



## Lebanon: Seeking Justice for Migrants

06 February 2024

Since 2014, February 6th has been globally recognized as the "Global Day of CommemorAction", dedicated to commemorating and remembering the lives lost, those who have gone missing, and individuals forcefully disappeared at sea and borders worldwide.

On this occasion, the below-mentioned local and international civil society organizations unite in a call to remember the injustices against those who have died and gone missing while attempting to cross seas and borders globally. This is especially poignant for the so-called irregular migrants facing tragic fates, including those who sought to leave Lebanon in recent years.

Lebanon remains one of the countries hosting the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. In 2023, the number of people who decided to leave Lebanon via Sea has increased<sup>1</sup> due to manifold reasons including Lebanon's exacerbating economic situation, challenging living conditions for the Lebanese, the migrants and refugees communities, and the logistical and financial barriers to legal migration from Lebanon.

On August 10, 2023, one of the boats managed to sail from Lebanon into territorial waters. It carried 110 migrants and mostly were Syrians while others were Lebanese<sup>2</sup>. On August 18, 2023, upon reaching Malta's Search and Rescue area, the migrants reported that a ship displaying a Libyan flag was pursuing them, and armed individuals were firing at their vessel. Members of Libyan militant group Tarek Bin Zeyad Brigade (TBZ) first took all 110 migrants into Misrata. They were then transferred to a Benghazi detention center. On August 25, 2023, Tarek Bin Zeyad Brigade released most of the detainees but more than 20 migrants remained in the detention center. On 4 October 2023, all the detainees were released. Some of the detainees reported to media<sup>3</sup> that they were subjected to ill-treatment and torture while in detention.

<sup>1</sup> L'Orient Today, Sea migration attempts on the rise this summer: UNHCR, 17 July 2023, <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1342956/sea-migration-attempts-on-the-rise-this-summer-unhcr.html>

<sup>2</sup> MENA Rights Group, Lebanese migrant disappeared after being abducted by Libyan militant group, 6 September 2023, <https://www.menarights.org/en/case/khodr-khaled-al-nabush>

<sup>3</sup> The New Arab, Yazidi man 'tortured' after Libyan militia 'abducts' 110 Syrian, Lebanese migrants, 29 September 2023, <https://www.newarab.com/news/yazidi-tortured-after-libya-militia-abducts-110-migrants>



On December 11, 2023, a group of 85 people sailed from Lebanon. The majority are Syrians, with others being Lebanese. As reported<sup>4</sup> by the families, the migrants had left the Lebanese territorial waters. Since then, their whereabouts remain unknown.

Last but not least, family members of the people who went missing and died after the shipwrecks of April, 23, 2022, are still waiting for thorough investigations<sup>5</sup> and recognition of responsibilities by authorities. On June 22, 2022, the case was transferred from the Military Court in Beirut for non-competency to the Public Prosecutor of North Lebanon. On September 21, 2023, the case was dismissed.

Accordingly, the undersigned organizations urge the Lebanese authorities and international community to:

### 1. Investigation and Recovery:

- Reopen the case of the Boat that Sank in April 2022.
- Transfer the case from the Military Court to a regular criminal court for an independent, impartial, prompt, comprehensive, and effective investigation into the boat sinking.
- Work towards the recovery of the remains of all missing passengers.

### 2. Rights and Support:

- Respect the principle of non-refoulement for asylum seekers in line with the mandate of UNHCR Lebanon.
- Provide fast resettlement opportunities for those in need.
- Offer medical and psychological support to the rescued individuals in the sea.
- Provide freedom of movement and allow obtaining a Lebanese passport without delay and reasonable fees, as stipulated in the Lebanese constitution and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### 3. Safe Alternatives and Livelihood Support:

- Provide safe and legal alternatives to those considering irregular migration.
- Support livelihoods and improve access to services for vulnerable communities.
- Increase humanitarian aid to address the socio-economic conditions in Lebanon that contribute to irregular migration for both the local population and migrant communities.

<sup>4</sup> Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Mystery Surrounds Fate of more than 75 Migrants in Cypriot Waters, 31 December 2023, <https://ccls-lebanon.org/mystery-surrounds-fate-migrants-in-cypriot-waters/>

<sup>5</sup> OHCHR, AL LBN 2/2022, Public Communication, 21 September 2022, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=27568>



**List of Signatories:** Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR), Alarm Phone (AP), Caesar Files for Justice (CF4J), Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS), Centre for Defending Civil Rights and Liberties, MENA Rights Group (MRG), NoPhotoZone, The Anti-Racism Movement (ARM), The Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH), The Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness), The Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO).