



THE TAHRIR INSTITUTE
FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY

Justice Through the Eyes of Impacted Persons in Lebanon



The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) centers localized perspectives in the policy discourse to foster transparent, accountable, and just societies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

TIMEP was founded in 2013 and is headquartered in Washington, DC, with a network of expert fellows and partners located on the ground in the MENA region and throughout the world. TIMEP is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit in the District of Columbia.

Since 2020, TIMEP has been programming on Lebanon as one of its five priority countries. Its work has focused primarily on accountability, the economic crisis, and migration, while cultivating in-depth knowledge and developing partnerships with Lebanese civil society. Through its programming, TIMEP amplified the voices and insights of Lebanese experts and impacted persons in the policy discourse. It hosted high-impact advocacy delegations from Lebanon to advance accountability and legal reforms; invested in Lebanese advocates through its nonresident fellowship program; supported accountability efforts targeting corrupt actors; and published widely read analyses on key issues affecting the country.

In 2025, TIMEP launched its knowledge platform, [Pathways to Justice in Lebanon](#), which promotes quality materials covering justice and accountability developments in Lebanon, written by experts and impacted persons. The platform aims to serve as a resource for those seeking to understand these developments, to navigate legal action and reform proposals taken by justice stakeholders, and to focus on why justice matters. The platform aims to encourage and facilitate people's engagement in the Lebanon justice and accountability discourse, and to ensure that Lebanon's reform agenda centers on the needs and priorities of those impacted, effectively addresses the root causes of injustice in the country, and contributes to achieving a just future that upholds the rule of law.

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1. Introduction

Across the last few decades, people in Lebanon have experienced multilayered crises that have resulted in accumulated injustices and the severe deprivation of their fundamental rights. From the absence of a transitional justice and reconciliation process after the civil war, to the financial collapse of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut Port explosion, and most recently the war with Israel, those impacted by these crises have been denied effective remedies, with impunity becoming a hallmark of Lebanon's recent history.

Despite bearing the direct consequences of these crises, successive governments have consistently sidelined the needs and priorities of those impacted from justice and accountability conversations. Many have lost trust in the state's capacity and capability to pursue justice. However, 2025 brought some renewed hope for meaningful change, as a new government took power, with the [pledge](#) that justice and accountability would be the compass of its reform agenda.

To understand the needs and realities of impacted persons and to place them at the center of any justice and reform agenda, the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) convened an in-person meeting in Beirut, bringing together impacted persons from across Lebanon's overlapping crises and justice actors, such as civil society groups, lawyers, and investigative journalists. The goal of the convening was to identify justice priorities and discuss collaborative pathways for meaningful engagement in the pursuit of justice and accountability.

This report builds on the outcomes of those discussions. It aims to amplify the voices of impacted persons, shed light on what justice means to them, and outline their priorities. It further highlights opportunities to strengthen their engagement in ongoing justice and accountability processes, ensuring that their perspectives and needs remain at the heart of Lebanon's reform and justice agenda.

The report has three main sections. After presenting Lebanon's challenging context for justice and accountability, the report explores what justice looks like from the perspective of those impacted, outlines their key priorities for justice, and concludes by emphasizing the importance of adopting a people-centric approach in the pursuit of justice and accountability in Lebanon.

2. Accumulated injustices and an enshrined culture of impunity

Since the Lebanese civil war (1975 and 1990), the state has made no concrete effort to pursue transitional justice in the country. The heads of armed groups and those responsible for atrocities during the war were granted **general amnesty** for their crimes; many of them went on to become the **heads** of the country's major political parties. After the civil war, the state moved forward with no genuine efforts toward truth and reconciliation, no commemoration or recognition of the victims' suffering, and without any guarantee of non-repetition.

This lack of reckoning for past crimes has entrenched a culture of impunity for more than three decades. It has enabled the concentration of power in the hands of a few and allowed for corruption and financial crimes to continue unabated, further enriching and empowering the political and business elite at the expense of the general population.

People in Lebanon today face multilayered, long-standing injustices. Among these are the state's failure to reveal the fate and whereabouts of the missing and disappeared persons since the civil war; the systemic impunity for crimes committed by state actors, such as the Beirut Port explosion and the financial crimes that led to the country's economic collapse; and the persistent political interference in justice and accountability processes, coupled with the lack of judicial independence.

