

Joint Statement

**Lebanon:
Seven Years of Enacting
a Torture Law without
Effective Implementation**

26 June 2025



On the occasion of 26 June, the ***International Day in Support of Victims of Torture***- which symbolizes the global commitment to ending the practice of torture and other ill-treatment- we, the undersigned organizations, express our deep concern over the ongoing impunity for the crime of torture in Lebanon and the lack of effective implementation of the Anti-Torture Law enacted in 2017.

Despite Lebanon's accession to the United Nations Convention against Torture (CAT) in 2000, along with its Optional Protocol in 2008, and its enactment of Law No. 65/2017, practical steps to ensure the prevention of torture and other ill-treatment and hold perpetrators accountable remain very limited. Furthermore, the Istanbul Protocol has not yet been adopted as a national reference for documenting and investigating cases of torture and other ill-treatment.

On 19 September 2017, the Lebanese Parliament passed Law No. 65/2017¹, which criminalizes torture, but requires significant amendments to comply with Lebanon's international obligations under the CAT. Specifically, the Committee Against Torture² has called on Lebanon to amend the anti-torture law to remove the statute of limitations, ensure the penalties reflect the grave nature of the crime, and include a complete definition of torture that comply with the CAT . The Committee also noted high levels of impunity around the crime of torture.

More than seven years after passing the anti-torture law, no serious prosecutions of alleged perpetrators have been recorded, and most of the complaints citing the anti-torture law have not been investigated. Victims' complaints are often ignored or referred to the military court, in violation of the principle of an independent and impartial judiciary.

In July 2019, the government appointed members of the National Human Rights Commission³, including the National Preventive Mechanism against Torture established under the Optional Protocol. However, the Commission remains unable to perform its duties due to the failure to issue the necessary implementing decrees and the lack of funding and administrative facilities.

The Case of Bashar Abed Saud

On 31 August 2022, Bashar Abed Saud, a Syrian refugee, died just one day after his arrest by the State Security Directorate. Reports⁴ indicated that he was tortured by an officer and four low rank officers at the General Directorate of State Security in Tebnine . Despite the arrest of the five officers, the case was referred to the military court, in violation of Lebanon's domestic and international obligations.

On 01 November 2024, nearly two years after his death, the Beirut military court issued its verdict in the case: all defendants were sentenced to time served after the court reduced the nature of their crime from felony to misdemeanor, dropped the charges under the anti-torture law and replaced them with the Article 166 of the Code of Military Justice that prohibits violating regulations, orders and general instructions.

This verdict was issued without sufficient justification, despite the presence of substantial evidence proving that the torture Abed Saud endured during his detention was the direct cause of his death. This ruling⁵ contradicted the findings of two forensic doctors appointed by the judicial authorities, who concluded that his death resulted from the severe beatings inflicted on him while in custody.

The Case of Abdulrahman Al-Qaradawi

On 28 December 2024, poet and political dissident Abdulrahman Al-Qaradawi was arrested in Lebanon upon returning from Syria based on an Arab Interior Ministers Council⁵ warrant triggered by politically motivated charges from Egypt and the UAE. Al-Qaradawi, known for his critical stance toward both regimes and his vocal defense of democratic freedoms, was accused of inciting unrest and spreading false information. Despite his Turkish citizenship and international protections, Lebanese authorities interrogated him and reviewed extradition requests from both Egypt and the UAE. Despite legal appeals and urgent interventions by human rights organisations⁶ and the UN Special Rapporteurs⁷—Lebanon deported Al-Qaradawi to the UAE on 8 January 2025. He has been held incommunicado ever since, prohibited from contacting his family or legal counsel.

In deporting Al-Qaradawi, Lebanon violated its obligations under the Convention against Torture and the customary international legal principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the deportation of any person to a country where they face the real risk of torture or other serious human rights violations. The deportation, despite a pending appeal and substantial evidence of potential torture or other ill-treatment, underscores growing concerns about the misuse of judicial cooperation mechanisms in the region to suppress dissent. In light of his ongoing enforced disappearance since January 2025 and Lebanon's obligations under the principle of non-refoulement and the Convention against Torture, authorities must conduct a transparent review of the deportation of Abdulrahman Al-Qaradawi and formally engage with the Emirati authorities to ensure his safety, disclose his fate and whereabouts, and guarantee his access to legal counsel and family contact.

Recommendations

We, the undersigned, urge the Lebanese authorities to take the following immediate actions:

1. Respect international obligations under the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol, and implement the recommendations issued by the UN Committee against Torture.
2. Recognize the authority of the UN Committee Against Torture to receive individual complaints under Article 22 of the Convention and enhance grievance mechanisms.
3. Refer all torture cases to regular courts in accordance with Article 15 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, ensuring fair and transparent trials.
4. Conduct prompt, independent, effective, and impartial investigations into all complaints of torture and other ill-treatment.
5. Adopt a law on the independence of the judiciary in accordance with international standards to ensure the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary, including in cases of torture and other ill-treatment.
6. Publish reports from the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture regarding Lebanon to promote transparency and accountability.
7. Adopt the Istanbul Protocol as a mandatory reference in medical and judicial investigations, and train judges and forensic doctors on its content.
8. Amend Law No. 65/2017 on the Punishment of Torture to include a more precise and comprehensive definition of the crime, abolish the statute of limitations, impose appropriately serious penalties, and restrict jurisdiction over torture cases to regular courts.
9. Empower the National Human Rights Commission to perform its duties immediately by issuing executive decrees and providing adequate resources.
10. Provide support and rehabilitation programs specifically for torture survivors, as well as for refugees who have been subjected to human trafficking or forced deportation, and ensure their access to medical, psychological, and legal services.

Signatories:

- ACAT- France
- Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR)
- Alkarama Foundation
- Amnesty International
- Association For Victims of Torture (AVT)
- Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS)
- Egyptian Human Rights Forum (EHRF)
- EuroMed Rights Network
- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- Justice for Human Rights
- MENA Rights Group (MRG)
- Omega Research Foundation
- Proud Lebanon
- The Legal Agenda
- The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
- Tawasol Organization for Human Rights

1-<https://ccls-lebanon.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/AntiTortureLaw.pdf>

2-https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CAT%2FC%2FLBN%2FCO%2F1&Lang=en

3-<https://en.nhrclb.org/>

4- <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=27650>

5- <https://nauss.edu.sa/en/about-nauss/arab-relations-and-international-cooperation/Pages/Interior-ministers-council.aspx>

6-<https://shorturl.at/uEett>

7-<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=29612>