



**Preliminary observations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions, Dr. Morris Tidball-Binz, at the conclusion of his visit to Lebanon (29 September – 10 October 2025)**

1. At the invitation of the Government of Lebanon, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Dr. Morris Tidball-Binz, conducted an official visit to the country from 29 September to 10 October 2025.
2. The visit was guided by a spirit of constructive dialogue – in full conformity with principles of independence, impartiality, objectivity and integrity – and followed a victim-centred approach. The Special Rapporteur expresses his gratitude to the Government of Lebanon for its excellent cooperation in facilitating his visit, and for the authorities’ openness and commitment to continuing constructive dialogue in follow-up.
3. During his visit, the Special Rapporteur travelled to Beirut, Naqoura, Tyre, Sidon, Nabatiyeh, Baalbek, and Tripoli. He had the opportunity to meet with State authorities, including H.E. the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers of Defense, Justice, and Finance as well as representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Health. In addition, he met with the Director General of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and visited the Forensic Laboratories of the ISF, and the Director of the Directorate of International Humanitarian Law & Human Rights. He also met with the judiciary, including the Prosecutor General at the Court of Cassation, and The President of the Supreme judicial Council, as well as legislators from Parliamentary Human Rights Committee and independent institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission, and the National Commission on the missing and forcibly disappeared. The Special Rapporteur further visited hospitals, including in the Southern region, Palestinian Refugee Camps, met with first responders and inspected sites of destruction by Israeli attacks on Lebanon.
4. The Special Rapporteur held meetings with United Nations agencies operating in Lebanon, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), national and international human rights organisations, journalists, academics, and medico-legal specialists. He also had meaningful exchanges with survivors and families of victims of unlawful killings, disappearances and those who lost relatives during recent hostilities or who suffered life-changing injuries.
5. The Special Rapporteur extends his profound appreciation to survivors and families who, despite grief, fear, and trauma of the ongoing conflict, generously shared their experiences with him. He recognises the pain and courage that such testimonies require and conveys his deepest respect for their dignity and perseverance in seeking truth and justice. He reaffirms that their voices will remain at the centre of his assessment and recommendations and he remains committed to addressing their cases with care, respect, and humanity.

**I. Background**

6. Lebanon’s modern history has been marked by recurrent armed conflict and external involvement, from the 1975–1990 civil war to successive rounds of hostilities with Israel and periods of intervention by neighbouring States, alongside episodes of internal political upheaval as well as

economic and financial crisis, which has been posing additional challenges for State institutions in upholding the rule of law and protecting the right to life.

7. On 8 October 2023, hostilities broke out between Hezbollah and Israel, when the former opened a support front for the war on Gaza, triggering repeated exchanges of fire and airstrikes across southern Lebanon. The conflict escalated significantly, on 23 September 2024, when Israel launched Operation “Northern Arrows”, conducting extensive airstrikes across Lebanon, killing and wounding thousands of civilians, including over 1,100 women and children, and displacing around 1.4 million people, primarily from Southern villages that were left entirely destroyed. A cessation-of-hostilities agreement was transmitted to the Security Council on 29 November 2024.<sup>1</sup> but military operations have continued on a near-daily basis by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).
8. In the meantime, the election of President Joseph Aoun, the appointment of Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, and the formation of a new Government in January and February 2025 represent a critical opportunity for Lebanon to restore sovereignty, rebuild national institutions, reaffirm the legitimate State monopoly over the means of force and revitalize the economy. In this context, ensuring the means and capacity to successfully investigate crime, including potentially unlawful deaths, is essential to the success of these reforms, to strengthen public trust on the rule of law and demonstrate the Government’s unflinching commitment to respect, protect and fulfil the right to life.

## **II. Scope of visit**

9. The objective of the two-week visit was to examine how allegations of unlawful killings in Lebanon, including those occurring in the context of armed conflict, are investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted. This included, inter alia, examining alleged targeted killings, and attacks on civilians protected under international humanitarian law. The visit adopted a victim-centred approach, with particular attention to the rights of victims and their families to truth, justice and reparation.
10. In this connection, the Special Rapporteur assessed the adequacy of the legislative and institutional framework for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of unlawful killings, and for the protection, support and assistance of victims and their families. He also examined the essential and complementary roles of relevant institutions, including the judiciary and prosecution services, investigative agencies, and medico-legal expertise, in establishing the facts and collecting and preserving evidence, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice and enabling reparations for victims.