The impacts of these overlapping crises were compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war with Israel, which collectively impacted the quality of life of the population and undermined their basic rights. This includes their right to access justice and effective remedies, in addition to economic and social rights, such as health, education, housing, and social security, among others.

For decades, the voices of those impacted by these crises in Lebanon have been sidelined from conversations on justice and accountability. The lack of transparency in judicial proceedings, persistent political interference, and the absence of judicial independence have deepened public mistrust in justice mechanisms and further alienated people from meaningfully engaging in these processes. Yet, effective pathways to justice must center the voices of the people, particularly those most impacted by the systemic injustices and abuses. Those impacted must be able to define what justice means to them, set their priorities for accountability, and meaningfully participate in shaping and engaging in these efforts.

3. Justice priorities for impacted persons in Lebanon

For impacted persons who participated in TIMEP’s convening, justice means ensuring effective and equal access to civil, political, economic, and social rights for all, without discrimination. Convening participants stated that their justice priorities include revealing the truth, holding perpetrators accountable in a non-selective manner, providing holistic reparations that address the harm endured by victims, and upholding their right to an effective remedy. They also highlighted the importance of committing to a genuine institutional reform—one that guarantees the independence of the judiciary, prevents the repetition of violations, and ensures the meaningful engagement of impacted persons during justice and accountability processes, enabling their full and effective access to all relevant information.

At the convening, impacted persons identified four key, thematic priorities for justice: 1) holding perpetrators accountable, particularly for major crimes such as the Beirut Port explosion and financial crimes; 2) seeking the truth; 3) reforming the state’s institutions and policies; and 4) centering people’s equal access to rights when rebuilding the country.

3.1 Holding perpetrators accountable

While there are numerous violations for which to hold perpetrators to account, impacted persons who participated in TIMEP’s convening focused on two key files: the Beirut Port explosion and the financial crimes that led to the 2019 economic collapse.

3.1.1 *The Beirut Port explosion*

The Beirut Port explosion—one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history—lifted the veil on the extent to which impunity and corruption are deeply entrenched in the Lebanese political system.

On [August 4, 2020](#), tons of ammonium nitrate, shipped in 2013 and improperly stored at the Beirut Port for years, detonated. Over 200 people were killed, and over 6,000 were injured, many suffering life-altering injuries, including amputations and loss of sight. This is in addition to the extensive damage to homes, schools, and hospitals that occurred across the city. The explosion forced tens of thousands of people to leave their homes.

[Human Rights Watch](#) undertook an extensive open-source investigation into the port explosion and found that in the months leading up to the blast, there had been extensive communication between port employees and higher-ups in the government, with the former warning about the dangers of the poorly stored ammonium nitrate and recommending their removal. Yet, authorities failed to take any meaningful action, allowing this catastrophe to occur.

Other open-source investigations [pointed](#) to a broader network of potential actors responsible for the damage caused by the explosion. They include the [company](#) that imported the ammonium nitrate but failed to properly safeguard it or obtain the official approvals required to transport such a large military-grade stockpile, as well as the [company](#) that chartered the vessel carrying the shipment to the port in order to load additional equipment, despite being aware that the ship was already at capacity and unseaworthy.

Despite the tireless efforts by civil society, lawyers, investigative journalists, and impacted persons to support investigations into the Beirut Port explosion, reveal the truth, and pursue justice, domestic proceedings in Lebanon remained obstructed for years. Human rights organizations have consistently [documented](#) a range of procedural and systemic flaws within the domestic investigation. These flaws include pervasive political interference, granting immunity to high-level politicians, and failure to respect due process and fair trial standards. For instance, the first investigative judge appointed to the case, Fadi Sawan, was [dismissed](#) after he summoned two former ministers for questioning. His successor, Tarek Bitar, faced tens of [complaints](#) filed by political leaders, state officials, and suspects implicated in the case to dismiss him, resulting in a prolonged obstruction of the domestic investigation into the blast.

After a two-year standstill, Judge Bitar [revived the investigation](#) in February 2025, issuing new summonses for officials and employees linked to the blast—a move that came as [President Joseph Aoun](#) and [Prime Minister Nawaf Salam](#) renewed pledges to advance justice and the rule of law. In March 2025, the interim top prosecutor enabled Bitar’s investigation by lifting previous measures that had also stalled the investigation, allowing Bitar to [proceed](#). Since then, several high-ranking officials appeared for questioning for the first time in years, while others continued to obstruct the probe by refusing to appear. As of November 2025, no indictment had been issued in the case.

