

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Amnesty International regrets Lebanon's decision to overturn its open border policy towards refugees and refusal to address discrimination against women and migrants

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Lebanon

Amnesty International welcomes recent advances in women's rights in Lebanon. However, it is disappointed that Lebanon rejected recommendations to enforce the Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence, criminalize marital rape,¹ withdraw reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and amend the discriminatory personal status laws to enable women to obtain a divorce or custody of their children.² These same laws prevent Lebanese women married to foreign nationals from passing on their nationality to their children.

Amnesty International recognizes the immense strain on the Government of Lebanon in hosting over one million refugees from Syria and commends it for its efforts in this regard. However, in January 2015, the government overturned its open-border policy and in May 2015, it instructed UNHCR to provisionally suspend all new registration of Syrian refugees. Amnesty International regrets Lebanon's rejection of recommendations to ratify the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Additional Protocol and to facilitate the registration of refugees and renewal of their residency permits.³

¹ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Lebanon*, A/HRC/31/5, 22 December 2015, recommendations 132.125 (Canada) and 132.128 (Slovenia); Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Lebanon (Addendum)*, A/HRC/31/5/Add.1, 25 February 2016, p. 7.

² A/HRC/31/5, recommendations 132.6 (Portugal, Slovenia, Croatia, Paraguay, Namibia, Republic of Korea, Norway, Uruguay), 132.7-132.10 (Luxembourg, Latvia, Sweden and Germany), 132.32 (Kenya), 132.88 (Spain), 132.155-132.157 (Denmark, France, Mexico); A/HRC/31/5/Add.1, pp. 3-4, 6 and 8.

³ A/HRC/31/5, recommendations 132.26 (Belgium), 132.27 (Uruguay, Iceland, Paraguay), 132.154 (Austria), 132.214 (France) and 132.215 (Germany); A/HRC/31/5, pp.4, 8 and 10.

Renewal of residency permits for refugees from Syria who entered Lebanon before 5 January 2015 is difficult due to the onerous process of obtaining documents, the annual fee of US\$200 and the requirement that applicants pledge, in some cases, not to work and, in others, to find a Lebanese sponsor. Those who cannot afford to renew annual residency permits become irregular in status and at risk of arrest, detention and deportation. In January 2016 Lebanon forcibly returned around 400 Syrians to Syria, in violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Amnesty International regrets Lebanon's rejection of recommendations to amend the Labour Code and the visa sponsorship system to ensure legal protection from discrimination of domestic workers.⁴ Currently, migrant workers are excluded from protection under national labour laws, exposing them to exploitation and abuse by their employers. Migrant domestic workers, predominantly women, are especially vulnerable as they are employed under the *kafala* sponsorship system, which ties them to their employer. If a domestic worker leaves their sponsor, they lose their legal status and are at risk of being detained and deported. In January 2015, the Minister for Labour refused to recognize the union for migrant workers.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Lebanon on 16th March 2016 during its 31st session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International also submitted information in advance of the review in November 2015:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde18/002/2010/en/>

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⁴ A/HRC/31/5, recommendations 132.197 (United States of America), 131.201 (Kenya) and 131.202 (Albania); A/HRC/31/5, p. 10.