## **III. Contextual and Legal Analysis**

11. The cessation-of-hostilities agreement sought to de-escalate the situation and enable phased steps consistent with Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).<sup>2</sup> Despite this understanding, incidents have persisted. UNIFIL stated that Israeli airstrikes in south Lebanon constitute violations of resolution 1701 and warned they “put the fragile stability... at risk,”<sup>3</sup> calling on the IDF to refrain from further strikes and to withdraw from Lebanese territory. The Security Council, in resolution

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<sup>1</sup> UNSC, **S/2024/870**.

<sup>2</sup> UNSC, Letter dated 29 November 2024 from the Permanent Representatives of France and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

<sup>3</sup> “UNIFIL statement – 19 September 2025”, available at: <https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-statement-19-september-2025>

2790 (2025) extending UNIFIL's mandate, welcomed the cessation-of-hostilities agreement while noting "continuous violations," including air and drone strikes on Lebanese territory.

12. The civilian toll since the ceasefire remains significant. According to the UN Human Rights Office, up to end-September 2025 the UN had verified 103 civilian deaths in Lebanon since the 27 November 2024 ceasefire, including women and children. In addition, recent strikes have resulted in widespread destruction of civilian property. Reports indicate over 80,000 people remain displaced in Lebanon, while there have been no recorded civilian fatalities in Israel from Lebanese projectiles during the same period.<sup>4</sup> The impact on local livelihoods has been devastating, leaving many families without shelter, income, or basic services.
13. The Special Rapporteur's visit took place against this backdrop of continued hostilities and destruction, along with a cumulative impact on safety, education, health care, and livelihoods causing profound suffering for families already living with loss and uncertainty. These security developments compound a prolonged socioeconomic crisis that has weakened institutions and eroded public trust. Justice, health, and social protection systems continue to face serious capacity and resource constraints, limiting access to timely investigations, medical and rehabilitative care, and support for bereaved families.

- **National legal framework**

14. Lebanon's Penal Code prohibits homicide and related offences, and the Code of Criminal Procedure contains provisions on investigative procedures. In particular, legislative Decree No. 340 criminalizes intentional and negligent killings, with aggravated circumstances that can elevate penalties up to death (e.g., premeditation; killings committed to facilitate another crime; killings of ascendants/descendants). Nevertheless, the domestic framework remains insufficient to address serious violations of the right to life, including international crimes under international humanitarian, human rights, and criminal laws. Notably, Lebanon has not incorporated international crimes, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity, into national law.
15. While Lebanon's Penal Code criminalises homicide, the absence of provisions criminalising war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide under domestic law creates a substantial accountability gap. This prevents Lebanese courts from prosecuting grave breaches of international humanitarian law as such and denies the victims full recognition and protection of their rights under international law.

- **International legal framework**

16. Lebanon is party to four of the nine core human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment (CAT) and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT), and has accepted the CAT inquiry procedure. Lebanon has also signed but not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED). Regionally, Lebanon has ratified the 2004 Arab Charter of Human Rights. The right to respect and protect the right to life is provided for under article 6 of the ICCPR,

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<sup>4</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Lebanon: Türk urges renewed efforts for durable truce amid civilian suffering" (press release, October 2025), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/lebanon-turk-urges-renewed-efforts-durable-truce-amid-civilian-suffering>

requiring the Government of Lebanon to investigate *ex officio* each violation effectively, promptly, transparently, independently, and impartially and to prosecute those found responsible.