As a result of this context, convening participants highlighted the following priorities:

- **Pursuing justice before domestic and foreign courts:** Impacted persons are currently prioritizing legal action before domestic courts in Lebanon and abroad. Several [cases](#) have been filed in foreign jurisdictions, including the [United States](#) and the [United Kingdom](#). Impacted persons believe that these cases can complement investigations in Lebanon, expose a broader network of actors responsible for the explosion, hold perpetrators to account, recognize victims, and provide remedies and reparations where possible. Most importantly, they see these proceedings as a pathway to uncover the truth and identify the different parties responsible for the blast. Due to a number of unsuccessful attempts to establish a UN fact-finding mission to investigate the Beirut Port explosion, impacted persons seem to have turned away from this strategy, with one survivor [stating](#): “There seems to be a collective omerta, an unspoken pact of silence even among nations, to avoid speaking about the explosion, to refrain from naming, accusing, or prosecuting those responsible.”

- **Enabling the Lebanese judiciary to investigate and prosecute without political interference:** While impacted persons support pursuing justice before foreign courts, they stress that these efforts should complement domestic proceedings in Lebanon and not

substitute them. For this reason, participants in the convening emphasized the importance of protecting the Lebanese judiciary from political interference, particularly safeguarding judges who are leading the prosecution and investigation into the Beirut Port explosion. Impacted persons also recognize the opportunity presented by the new government's reformist approach, and hope this government will take concrete steps to guarantee judicial independence and support their demands for justice and accountability.

- **Expanding investigations to identify the broader network of perpetrators, including senior officials responsible for the explosion:** Investigative Judge Bitar is expected to issue his indictment decision in the Beirut Port explosion case by the end of 2025. However, several higher-ups summoned by the judge have refused to attend their scheduled interrogations, with the ongoing political interference in the case still obstructing investigations. Impacted persons are concerned that this may restrict Bitar's ability to hold those most responsible accountable and limit investigations to lower-level perpetrators. They prioritize facilitating collaboration between Judge Bitar and the various judges involved in foreign jurisdictions investigating the case in order to uncover more elements that could provide leads for the investigation in Lebanon.

3.1.2 *The economic crisis*

Lebanon's 2019 financial collapse has been described by the World Bank as one of the [most severe](#) economic crises globally since the mid-19th century. The collapse was the result of decades of government and private sector corruption, criminal banking practices, mismanagement of public funds, and unsustainable debt accumulation, with the World Bank referring to it a "[deliberate depression](#)." The country's GDP [shrank](#) by over 50 percent in just two years, from \$52 billion in 2019 to \$23 billion in 2021, marking the worst economic contraction in Lebanon's history. This was followed by the rapid devaluation of the Lebanese pound, accompanied by hyperinflation, and a stark rise in poverty and unemployment. Banks imposed informal capital controls to limit withdrawals—restricting the amount of money that depositors could withdraw from their own accounts—and prohibited the transfer of funds abroad, leading to a major banking crisis.

In spite of these capital controls, it is [reported](#) that during the time of the crisis, around \$6 billion were transferred abroad by the political and business elite, who used their power and leverage to [pressure](#) or coerce senior bank officials to override the capital controls. Meanwhile, ordinary Lebanese citizens were forced to bear the brunt of the manmade economic collapse.

The collapse was followed by several shocks that have further [exacerbated](#) the situation in the country, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut Port explosion, years of political paralysis, and the war that destroyed large swathes of infrastructure. [Poverty rates](#) and unemployment rates increased drastically between 2012 and 2022, and even those who retained their employment lost most of their earnings' value due to the depreciation of the local currency. Lebanon also lacks adequate [social security schemes](#) to support the most vulnerable in the country, leaving many to fend for themselves. A [survey](#) by Human Rights Watch in 2022 found that 70 percent of households were having difficulty meeting their financial needs, but less than 5 percent had received some government assistance.

