



LEBANON: CONCERNS REGARDING THE DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY OF CHILDREN—INCLUDING MIGRANT, REFUGEE, AND ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

SUBMISSION TO THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AHEAD OF ITS ADOPTION OF ITS LIST OF ISSUES PRIOR TO REPORTING

SUBMITTED: DECEMBER 2025

ABOUT THE LEBANESE CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (CLDH)

The Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) has been working with children deprived of liberty and children at risk providing them with psychosocial support and legal services in detention centers, prisons and outside. CLDH also monitors the situation of human rights in Lebanon, both online and through its presence in official or non-official facilities and courts all over Lebanon. CLDH stresses the fact that children deprived of liberty continue to face violations to their basic rights in Lebanon, with a recent surge in violations affecting their well-being and mental health.

CLDH published a report in 2022 on the conditions of juveniles in detention centers in Lebanon and has since been actively supporting children deprived of their liberty through legal aid, psychosocial support, and targeted advocacy. The advocacy includes online campaigns, public statements, awareness videos, as well as roundtables and trainings with key stakeholders working directly with detained children. These efforts aim to promote awareness of children's rights as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Lebanon, and in Law 422/2002, while advocating for the amendment of this law to ensure full alignment with international child protection standards

ABOUT THE GLOBAL DETENTION PROJECT (GDP)

The Global Detention Project (GDP) is committed to ending arbitrary and harmful migration-related detention practices around the world, and to ensuring respect for the fundamental human rights of all migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. To achieve this, we seek to:

- Increase public knowledge and awareness of immigration detention policies.
- Expand coverage of immigration detention by human rights monitoring bodies and other international agencies.
- Expand partnerships with local and international civil society organisations working to end arbitrary and harmful immigration detention practices.
- Strategically target research and advocacy so that it effectively challenges arbitrary and harmful detention laws and policies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) and the Global Detention Project (GDP) welcome the opportunity to provide this report on Lebanon to the Committee on the Rights of the Child ahead of its adoption of its List of Issues Prior to Reporting during its 103rd Pre-Session. This submission raises concerns regarding the treatment of children deprived of their liberty since the State Party's review in 2017—including detained migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking children.

2. ARREST AND DETENTION OF MIGRANT, REFUGEE, AND ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

In Lebanon, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers can be detained and deported through both criminal and administrative procedures stemming from their migratory status. The country's **Law on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country** (1962), which provides the legal framework for immigration enforcement, applies to migrants as well as refugees and asylum seekers (there is currently no asylum legislation in place). Article 18 provides detention measures for facilitating removal procedures, although it does not stipulate a time limit for the measure, stating only that it can be imposed "for the period of time required to complete the travel formalities." Deportation may be ordered by a criminal judge when a migrant, refugee, or asylum seeker is convicted of illegal entry or other criminal offenses. Additionally, for minors, Article 18 of the Juvenile Protection Law No. 422/2002 grants the juvenile judge the power to order the removal of a child from the country if the minor has committed an offense, which raises significant protection concerns.

The law also provides for criminal prosecution for unauthorised entry or exit, failure to comply with expulsion orders, and overstaying or failing to renew residency permits (Articles 32 – 36). Non-citizens charged with these violations can face three distinct stages of incarceration: pre-trial detention, criminal incarceration upon conviction, and detention while awaiting removal.

Critically, this law **does not provide any protections for children**, leaving them vulnerable to detention, imprisonment, and expulsion.

The issue of immigration detention of children in Lebanon is long-standing. In 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee highlighted in its Concluding Observations on the State Report for Lebanon that it had received "Reports of the prolonged administrative detention of asylum seekers and refugees other than Syrian nationals, including that of children, without due

process, and their expulsion.”¹ The 2019 UN-mandated Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty reported Lebanon as one of a several countries where this practice was widespread.²

CLDH and the GDP have also documented numerous more recent reports of children being detained for immigration-related reasons. In mid-April 2023, for example, during a major crackdown on Syrian refugees by Lebanese authorities, thousands of refugees were detained and deported, without being afforded the opportunity to challenge their removal or seek protection. Syrian child refugees were amongst those apprehended by security forces in raids, transported to barracks and other military units where many were interrogated and subjected to ill-treatment including bullying, abuse, and harassment, before they were handed to Lebanese soldiers at the border with Syria.³

Lebanon has only one dedicated retention facility for foreigners—the General Security retention centre—which is used primarily for migrants detained for administrative reasons, particularly residency violations. Individuals who complete a criminal sentence in prison are transferred to the General Security retention centre afterward for immigration procedures. Therefore, when a person (including a child) is held in prison, it is generally because they have committed an offense, not merely for administrative reasons.