17. Lebanon ratified all four 1949 Geneva Conventions in 1951 and their two Additional Protocols in 1997. These ratifications make Lebanon a party to the core international humanitarian law (IHL) treaties that protect victims of armed conflict. The Lebanese Code of Civil Procedure establishes that the provisions of international conventions, once ratified, prevail over domestic ordinary law when conflicts arise.<sup>5</sup>
18. Israel also ratified the four 1949 Geneva Conventions, in 1951, and Additional Protocol III (2005) in 2007. Nonetheless, it did not ratify Additional Protocol I or II (1977). It is worth noting that many provisions of the Geneva Conventions are considered part of customary international law, meaning they are binding on all states, including those that have not ratified the conventions themselves.
19. International human rights law (IHRL) and IHL are considered to be complementary and mutually reinforcing in situations of armed conflict. The right to life under IHRL is non-derogable and continues to apply even in war time, imposing an obligation on States to take measures to protect and respect the right to life and to investigate violations thereof for the purpose of justice and accountability. Additionally, customary IHL rules require parties to a conflict, be it international or non-international, to respect principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. These obligations are cumulative, meaning that any attack must comply with all of the rules in order to be lawful.
20. The principle of distinction provides that attacks must only be directed to military objectives as defined under international humanitarian law, as an object or person which, by its nature, location, purpose, or use, makes an effective contribution to military action, and whose destruction, capture, or neutralisation offers a definite military advantage. The principle of distinction prohibits attacks against civilians and civilian objects.
21. In this regard, it is important to clarify that although Hezbollah is considered to be in conflict with Israel, not all of its members qualify as military targets. Only those individuals directly participating in hostilities or those holding a continuous combat function may be lawfully targeted. Civilian members or supporters of a party to the conflict do not lose their civilian protection unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities. Indiscriminate attacks or attacks based on status alone, rather than conduct, violate the principle of distinction.
22. The principle of proportionality further prohibits attacks expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life or injury that would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated. Equally, the principle of precaution requires all feasible measures to be taken in planning and conducting military operations to avoid or minimise civilian harm.
23. The obligations to prevent, investigate, and punish unlawful killings are binding on Lebanon regardless of the conduct of the opposing party. Violations of the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution amount to unlawful killings and give rise to the duty to investigate, prosecute, and provide redress to victims and their families.

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<sup>5</sup> UNGA, Sixth Committee (Legal), "Lebanon – submission on the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols (65th session)" (document), available at: [https://www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/65/StatProtGeneva\\_StatesComments/After%20Addendum/Lebanon\\_E.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/65/StatProtGeneva_StatesComments/After%20Addendum/Lebanon_E.pdf)

24. In April 2024, Lebanon's caretaker cabinet voted to instruct the foreign ministry to file a declaration with the ICC authorising it to investigate and prosecute alleged war crimes on Lebanese territory since 7 October 2023, under article 12(3) of the Rome Statute. However, this decision was later retracted and replaced by a complaint submitted to the Security Council regarding the Israeli war crimes in Lebanon.

#### **IV. Impact of ongoing hostilities on the right to life**

25. On October 8, 2023, military hostilities erupted between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. While initially limited to border areas, Israel escalated its attacks, including a ground invasion, carrying out over 14,775 attacks across Lebanon as part of its Operation Northern Arrow between mid-September and 27 November 2024. During this period, nearly 4,047 people were killed in Lebanon, including over 1,106 women and children, 16,638 were injured, and over 1.4 million people were internally displaced. More than 3,600 buildings were destroyed over two weeks in October 2024 alone, with towns in southern Lebanon, including critical civilian infrastructure, being reduced to rubble.

26. On 1 October 2024, the IDF launched a ground offensive in southern Lebanon, operating in at least 34 towns and villages along Lebanon's border. On 27 November 2024, a cessation of hostilities agreement was agreed, however, Israel maintains its military occupation in five positions and two so-called "buffer zones" in southern Lebanon, preventing civilians from returning to their houses, and unilaterally continues its military attacks against Lebanon.

- **Attacks on protected individuals and groups**

27. During his visit, the Special Rapporteur met with families of persons unlawfully killed in Israeli strikes and survivors. Families of those killed in the hostilities often lack information and support to assert their rights to truth, justice and reparations. Survivors who sustained injuries face long-term physical and psychological consequences without adequate medical, rehabilitative, or psychosocial assistance.

