

JOINT STATEMENT

In Solidarity with  
**Daraj and Megaphone**  
Amid A Coordinated Campaign



In light of the coordinated campaign targeting Lebanese independent media outlets Daraj and Megaphone, we, the undersigned group of civil society and media organizations from Lebanon and around the world, come together to stand in solidarity against attempts to silence these leading voices. We call on the relevant Lebanese authorities to take clear steps in the face of these defamatory and alarming actions.

Earlier this month, Daraj and Megaphone learned via an article published by Lebanese television channel MTV that a new legal complaint<sup>1</sup> was allegedly being brought against them before the Public Prosecutor's Office, a complaint that both Daraj and Megaphone have yet to be officially notified of or served with. The independent media organizations are reportedly accused of (1) undermining the financial standing of the state, (2) destabilizing confidence in the strength of the national currency and state bonds, (3) inciting depositors to withdraw their funds and sell bonds, and (4) receiving suspicious foreign funds with the aim of launching media campaigns that would shake confidence in Lebanon.

This most recent targeting of Daraj and Megaphone comes alongside a defamatory campaign against both independent media organizations from media outlets, websites, and figures who are linked to Lebanese banker Antoun Sehnaoui.<sup>2</sup> This campaign follows recent similar campaigns<sup>3</sup> targeting Lebanese economists who have put forth recommendations which would threaten the banking lobby's interests<sup>4</sup> and hold them to account. Since February, a similar media defamation campaign<sup>5</sup> linked to Sehnaoui's affiliated-organizations has also targeted Lebanese advocacy group Kulluna Irada following their demands for accountability in relation to the theft of peoples' funds following Lebanon's 2019 financial crisis.

Since Lebanon's financial crisis in 2019, Daraj and Megaphone have been producing news and reports investigating financial mismanagement, corruption, and money laundering, including critical investigations which resulted in multi-country accountability efforts targeting<sup>6</sup> former Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh.<sup>7</sup> Prior to this coordinated campaign, attempts were previously made to silence both Daraj and Megaphone through prior lawsuits.<sup>8</sup>

Lebanon is at a critical moment. The new Lebanese government is actively engaging<sup>9</sup> with the IMF and the World Bank in support of the country's reconstruction and economic recovery and the country is preparing to elect<sup>10</sup> a new Central Bank Governor. Rather than working toward the financial and economic reform that the country and its people desperately need, the Association of Banks in Lebanon is working to ensure their preferred candidate is elected<sup>11</sup> and that restructuring plans<sup>12</sup> are adopted to shift the burden of repaying depositors away from the banks and onto the government itself. In support of this, they are instrumentalizing Daraj and Megaphone's reporting in a campaign to silence them.

1-<https://www.occrp.org/en/news/silencing-the-media-journalists-face-legal-action-after-bank-expose>

2-<https://daraj.media/en/why-are-antoun-sehnaouis-media-arms-targeting-daraj/>

3-<https://x.com/MegaphoneNewsEN/status/1900640034761384215>

4-<https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1450608/five-years-after-the-start-of-the-crisis-in-lebanon-the-banking-lobby-remains-an-unshakeable-bastion.html>

5-<https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1447171/sibylle-rizk-the-campaign-against-kulluna-irada-actually-targets-nawaf-salam.html>

6-<https://www.occrp.org/en/feature/new-sanctions-on-lebanons-former-central-bank-governor-likely-bring-frozen-assets-to-at-least-200-million-documents-show>

7-<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/judge-questions-lebanons-detained-ex-central-bank-chief-salameh-sources-say-2024-09-09/>

8- <https://www.occrp.org/en/news/silencing-the-media-journalists-face-legal-action-after-bank-expose>

9-<https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1451552/imf-will-help-lebanon-prepare-a-new-plan.html>

10-<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-weighting-lebanons-next-central-bank-chief-sources-say-2025-03-16/>

11-<https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1451465/bdl-governance-how-karim-souhaid-became-the-frontrunner.html>

12-<https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1450986/bank-resolution-should-all-lebanese-bear-the-losses-of-a-minority.html>

We, the undersigned, call on the relevant Lebanese authorities, specifically, the public prosecutors and judicial authorities, the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Justice and of Information, and the President, to protect independent media outlets and support the country's economic recovery by:

- Stopping the weaponization of baseless charges to silence independent media and stopping the referral of cases involving media outlets and journalists to criminal court.
- Investigating entities that weaponize state tools to silence independent media outlets through SLAPP lawsuits.<sup>13</sup>
- Ensuring a free operating environment for the media and free expression in line with Lebanon's constitutional and international obligations.
- Enacting necessary reforms on media regulation and ensuring state oversight on media funding to prevent conflicts of interest and the control of media by the perpetrators of financial crimes.
- Pursuing meaningful economic reforms which hold financial abusers accountable and which bring the country out of economic crisis.

#### Signatories

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|---|--|
| 1-Access Center For Human Rights (ACHR)                     | 30-Kandoo  |
| 2-Access Now  | 31-Kawaakibi Foundation  |
| 3-Al-aalem Al-jadeed  | 32-Lebanese Center for Human Rights                                      |
| 4-Al-Jumhuriya Collective                                   | 33-Mada Network  |
| 5-Alhudood  | 34-Maharat Foundation  |
| 6-AMAL  | 35-Marie Colvin Journalists' Network                                     |
| 7-Arab Reform Initiative                                    | 36-Matsadaash  |
| 8-Arab Watch Coalition                                      | 37-MENA Rights Group   |
| 9-Arabi Facts Hub   | 38-Middle East Democracy Center (MEDC)                                   |
| 10-ARIJ (Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism)       | 39-Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA)          |
| 11-ARTICLE 19   | 40-Radio Rozana  |
| 12-Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) | 41-Raseef22  |
| 13-Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)         | 42-REDWORD for Human Rights & Freedom of Expression                      |
| 14-Cedar Centre for Legal Studies                           | 43-Reporters Without Borders (RSF)                                       |
| 15-Committee to Protect Journalists                         | 44-Samir Kassir Foundation   |
| 16-Community Media Network                                  | 45-SMEX  |
| 17-Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR)                   | 46-Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research                          |
| 18-Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)                       | 47-Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)               |
| 19-Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)           | 48-Syrians for Truth and Justice - STJ                                   |
| 20-Electronic Frontier Foundation                           | 49-Syrian Investigative Reporting for Accountability Journalism (SIRAJ)  |
| 21-Fair Square  | 50-The Alternative Press Syndicate - Lebanon                             |
| 22-Fakar Tany   | 51-The Palestinian Platform for Fact-Checking and Media Literacy- Kashif |
| 23-Febrayer Network   | 52-The Solidarity Directory (Daleel Tadamon)                             |
| 24-Forbidden Stories  | 53-The Syria Campaign  |
| 25-From The Periphery                                       | 54-The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)                   |
| 26-HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement             | 55-Tech4Peace  |
| 27-INSM   | 56-UMAM Documentation & Research   |
| 28- International Press Institute (IPI)                     | 57-Wattan Media Network  |
| 29-Journalisme & Citoyenneté . Les Assises du Journalisme   | 58-Zawia3  |

13-[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic\\_lawsuit\\_against\\_public\\_participation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_lawsuit_against_public_participation)