

URGENT STATEMENT

Politicians' speeches are extremely disturbing and the Lebanese authorities must intervene to prevent the escalation of violence



Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR)

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The Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) meticulously monitors governmental resolutions, security protocols, official and unofficial declarations, and provocative media initiatives directed at Syrian refugees within Lebanon. These campaigns encompass incursions, arbitrary apprehensions, instances of torture within detention facilities (substantiated by forensic reports), the coercive expulsion of certain individuals, and capricious deportations. These activities have experienced a marked intensification since last April throughout Lebanon.

Politicians orchestrate these systematic and unrelenting media campaigns, attributing Lebanon's challenging conditions to the presence of refugees in the nation. This narrative has led to an escalation of public tension. Regrettably, an incident unfolded yesterday evening, Thursday, October 5, in the Doura area of the Matn district and at the northern entrance to Beirut. The repercussions extended to other regions in Beirut, including Sin El Fil, Nabaa, Dekwaneh, Sabtieh, Sad Bouchrieh, and Bourj Hammoud, with Syrian refugees bearing the brunt of the violence.

What initially began as an individual conflict among Lebanese citizens swiftly transformed into protest gatherings affiliated with political parties in the region, vehemently opposing the existence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. These gatherings instigated acts of violence, assaults, and arbitrary expulsions against Syrian refugees, prompting the intervention of the military to evacuate some from a laboratory in the area where they were detained.

Throughout this campaign, instances of provocation, discrimination, and violence against refugees surged, inclusive of Cabinet Resolution No. (74) and circulars disseminated by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, which precipitated violent episodes in the Doura area of the Matn District. Armed elements, including those affiliated with the Soldiers of God organization, assaulted passing refugees using sticks and iron bars, resulting in approximately ten refugees sustaining injuries and fractures, with one individual in a serious condition. These armed elements also vandalized the property of refugees and expelled them arbitrarily from their residences.

Additionally, in accordance with the information at our disposal, other factions aligned with the Lebanese Forces Party assaulted refugees, invaded their homes, and perpetrated acts of violence against them in areas such as Sad Al-Bouchrieh and neighboring locales. The Lebanese army conducted raids in the residences of refugees, leading to the arrest of at least eight individuals, whose fate remains unknown at present.

As per information from the Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR), spanning from April of the previous year to the present, the field team has diligently observed and documented numerous transgressions perpetrated against refugees by the Lebanese army. These actions stem from the execution of a directive issued by the Supreme Defense Council in April 2019, mandating the expulsion of Syrians who illicitly entered the country post the 24th day of said month. The reported violations encompass arbitrary detentions, compelled deportations, instances of ill-treatment, torture, and persistent harassment.

The recorded transgressions by the field team encapsulate the apprehension of over 955 refugees in an extensive security operation, accompanied by the coerced repatriation of 519 refugees to Syria. Additionally, the Center has meticulously chronicled 47 security incursions into refugee camps, during which some individuals were subjected to physical assault, ill-treatment, and torture during their detention periods before facing forced expulsion. The seizure of personal belongings, destruction of some tents, and intimidation and harassment by local inhabitants and municipal police further compound the documented grievances.

The Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) vehemently denounces the recent developments and the security, military, and media initiatives instigated by the Lebanese authorities against Syrian refugees, along with the regrettable incidents that have ensued. These actions collectively represent a substantial infringement upon human rights.

Consequently, the ACHR urges the Lebanese government to probe the orchestrated campaign of provocation against refugees, halt all security and military operations as well as forced deportations, and rigorously scrutinize and prosecute those inciting violence and disseminating hate speech—actions attributed to certain Lebanese officials, partisan entities, media organizations, and parties. Such measures should align with both local and international laws and agreements, emphasizing the obligation to treat refugees in a manner that upholds their rights and dignity. The ACHR further implores Lebanese authorities to promptly intervene to cease this campaign, initiate comprehensive investigations into recent violations, and ensure the safeguarding of human rights for all refugees residing in Lebanon.

Furthermore, a call is made to the United States and other donor nations to Lebanon, urging them to ensure that assistance provided to the Lebanese Army adheres to due process, ethical considerations, and humanitarian principles. Assistance should be in compliance with relevant international laws and agreements, demonstrating respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of international law. Moreover, such aid should neither facilitate nor contribute to abuses, with an emphasis on enhancing transparency and accountability in the utilization and direction of assistance, coupled with the establishment of reporting protocols for potential violations or misuse of said aid.