##### ***1) Targeting journalists***

28. On 13 October 2023, while covering the hostilities at the Lebanese-Israeli border, seven journalists from Reuters, AFP, and Al Jazeera were subject to a double tap attack in the span of 37 seconds. The first strike immediately killed Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah and severely injured AFP correspondent Christina Assi, leading to the amputation of her right leg at the knee. A second strike injured two correspondents from Al Jazeera [Carmen Joukhadar and Elie Brakhya], and AFP photographer [Dylan Collins], and two other Reuters journalists. Forensic and open-source analysis of footage from the crime scene, debris, and weapon fragments shows that both strikes originated from the Israeli side of the border, most likely from an Israeli tank.

29. All seven journalists were clearly exposed and visible on an elevated hill for at least an hour prior to the attack. They were wearing press vests and press helmets, at least one car was marked with TV signs on its hood, and they were carrying their cameras and equipment and thus clearly identifiable as journalists. The evidence suggests that the seven journalists were visible to the cameras of a nearby unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that was most likely Israeli, within line of sight of Israeli observation posts and a helicopter above the journalists, moments before the attack. The journalists conducted at least three live broadcasts from that location. All evidence reviewed indicated that the journalists were not near areas with ongoing hostilities, and they had notified the

Lebanese army and the UNIFIL of their positions. No exchange of fire was reported at the time of the Israeli tank fire.<sup>6</sup>

30. In addition, on 25 October 2024, Israel killed three journalists and injured four others in an airstrike on Hasbaya Village Club Resort (southern Lebanon). According to information examined and testimonies, the strike occurred shortly after 03:00 in the morning, when over a dozen journalists were lodged at the resort. Among those killed is Ghassan Najjar (journalist/cameraman, Al Mayadeen TV). Forensic analysis of munition remnants, site damage and verified imagery indicates the attack was carried out with an air-dropped bomb equipped with a United States-produced Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) guidance kit. There has been no evidence of fighting or military presence at or near the targeted building at the time; available material indicates the Israeli military knew or should have known that journalists were staying in the clearly marked area of exclusive use of journalists due to drone surveillance.
31. These attacks raise serious concerns under international humanitarian law, including the prohibition of attacks directed against civilians, and the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. Journalists carrying out their professional duties in situations of armed conflict are civilians and must not be made the object of attacks.

## ***2) Attacks on first responders and healthcare facilities***

32. At least 408 health workers were killed, in 2024, with approximately one quarter of these deaths occurring during the first eight days of Israeli Operation Northern Arrow (23–30 September 2024).<sup>7</sup> Nearly three quarters of those killed worked in emergency medical services, with doctors, nurses and military medics also among the victims. At least 25 health workers were reportedly killed inside hospitals and clinics struck by drones or aircraft; others were killed when homes or public spaces were hit, as well as during the pagers' explosions of 17–18 September 2024.<sup>8</sup>
33. The Special Rapporteur received reports, including from witnesses and survivors interviewed during the visit, that emergency medical workers were killed and injured in drone and aircraft strikes while conducting recovery and rescue operations, including in “double-tap” strikes in which a location was struck and then re-struck as first responders arrived. Other emergency workers were killed inside emergency health centres hit by munitions. In one large-scale incident, 15 paramedics were reportedly killed when a Lebanese Civil Defence centre in Baalbek-Hermel governorate was hit and damaged by air strikes, which also damaged a neighbouring mosque.
34. In discussions with first responders and hospital personnel across several areas, the Special Rapporteur observed the profound impact of these attacks on their capacity to work. Many health workers in the South reported the loss of one or more family members or friends in strikes. He recalls that, under international humanitarian law, medical personnel, units and transports must be respected and protected at all times and must not be made the object of attack. Intentionally directing attacks against medical personnel or units, or against medical transports bearing the

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<sup>6</sup> Reuters, “Israeli tank in ‘likely scenario’ fired machine gun at reporters after deadly shelling, report finds,” 7 March 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Insecurity Insight, “Attacks on Health Care in Lebanon, 13–26 November 2024” (report, December 2024), available at: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/5-13-26-November-2024-Attacks-on-Health-Care-in-Lebanon.pdf>; WHO reported between August and September 2025, 163 incidents of attacks, impacting 46 health facilities and killing 241 persons, 113 healthcare workers, and impacting 105 medical transport.

distinctive emblems, constitutes a serious violation of IHL and, when committed with the requisite intent, a war crime. All feasible precautions should be taken in the conduct of hostilities to spare protected persons and objects.