Lebanon has an extensive history of corruption and clientelism, which have [stunted](#) the financial welfare of the country and allowed for the concentration of wealth among the political and business elite and those close to them. Corruption has also affected development and reconstruction, as state infrastructure projects or services [are subject](#) to elite capture, usually involving bribes and kickbacks, preventing any real competition for procurements. These projects are often [mismanaged](#), with shortcuts taken to reduce costs, rendering these projects unsustainable and requiring constant repairs and repetition, further depleting public resources by transferring them to private companies or individuals.

In light of this context, convening participants highlighted the following priorities:

- **Expanding independent investigations and prosecutions of financial crimes:** To date, there has been little to no accountability for the widespread political corruption and financial mismanagement that led to the economic collapse. Former Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh, who was responsible for the financial engineering scheme that led to the economic crisis, has been [charged](#) in several cases both in Lebanon and abroad, but has not been convicted yet, and many domestic investigations into his alleged crimes have been [obstructed](#). In September 2025, Lebanese authorities [released](#) Salameh after he spent one year in pretrial detention on allegations of embezzlement, with no indictment issued against him as of the drafting of this report. Even if Salameh is ultimately convicted, impacted persons are concerned that he will become the collapse's sole scapegoat, while the broader network of actors who also benefited from corruption and who committed financial crimes evade accountability. Impacted persons participating in TIMEP's convening highlighted the importance of efforts to hold all individuals who orchestrated and profited from financial crimes at the public's expense accountable. They also raised the importance of finding a way for embezzled and illicitly obtained funds to be returned to the public coffers.

3.2 Truth-seeking measures

Since the civil war, which claimed roughly 100,000 lives, there has been no concerted state efforts toward truth and [reconciliation](#). At the end of the war, most warring factions signed a pact known as the [Ta'if agreement](#), which, among other things, reinstitutionalized the country's political sectarian system. Many of the armed militias that had kidnapped, disappeared, raped, tortured, and killed civilians turned into political parties and exercised further [control over the country](#), while [general amnesty](#) was granted for all parties to the conflict, leaving victims without hope for justice. As one survivor stated, "the war technically ended in 1990, but really, it was like the Lebanese went to sleep one night and woke up as if the war had never happened. There was never any accountability, no one took responsibility, so this keeps the injuries of the war open."

Some [17,000 people](#) were kidnapped or disappeared by different actors, with between 7,000 and 10,000 still missing to date. After around four decades of advocacy, the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon, a victim-led organization established in 1982, succeeded in their efforts to establish a National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared. The National Commission was formed in 2020, established under [Law 105 of 2018](#) with the [mandate](#) of seeking the truth about the fate and whereabouts of the missing and disappeared persons from the civil war. However, due to

a lack of genuine political will, the commission has not received the requisite support and resources to properly carry out its mandate.

Moreover, Lebanon has witnessed a series of political assassinations and attempted assassinations that have not been properly investigated or prosecuted. These investigations were obstructed by various obstacles and were rooted in a prevailing culture of impunity that has persisted in the decades following the civil war. In addition, many of those in power exchanged war crimes for white-collar crimes, continuing to rob the country of stability, peace, and progress. Political cover and secrecy have deprived the population of their right to the truth, concealing the facts about those responsible for more recent crimes such as the Beirut Port explosion and the economic collapse.

As a result of this context, convening participants highlighted four key areas for which truth-seeking and fact-finding would be central for the country to move forward:

- **Truth about the fate of the disappeared since the civil war:** The families of the kidnapped and disappeared during the civil war want to know the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones and the locations of mass graves and identities of those buried there. Though the establishment of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared was a welcome step, authorities have yet to ensure the [full implementation](#) of Law 105 of 2018, which empowers the National Commission to undertake investigations, uncover mass graves, and provide reparations to victims and their families. Impacted families continue to call on the government to adequately support the commission and ensure that it has the autonomy and resources necessary to fulfill its mandate.
- **Truth about political assassinations:** In a welcome step toward investigating these crimes, the Minister of Justice [appointed](#) several investigative judges in October 2025 to probe 11 political assassinations and attempted assassinations that took place in Lebanon from the 1970s onward. Impacted persons celebrated this step, and insisted on the protection of these investigations from political interference to finally uncover the truth behind the assassinations of their loved ones.
- **Truth about the Beirut Port explosion:** The victims and survivors of the Beirut Port explosion are similarly advocating for the lifting of the veil of secrecy around the events that led to the blast, including the identities of the parties that allowed and facilitated the transfer of tons of ammonium nitrate to Lebanon; who was responsible for storing these explosive materials in a densely populated area; how the materials combusted; and who had knowledge of the improper storage of the materials but failed to take action to remove the threat, among other issues.
- **Truth and transparency around corruption, financial crimes, and the economic collapse:** Those impacted by the economic collapse also highlighted the importance of uncovering the truth about its causes, the actors who have committed financial crimes, the potential conflicts of interests by the political elite who own shares in Lebanese banks, and the value of public funds that have been misappropriated. They also raised the need for impartial third-party audits of local banks and the Central Bank as a key step, with the findings to be made fully accessible to the public.

