts migrant women's rights to freedom of movement, communication, education and healthcare. Migrant women also suffer from exploitative working conditions, denial of pay or compulsory deductions, deprivation of food and proper accommodation, and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. The 1925 Nationality Law, grants citizenship only to children whose fathers are Lebanese. It inhibits refugee children's ability to enroll in public schools, and restricts their right to healthcare, work, and property ownership. It puts such children at high risk of statelessness.

Because of its discriminatory practices towards women, the LGBTQ community, and refugees, Genocide Watch considers Lebanon to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination**. Because of its failure to seek justice for atrocities committed during the civil war, especially the Sabra and Shatila Massacres, Lebanon is also at **Stage 10: Denial**.

Genocide Watch urges Lebanon to:

- Change its discriminatory 1925 Nationality Law to confer citizenship on all persons born in Lebanon.
- Repeal Article 534 and introduce legislation that protects LGBTQ people from discrimination.
- Initiate a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate atrocities committed during the civil war.
- Repeal the General Amnesty Law of 1991. Ban perpetrators of crimes from government roles.