### **3) *Kill zones and denial of the right to return***

35. Notwithstanding the cessation-of-hostilities agreement requiring withdrawal consistent with Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), Israeli forces maintained positions on at least five hills along Lebanon's southern border. Residents and local authorities reported the creation of so-called "kill zones" near these posts, which are not demarcated or formally notified, and where live fire has been directed at civilians attempting to return to their villages and land. On 14 August 2025, Israeli authorities announced a closed military area in Shebaa, barring residents' entry and further restricting access to farmland and livelihoods.
36. The Special Rapporteur heard testimonies from families in southern villages whose loved ones were shot at, killed, or taken away by Israeli forces while peacefully attempting to return to their villages after the announced cessation of hostilities. On 26 January 2025, at dawn, near Markaba, a family—Fatima Karaki (20), her brother Hussein Karaki (28), and their mother, Tamara Shehemi (53)—set out to return home and on the road were joined by another family—a father and his two sons (approximately 16–17). Clearly unarmed civilians, they were reportedly ambushed by about 20 soldiers and fired upon at very close range: Mr. Karaki was shot twice (lower arm, then on the lower back as he tried to rise); his mother was shot in the shoulder and died instantly of her wounds; the other family's father was killed. Mr. Karaki and the two boys were taken by Israeli forces; their fate and whereabouts remain unknown. On that day, 22 people were reportedly killed, including 6 women, and 124 others injured, including 14 women and 12 children, as residents were trying to return to their villages.

### **4) *Attacks against civilians***

37. On 29 September 2024, an Israeli strike destroyed a seven-storey residential building in Ain el-Delb (Sidon district). Lebanon's Ministry of Health initially reported at least 45 fatalities; local civil defence and subsequent media investigations later confirmed 73 people killed, including 23 children. The Special Rapporteur spoke with Abdel Hamid Ramadan (63) a survivor who lost his wife, Jinan Ahmad El-Baba (59), and daughter Julia Ramadan (20) in the attack. Like other victims, he remains without a home, compensation or support. In response to this attack, a number of UN experts<sup>9</sup> have raised concerns about the proportionality and necessity of Israeli air strikes on residential buildings in densely populated areas in Lebanon.
38. In addition, during his visit in Nabatiyeh, on 6 October 2025, a disabled blind man and his wife were killed by an Israeli drone attack in front of a grocery shop. The man was a survivor of the pagers' explosion, in which he lost his sight and his hands. Due to his disability, his wife was driving their vehicle.

## **V. Investigation of suspicious deaths**

39. The Special Rapporteur recognises the efforts of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in documenting violations of the right to life. He noted, however, that in cases

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<sup>9</sup> OHCHR, "UN experts alarmed at Israel–Lebanon conflict; strongly condemn escalation ..." (press release, September 2024), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/09/un-experts-alarmed-israel-lebanon-conflict-strongly-condemn-escalation-and>.

of alleged unlawful killings linked to strikes attributed to Israeli forces, the so-called “information reports” often record basic facts without triggering a criminal case file. As a result, evidence is not systematically consolidated under prosecutorial authority, and information frequently remains internal/confidential and unavailable to families and survivors.

40. While acknowledging access constraints to certain scenes—particularly in the Southern Lebanon—the Special Rapporteur encourages the Public Prosecutor to open criminal investigations under the Penal Code as soon as feasible, to preserve and consolidate evidence (including through chain-of-custody measures) and to prevent its loss or tampering. Such investigations should be victim-centred, recognise families’ status as victims, and ensure their meaningful participation throughout proceedings, thereby advancing truth, justice and reparation.
41. The Special Rapporteur further emphasises that other potentially unlawful deaths—including deaths in custody—must be systematically investigated to establish the cause, manner and circumstances of death and determine any criminal responsibility, in line with international standards (including the Minnesota Protocol, 2016).
42. During visits to Ain al-Hilweh and Shatila, two of 12 Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon, the Special Rapporteur observed significant obstacles to investigating potentially unlawful deaths, including alleged unlawful killings (of men and women, including gender-based killings), arising from limited access of State security bodies to the camps. These constraints hinder prevention and effective investigation and call for practical arrangements, in cooperation with relevant authorities and community actors, to enable timely, safe and lawful investigative action consistent with the protection of the right to life.