Mixing of adults and children is not systematic across all prisons. It tends to occur mainly during the initial stages of arrest or in certain security or military agency facilities, rather than being a uniform practice across the entire prison system.

On average, children as well as adults spend more than a month in pre-trial detention within Lebanese prisons, although some are held for up to a year.⁴ In general, prisons do not separate administrative and criminal detainees, and minors are often insufficiently separated from adults. [For more on conditions, see III (c) below.]

RECOMMENDATIONS

We encourage the committee to request the following information from the State Party:

- Details of how it intends to reform its domestic legislation to ensure that child migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are protected from detention, in line with its obligations under the Convention and as set out in the *CMW-CRC Joint general comment on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return*.
- Detailed information on specific steps authorities have taken to investigate abuses experienced by non-citizen children and to provide effective remedies to victims, as well as steps taken to prevent future recurrence of such violations.

¹ Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Lebanon, 9 May 2018, <https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/document/40785dbb-25f6-4545-bb50-dbd92c68c6c>

² Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/united-nations-global-study-children-deprived-liberty>

³ ACHR, “What Happens After the Deportation of Refugees From Lebanon?” January 2024, <https://www.achr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/WHAT-HAPPENS-AFTER-THE-DEPORTATION-OF-REFUGEES-FROM-LEBANON.pdf>

⁴ ALEF, “Situation Report 2019 – 2023,” August 2024, <https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Situation-Report-2019-2023-FINAL.pdf>

3. INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE EXPULSIONS

In its 2017 Concluding Observations, the Committee on the Rights of the child urged Lebanon to uphold the principle of non-refoulement, including ending collective expulsions. However, since then, there have been numerous reports indicating that these violations have continued, with children among those affected. In addition to the forced removal of refugees from border areas—where, according to a coalition of Lebanese NGOs, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have forcibly deported more than 13,700 since 2023⁵—the LAF has also intercepted refugees at sea, briefly detained them, and summarily expelled them to Syria.⁶ Testimonies documented by rights organisations confirm that children have been present during these operations. At the same time as these abuses, Lebanese security services have received European funding intended to curb irregular migration through the Mediterranean—raising concerns that such funding is indirectly supporting practices that violate child rights.

In some cases documented by CLDH, a minor has been detained and a decision was issued to deport them to Syria even though their parents were in Lebanon. The problem, however, is that the parents themselves are often in an irregular situation because they entered Lebanon through unofficial crossings, which prevents them from approaching General Security to declare their presence or request to remain with their child. As a result, authorities proceed with deporting the child alone to Syria, without any form of monitoring of the child’s situation, who receives them upon return, or the potential risks they may face.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We encourage the Committee to request the following information:

- What concrete measures will the State Party take to ensure full respect for the principle of non-refoulement, particularly in relation to refugee and asylum-seeking children?
- How does the State Party intend to ensure that no child is subject to collective expulsion or summary deportation?
- What child-sensitive asylum or protection procedures exist to identify unaccompanied, separated, or otherwise vulnerable children among refugees facing removal?
- What monitoring and oversight mechanisms are in place to guarantee that funding received by Lebanese security services is not used in ways that result in arbitrary detention, forced returns, and any other abuses affecting children?

⁵ Alef et al, “Lebanon: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review,” July 2025, <https://alefliban.org/publications/conditions-of-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-submission-to-the-un-universal-periodic-review-2/>

⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Lebanon/Cyprus: Refugees Pulled Back, Expelled, Then Forced Back to Syria.” 4 September 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/04/lebanon/cyprus-refugees-pulled-back-expelled-then-forced-back-syria>

4. OTHER SYSTEMIC VIOLATIONS FACED BY CITIZEN & NON-CITIZEN CHILDREN

4.A INTERROGATIONS WITHOUT A SOCIAL WORKER

Children in Lebanon are sometimes interrogated in the absence of a social worker, in clear violation of Article 34 of Law No. 422/2002, which mandates the presence of a social worker during any investigation involving minors. This safeguard is essential to ensure the child's best interests and to prevent intimidation or coercion during questioning, in line with Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which affirms that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning them.