3.3 Institutional reforms

3.3.1 Economic reforms

In many ways, the 2019 economic collapse was a wakeup call for those in Lebanon as well as international stakeholders and partners of the country. The [financial engineering](#) that former Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh had been praised and awarded for by the international community would ultimately reveal itself as a Ponzi scheme that was doomed from the start. Today, corruption underlies most issues in the country, from the lack of accountability, stunted productivity and development, dilapidated infrastructure, and inadequate social protections.

In 2023, Lebanon was [ranked 154](#) out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International. Calls for [audits and systemic reforms](#) became widespread, with additional [pressure exerted](#) on the Lebanese authorities by international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and foreign stakeholders such as France and the United States.

In response to this mounting pressure, Lebanon has recently reformed its banking secrecy law. The law had long shielded perpetrators of tax evasion and financial crimes from accountability, as the banks did not have to comply with disclosure requests from the judiciary or tax bodies in Lebanon. In April 2025, the Parliament [amended](#) the law, granting auditors and the Central Bank retroactive access to banking records for the past 10 years—a necessary step for any future restructuring of the banking system. How this law is implemented in the months to come will be critical to monitor.

In July 2025, the Parliament also passed the [Law on the Reform and Reorganization of Banks in Lebanon](#), known as the bank restructuring law. The law establishes the criteria for determining which banks should be recapitalized and which are no longer viable and therefore subject to liquidation. It also establishes the Higher Banking Committee, a two-chambered committee responsible for determining the fate of the commercial banks on the one hand, and taking punitive measures against banks violating administrative rules on the other. How this law is implemented will depend on whether Parliament passes the Financial Regularization and Deposit Recovery Law, known as the financial gap law. The gap law is meant to regulate how losses from the economic crisis will be allocated among the different stakeholders, which may include the state, the Central Bank, commercial banks, and depositors. This law has not yet been introduced in Parliament.

Economic and legal experts have criticized the newly-passed bank restructuring law for several shortcomings, including the fact that its implementation will be [contingent](#) on the enactment of the awaited financial gap law. The delay in passing this latter law has postponed the application of the bank restructuring law and raises concerns that it may ultimately undermine its full and effective application. Moreover, the affiliation of the members of the Higher Banking Committee has sparked fears about [potential conflicts of interest](#), which could also result in the selective implementation of the law and undermine genuine reform.

In light of this context, convening participants highlighted the following priorities:

- **Genuinely implementing a national anti-corruption strategy:** Several [anti-corruption laws](#) have been enacted in Lebanon, including the [Access to Information Law in 2017](#), the [Whistleblowers' Protection Law of 2018](#), and the [Law on Illicit Enrichment of 2020](#). To oversee the implementation of these laws, Lebanon established the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). However, the NACC's work has been [obstructed](#) by prolonged delays in appointing its members and in approving its internal regulations and organizational structure. This reflects a lack of political will to end corruption and leaves anti-corruption laws not effectively enforced. Impacted persons raised the importance of challenging this status quo.
- **Passing the financial gap law and implementing financial reforms:** Impacted persons who participated in TIMEP's convening raised the importance of swiftly passing and implementing the aforementioned economic reform laws. While the banking secrecy law's amendments may be a step in the right direction, they do not guarantee justice for depositors who lost their savings and had their livelihoods impacted. It is crucial for the authorities to start forensic audits on the commercial banks. Moreover, recovery of frozen assets will depend on how the financial gap law is drafted, approved, and implemented. Participants suggested that the law should be enacted without delay, and that it must ensure that the burden of financial losses is borne by those responsible for corruption and those who profited from it, rather than by the state or by everyday depositors. The convening's participants also raised concerns about the new bank restructuring law and highlighted the amendments necessary to address its shortcomings and to eliminate any potential conflicts of interest among the members of the Higher Banking Committee.