- **Medico-legal death investigation**

43. The Special Rapporteur observed that Lebanon does not have a national medico-legal institute (MLI). Instead, medico-legal tasks (including post-mortem examinations and autopsies) are performed by medical practitioners listed by the Ministry of Justice, many of whom are not forensic specialists, and who conduct examinations in general hospitals.
44. In criminal inquiries into potentially unlawful deaths, the Judicial Police, within ISF, assist prosecutors and investigation judges with crime-scene work, recovery, preservation and interpretation of forensic evidence (criminalistics), while medico-legal examinations, including autopsies, are carried out by physicians designated by the ministry of justice at the instruction of the competent prosecutor.
45. In response to challenges in collecting, preserving and analysing evidence during the investigation into the February 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic El Hariri and related crimes, the ISF and its Judicial Police underwent restructuring and intensive training, significantly improving their investigative capacity, including crime-scene investigations, trace evidence analysis and DNA identification at the ISF Forensic laboratory in Beirut.
46. By contrast, the medico-legal pillar remains under-developed. In the absence of a national MLI, hospital mortuaries—public and private—are used, often lacking specialised facilities and equipment. Reportedly approximately 200 autopsies are performed annually, with no more than around 30 per cent being full autopsies; the remainder are primarily external examinations. This inconsistency in medico-legal practice undermines death investigations (including identification of the deceased and determination of cause, manner and circumstances of death) and weakens the

administration of justice. Similar gaps affect medico-legal assessments of the living (e.g., documentation of torture, gender-based violence or child abuse).

47. The Special Rapporteur was encouraged by the support received from different interlocutors across State authorities, international organisations, civil society and victims' groups regarding the urgent need for a national medico-legal institute of high standards. He considers the conditions ripe for its establishment—citing political will, available infrastructure (e.g., at Rafic Hariri University Hospital mortuary), and qualified medical professionals who could rapidly acquire specialised forensic competencies with appropriate support. A national MLI should provide standardised procedures, quality assurance and control, training and certification of forensic doctors, research and best-practice dissemination at national and regional levels, in line with the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016).

## **VI. Accountability for past violations**

48. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the resumption of proceedings in emblematic cases, including the killing of Lokman Slim and the 4 August 2020 Beirut Port explosion. He notes with appreciation that, after a prolonged period of procedural obstruction, the Beirut Port investigation has resumed, and encourages its expeditious, independent and impartial completion with timely submission to the competent courts for adjudication. He further welcomes the decision of the Court of Cassation enabling the reopening of proceedings in the assassination of Lokman Slim.

## **VII. Search for the missing from the past**

49. Approximately 17.000 people remain missing from the 1975-1990 Civil War in Lebanon and hundreds of families are still searching for the whereabouts of their loved ones and suffering the ambiguous loss of their disappearance.
50. On 4 March 2014, Lebanon's State Council (First Chamber) issued a decision recognizing that relatives of people who disappeared during the civil war have a right to the truth concerning the fate of their family members. This included an order for the government to make a full investigation dossier compiled by the Official Commission of Inquiry publicly available, including to the families of the disappeared. The ruling represents a foundational jurisprudential precedent for truth as a right linked to international human rights obligations. While the decision formally enshrined the right to truth, enforcement has been partial; many families still do not have access to full information; there is no complete identification of burial or mass grave sites; and legal and political obstacles remain in ensuring accountability or shaping reparations.
51. In 2018 the Lebanese Parliament adopted a law on Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons (Law 105/2018). This law established the independent National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, with full legal authority and administrative and financial autonomy. The Commission's mandate includes investigating the fate of the missing, protecting mass graves, documenting, and supporting forensic identification in advance of the legal "right to know" and engaging families. Implementation has been hampered by limited budgets and resistance to excavating mass graves, but the Commission has recently demonstrated progress by releasing its first comprehensive report covering 2020–2025.