4.B COERCED OR FORCED CONFESSIONS

During interrogations, children often face intense psychological pressure, verbal abuse, and emotional manipulation, especially since, prior to the arrival of the social worker or the family or the lawyer, the child is likely to be subjected to psychological pressure. which can lead them to confess to crimes they did not commit. Such practices violate Article 37(a) of the CRC, which prohibits subjecting children to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and Article 15 of the Convention against Torture (CAT), which prohibits the use of statements obtained through coercion as evidence. These practices also contradict the guarantees of humane treatment outlined in Law No. 422/2002.

4.C INADEQUATE DETENTION CONDITIONS

Children held in Lebanese prisons are often mixed with adult detainees especially in military facilities and kept in overcrowded, unsanitary cells with insufficient lighting, poor hygiene, and inadequate food. This situation violates article 37 (c) of the CRC, which requires that every child deprived of liberty be treated with humanity and provided with conditions appropriate to their needs. and guarantees that children deprived of liberty must be separated from adults and treated in a manner consistent with their age and dignity.

4.D PROLONGED DETENTION IN POLICE STATIONS

Many minors remain detained in police stations despite having judicial warrants that require their transfer to the Warwar Rehabilitation Center for Minors. Such practices deprive them of essential protection and constitute a breach of their right to dignity and rehabilitation, as affirmed in Article 39 of the CRC.

4.E ABSENCE OF LEGAL REPRESENTATION OR GUARDIANSHIP

Numerous children are interrogated without the presence of a lawyer or legal guardian, leaving them vulnerable to intimidation and coerced confessions. This violates Article 37(d) of the CRC, which guarantees the right of every child deprived of liberty to prompt access to legal assistance, as well as Article 42 of Law No. 422/2002, which ensures minors' right to legal counsel during the trial stage only.

4.F VIOLATION OF PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Lebanese media outlets have repeatedly published or circulated information about ongoing juvenile cases, including the names and identifiable images of minors. Such actions violate Article 48 of Law No. 422/2002, which strictly prohibits the publication of any material revealing a child's identity, investigation details, or trial proceedings. They also contravene Article 16 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which guarantees every child the right to privacy and protection from unlawful interference or attacks on their honor and reputation. These violations not only endanger the children involved but also undermine their right to dignity, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We encourage the Committee to request the following information:

Prevention and Early Intervention

- How can Lebanon invest in community-based prevention and early intervention programmes that address root causes of offending behavior such as poverty, exclusion, and lack of access to education?
- How can family and community support systems be strengthened to prevent children from entering the justice system?

Legal and Procedural Recommendations

- When will Article 34 of Law 422/2002 be amended to clearly state that investigation procedures are null and void in the absence of a social worker, unless required otherwise by the child's best interest?
- When will Article 42 of Law 422/2002 be amended to extend the obligation of legal representation to the prosecution and investigation stages, and explicitly provide for nullity of proceedings in the absence of a lawyer?
- How can the powers and responsibilities of social workers be more clearly defined, and should a specialized oversight body be established to monitor their performance and ensure accountability?
- Should a full-time social worker be present in all juvenile detention facilities to attend interrogations immediately, rather than waiting for the six-hour period currently allowed by law?
- Should investigations conducted without a social inquiry report be considered invalid, and how can timely submission of these reports be ensured as part of due process?
- How can coordination between the justice, social welfare, education, and health sectors be improved to provide a holistic response to children in conflict with the law?

Age of Criminal Responsibility and Detention

- Will Lebanon raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years?

Diversion and Alternatives to Judicial Proceedings

- How can diversion measures be scaled up to redirect children from judicial proceedings toward community-based, educational, and rehabilitative programmes?
- How can Lebanon ensure that diversion measures are accessible, well-resourced, and implemented without discrimination?

Detention Measures and Conditions

- How can non-custodial sentences and community-based rehabilitation be prioritized over detention?
- How can Lebanon ensure that detention is used only as a last resort, for the shortest possible period, and subject to regular judicial review?
- How can child-appropriate detention facilities be designated, fully separated from adult facilities, and equipped with adequate health, psychological, educational, and recreational services?

- How can juvenile detention centers, including Warwar Center, be placed under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Justice – Juvenile Affairs Department and the Ministry of Social Affairs?

Fair Trial and Justice Guarantees

- Should specialized public prosecutors for juvenile cases be appointed in every public prosecution office to ensure proper representation and child-sensitive procedures?
- Should the right to appeal decisions issued by the Juvenile Misdemeanor Judge before a specialized juvenile court be explicitly guaranteed?
- Should vague legal exceptions regarding the restraint and transfer of minors be removed to ensure dignity, prevent abuse, and eliminate misuse of the “exceptional circumstances” clause?