3.3.2 Judicial reforms

While the [Lebanese Constitution](#) stipulates that “judges shall be independent in the exercise of their functions,” Legislative Decree No. 150 of 1983, which regulates the judiciary, does not provide sufficient safeguards to uphold this principle. Instead, it enables [improper interference](#) by the executive branch in the appointment, dismissal, transfer, and discipline of judges, as well as in the [appointment](#) of key judicial positions, such as members of the High Judicial Council—the supervisory body that oversees the proper functioning of the judiciary and its independence. As a result, political interference in the judiciary in Lebanon has become pervasive. Major cases, such as the [Beirut Port explosion](#) and the investigations and prosecutions of financial crimes committed by the [former Central Bank governor](#) and other politically exposed persons, have witnessed massive political interference, obstructing investigations and rendering justice ineffective.

Amid the persistent political influence over Lebanon's justice system, experts and civil society organizations have consistently advocated for reforms to establish a judiciary that is independent from the executive branch. Chief among these efforts has been advocacy for a [draft law](#) proposed in 2018 by Legal Agenda with a coalition of 30 Lebanese civil

society groups. The draft introduces key reforms, including safeguards to strengthen the independence and transparency of judicial regulatory institutions, as well as fair and transparent mechanisms for judicial appointments and transfers, free from discrimination or political interference.

A lack of political will stalled progress on this until July 2025, when Parliament [adopted](#) a revised version of the draft law put forward by civil society. The adopted bill [ignores](#) many of civil society's key recommendations and the recommendations made by international actors, including the [Venice Commission](#). A major drawback of the adopted bill is that it allows the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation, who is appointed by the executive branch, to halt ongoing legal proceedings led by other prosecutors—an extraordinary power that, if abused, will facilitate political interference and obstruction of investigations into major cases. Members of Parliament were not given the opportunity to [review](#) some last-minute amendments introduced to the text before voting took place, raising serious concerns on procedural violations as well.

It is worth noting that the adopted bill applies only to civil and criminal courts, leaving the military and administrative courts outside of the law's scope; this is despite the fact that both courts suffer from an independence issue and have been the subject of criticism from civil society. Human Rights Watch, for example, has [advocated](#) for reforms to the military court system in order to ensure that civilians are not improperly subjected to their jurisdiction as a tool of intimidation and coercion. Similarly, Legal Agenda has [highlighted](#) the lack of independence and transparency in the administrative judiciary, pointing to shortcomings in the appointment and decision-making processes of the State Council Bureau—the equivalent of the High Judicial Council in the ordinary judiciary—which allow for executive branch interference.

In light of this context, convening participants highlighted the following priorities:

- **Amending the bill regulating the judiciary and enacting laws that guarantee the independence of the military and administrative judiciary:** The majority of Lebanon's population has been directly or indirectly impacted by the lack of an independent judiciary. Impacted persons participating in the convening recognized the essential need for significant judicial reforms to ensure meaningful access to justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators, regardless of their political connections. The problematic provisions of the independence of the judiciary law and the way it was passed raise serious questions on whether this reform may be possible.

Impacted persons who participated in the convening have raised the importance of amending the newly-adopted text. Key amendments should include ensuring that a majority of the members of the High Judicial Council are elected by their peers; guaranteeing the judiciary's financial independence by delinking its budget from that of the Ministry of Justice; and preventing the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation from interfering in investigations led by other prosecutors. Impacted persons at the convening also emphasized the importance of enacting laws to safeguard the independence of the military and administrative judiciary.

3.4 Reconstruction and reparations

Poverty and unemployment rates in Lebanon have been rising steadily for years, along with the cost of living in the country. According to World Bank estimates, [poverty rates](#) tripled between 2012 and 2022, rising from 12 percent to 44 percent, while multidimensional poverty impacts nearly 80 percent of the population. Despite these numbers, the country's [social protection](#) policies remain fragmented, undercapitalized, and exclusionary, depriving Lebanon's residents of adequate benefits and protections related to retirement, sickness, disability, health coverage, and emergency protections.