## **VIII. Death Penalty**

52. While Lebanon has observed a de facto moratorium on executions since 2004, this restraint is not codified in law, and capital punishment remains a lawful penalty. Courts can continue to issue death sentences for a range of offenses, including crimes that fall short of the "most serious crimes"

threshold required under Article 6(2) of the ICCPR. There are currently 84 persons in death row in Lebanon. The lack of a formal abolition or legislative prohibition allows for the possibility to resume executions, particularly in response to public pressure or political shifts. The Special Rapporteur believes that Lebanon should abolish the death penalty, in line with global trends to eradicate this practice the world over.

## **IX. Conclusions and Recommendations**

53. The Special Rapporteur notes and welcomes the opportunities created by the new Government's stated commitment to strengthening the rule of law and rebuilding State institutions. In a spirit of constructive engagement, and with a view to supporting these efforts, he offers the following recommendations:

### **To the Government of Lebanon**

- **Judicial independence: Adopt, without delay, the Law on Judicial the organisation of the Judiciary, in compliance with international standards in the independence of the judiciary and ensure its effective implementation.**
- **Military justice: Adopt the pending reforms to the Code of Military Justice to narrow the jurisdiction of military courts to strictly military offences committed by military personnel.**
- **International criminal justice: Accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court under Article 12(3) of the Rome Statute, pending ratification, and incorporate genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes into domestic law with penalties and modes of liability consistent with international standards.**
- **Investigations and prosecutions: Open criminal investigations into all potentially unlawful deaths, including those allegedly resulting from attacks by Israeli forces, and, where evidence so warrants, prosecute before competent civilian courts.**
- **Specialised capacity: Consider establishing a specialised unit within the Office of the Public Prosecutor to investigate and prosecute serious violations of IHL and IHRL, including those associated with recent hostilities.**
- **Victims' rights: Ensure meaningful participation of victims' relatives in proceedings; provide information, protection and support throughout; and recognise families as rights-holders with access to psychosocial and other assistance.**
- **Medico-legal system: As a matter of priority, establish a National Medico-Legal Institute (MLI) to oversee medico-legal services nationwide in line with international best practice, including the Minnesota Protocol (2016). The MLI should set standards and SOPs, certify practitioners, ensure quality assurance/quality control, conduct training and research, and supervise medico-legal work countrywide. Adopt without delay the draft Law on the Organisation of Forensic Medicine. In the interim, refurbish and equip the mortuary at Rafic Hariri University Hospital to function as a national centre of excellence, with international cooperation for capacity-building.**
- **Death penalty: Convert the de facto moratorium since 2004 into de jure abolition of the death penalty.**
- **NHRC-CPT: Finalise and sign the by-laws of the Lebanese National Commission for Human Rights, including its National Preventive Mechanism under OPCAT, and provide the resources necessary for it to operate in full compliance with the Paris Principles.**

- **Missing persons:** Continue supporting the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, including by providing forensic capacity and sufficient resources to enable the delivery of truth, justice and reparation to families.
- **Forensic services in courts:** Renew/extend the MoU between the Ministry of Justice and RESTART to sustain the model Forensic Clinic at the Palace of Justice in Tripoli and consider replication where needed.
- **UN cooperation:** Conclude the Host Country Agreement with OHCHR to facilitate sustained technical cooperation.

#### **To the International Community**

- **Compliance and protection of civilians:** In particular through the mechanism monitoring the 26 November 2024 cessation-of-hostilities agreement, support efforts to ensure full compliance with IHL and IHRL, including by Israel, and the immediate cessation of attacks against civilians and other protected persons and objects in Lebanon. All alleged violations should be recorded, reported, investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted, with reparation for victims.
- **Universal jurisdiction:** Where national law permits, consider domestic investigations and prosecutions under universal jurisdiction for grave breaches of IHL committed in Lebanon.
- **Support to UNRWA in Lebanon:** Increase support to UNRWA to uphold protection in Palestine refugee camps, including for investigation and prevention of potentially unlawful killings, such as those linked to gender-based violence.
- **Monitoring and de-escalation:** Maintain and, as needed, strengthen UNIFIL's monitoring and liaison functions to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in promoting full compliance with Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and in preventing renewed escalation.