

7.3. Human rights defenders and activists

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Freedom House reported in 2025 that Lebanese authorities regularly monitored social media and electronic communications, including those of activists, with security personnel infiltrating online groups used by campaigners and protesters.596 According to Human Rights Watch and NHRC-CPT (National Human Rights Commission – Committee for the Prevention of Torture), Lebanese authorities and various political factions continued to impose growing limitations on activists and journalists in the country, particularly by using defamation charges against critics. 597 The authorities summoned activists, teachers, lawyers or artists for publicly speaking out against their interests. Some were targeted for criticising public officials, others for alleging corruption in the banking sector or for comments considered offensive to state institutions, including the army.598 In 2024, at least three people were summoned by the Internal Security Forces (ISF) without being told of the accusations against them before appearing in court.599 Freedom House further noticed that the state did not safeguard individuals from non-state actors, including political parties, armed groups and their affiliates, who monitored and retaliated against those voicing dissenting views.600 For further information of actions by state and non-state actors against public expressions of opinions and identities, see 7.4.1 Threats and harassment against journalists and media workers and 7.5.1 Institutional discrimination based on sexual orientation/gender identity.

An incident in December 2024 illustrated these dynamics. Three activists —Sahar Ghaddar, Ghina Ghandour, and Evelina Mahous— were interrogated by the Cybercrimes Bureau following a complaint filed by the MTV television station. The complaint alleged defamation, incitement to murder, and stirring sectarian strife after the activists criticised the channel’s coverage of the Israeli war on Lebanon. The three women spent around twelve hours in the bureau. They were asked to sign undertakings not to target MTV and to delete the disputed posts. When they refused, the prosecutor ordered their detention. After protests and political mediation, they were released under investigation. Civil society actors described the procedures as exceeding the prosecutor’s legal powers and criticised the detention as a violation of freedom of expression. 601

According to Freedom House, the right to peaceful assembly was largely upheld in 2024, and gatherings commonly took place without official authorisation. While demonstrations focusing on state mismanagement and the economic crisis usually were allowed to proceed without interference, foreign nationals, LGBTIQ persons, and other marginalised groups encountered heightened obstacles when attempting to exercise their right to protest. The same source stated

that protesters at times faced assaults from political factions, armed groups, or private individuals, while judicial police occasionally issued summons to those involved. No specific examples of such incidents during the reference period were given.602 In 2023, a protest in Beirut against curbs on fundamental rights was violently disrupted by groups of men reportedly associated with religious extremists and security forces allegedly did not provide effective protection, with some engaging in harassment or physical attacks against protesters and media representatives.603

Freedom House further reported that civil society organisations continued to operate but remained subject to the 1909 Law on Associations and to other legislation governing labour, finance, and immigration. Registration with the Ministry of Interior was required, and the ministry could investigate the organisation's founders and staff. Some NGOs experienced bureaucratic obstacles or interference by security agencies depending on their field of work. Groups led by Syrian refugees were particularly vulnerable to scrutiny, and organisations associated with LGBTIQ rights encountered restrictions, as authorities took steps to curb related initiatives.604 According to a 2024 Mid-Term report for the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva prepared by over 30 civil society organisations, civic space for civil society steadily narrowed as authorities intensified their crackdown on civil society organisations, especially those offering assistance to Syrian refugees. The government obliged organisations to obtain authorisation from governors and the Ministry of Social Affairs before entering refugee camps. Authorities further issued ad-hoc directives commanding NGOs share internal records and data on their beneficiaries.605 In addition, in late 2024, Israeli airstrikes and incursions in southern Lebanon and near the Syrian border severely disrupted the work of humanitarian groups, limiting their capacity to provide relief.606

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) noted in a report about media workers from December 2024 that the war context placed persons who exercised free speech at heightened risk, with reports of killings, physical violence, pressure to suppress their work, and intimidation in digital spaces.607 In a subsequent submission from July 2025, GCHR emphasised that women human rights defenders faced particular risks. While the evidence cited predated the current reporting period, it described continuing patterns of harassment, social stigmatisation, online abuse, and surveillance targeting women advocating for gender equality, reform of personal status laws, and LGBTQ+ rights.608

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HRW, Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Lebanon 51st Session, 16 July 2025, url, p. 7

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  Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Lebanon, 2025, url, section F2

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  Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Lebanon, 2025, url, section D4

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  ANND, Midterm Report 2024, 2024, url, p.23

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  Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Lebanon, 2025, url, section E2

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  GCHR et al., Attacked from all directions: Media workers under fire in Lebanon’s war, December 2024, url, p. 5

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  GCHR et al., Lebanon Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review, 51st Session, 24 July 2025, url, pp. 8–9

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