Access to healthcare has long been a struggle for the population, made worse by the economic crisis, COVID-19, and damages to hospitals and health facilities resulting from the port blast, and the war. According to the American University of Beirut's [Knowledge to Policy Center](#), as of 2023, roughly 55 percent of the population lacked access to healthcare services, while over 40 percent did not have any healthcare coverage and relied on the under-resourced public health sector. Yet, even those covered by health insurance often have to pay [out of pocket](#) for medicine, while these costs are increasing due to the reduction of government subsidies. In 2023, the caretaker Minister of Public Health reported that the government had [reduced](#) its health sector spending by 40 percent, at a time when the majority of the population had fallen into multidimensional poverty. [Medicine shortages](#) were also widespread, causing significant health risks to patients with chronic illnesses or diseases, including fatalities due to not having access to necessary treatments.

Lebanon's education sector was already underfunded and struggling before it was further devastated by the crises mentioned earlier. Students have missed many [school days](#), compounded by severe [electricity cuts](#) and fuel shortages. These conditions have made even online learning challenging, especially for students from vulnerable families who have not been able to afford the necessary tools and technology to continue their education remotely.

Adding to the precarity is the repeated failure of successive Lebanese governments to prepare for or adequately respond to shocks. In March 2025, the World Bank estimated that the total cost of reconstruction following the war with Israel exceeded [\\$10 billion](#). Yet, the government has not put forth any serious reconstruction plans or strategies. Prior to that, the government's response to the impacts of the Beirut Port explosion was similarly slow, leaving civilians and civil society groups to lead emergency relief efforts, secure accommodations, and provide support for those impacted. The [government compensation](#) for damages was either significantly delayed or never delivered to those impacted by the blast.

In light of this context, convening participants highlighted the following priorities:

- **Fulfilling economic and social rights:** The overlapping crises in Lebanon have left much of the population in a highly vulnerable position, underscoring the urgent need for reparations, restitution, and reconstruction strategies that prioritize social protection, affordable access to quality healthcare, education, and adequate housing. Impacted persons at the convening emphasized that these fundamental rights are essential, because they enable them to more

meaningfully engage in the broader fight for justice and accountability. More specifically, convening participants highlighted the importance of returning misappropriated public funds, restoring their personal deposit accounts, and implementing comprehensive and universal social welfare and protection policies. They also emphasized the significance of implementing restructuring and reparations strategies that fulfill people's rights to adequate housing, and increasing the budget for the public sector, particularly the health and education sectors, while ensuring adequate salaries for employees.

4. Toward a people-centric approach

The current atmosphere in Lebanon offers a unique opportunity to finally implement much needed reforms and steer the country in the direction of progress, built on a foundation of justice and accountability. For the first time in three decades, Lebanon has a reform-oriented president and prime minister, and several members of parliament who are not members of the traditional sectarian parties. This political shift, combined with increased support and attention from the international community for Lebanon, have created a tangible and significant opportunity for the political, legal, and financial reforms that civil society and impacted persons have been demanding for years. However, this window of opportunity is limited, with the next parliamentary elections expected to take place in May 2026. As the ramifications of the various crises continue to impact the people in Lebanon, more families are pushed into financial vulnerability as social protections and government services continue to shrink, leading to a real fear among those impacted that the next elections may not yield a positive outcome for non-traditional political forces. Economic precarity and uncertainty help strengthen political and sectarian patronage and clientelism. On the other hand, if this moment of opportunity is properly seized, it could lay the foundation for good governance, increased oversight, and accountability, while also building trust in the current government and encourage the re-election of independent candidates capable of taking the country forward.

For this to happen, the state should guarantee the genuine and active engagement of those directly impacted in Lebanon's reform agenda. This includes meaningfully engaging civil society around policy reforms and ensuring that the people have access to the information and knowledge they need to hold the people in power to account. As the country pursues reconstruction, this also requires ensuring that reconstruction policies are designed, implemented, and evaluated in close consultation with those impacted to reflect their needs and priorities.

A people-centric approach to justice and accountability is not a luxury, but rather a critical step toward achieving progress in Lebanon. Such an approach should ensure that the priorities of those impacted are placed at the heart of the reform agenda, allowing them to directly inform the path ahead, ultimately ensuring that Lebanon's policies begin to respond to the needs of those they are meant to serve.



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