

*(Translated from Arabic)*

## **Lebanese Republic**

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants**

**Beirut, 20 January 2020**

**Replies to the joint communiqué from the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls**

Herewith are replies to joint communication No. AL LBN 6/2019, dated 20 November 2019 and addressed to the Lebanese Government via the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants from a number of special rapporteurs who hold mandates from the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.

The replies are based on information received from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defence (Army Command) and the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities (Directorate General of Internal Security Forces), and on observations communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants by the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva.

Lebanon begins by reaffirming its full commitment to the principle of constructive dialogue with special rapporteurs, according to their various mandates, and it hopes that each will remain within the framework of those mandates and of the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council.

It should be noted that the present reply refers to the special rapporteurs' communication dated 20 November 2019. The popular movement continues to unfold and each day brings additional information, which has not been included in this reply.

#### **I. Protecting the right to demonstrate in Lebanon, in law and in practice**

Freedom of assembly and of opinion are protected under the Constitution as well as under international treaties the Government of Lebanon has ratified which, under paragraph (b) of the preamble to the Constitution, are an integral part of the domestic legal structure.

According to article 7 of the Constitution: "All Lebanese citizens are equal before the law. They shall enjoy civil and political rights on an equal basis and shall be equally bound, without distinction, by public obligations and duties."

According to article 8 of the Constitution: "The right to personal liberty shall be safeguarded and protected by law. No one may be arrested, imprisoned or detained except as provided for by law and no offence or penalty may be established other than by law."

Article 13 of the Constitution reads: "Freedom to express opinions orally or in writing, as well as freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, shall be guaranteed, within the limits of the law."

In this way, the Lebanese Constitution protects the freedom to assemble and demonstrate as a fundamental human right. This right may be exercised by individuals as well as by groups and associations who can thereby express their varying views, within limits imposed by the need for demonstrations to be peaceful and free from violence.

The Lebanese Government fulfils its obligations under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which safeguard the right of all persons to hold and express opinions.



Since the popular movement began on 17 October 2020, senior political figures including the President of the Republic, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, the Prime Minister and the Army Commander-in-Chief, as well as representatives of parliamentary blocs and parties, have all made statements reaffirming citizens' right to demonstrate, the need for security agencies to protect that right and the need for political authorities to take account of demonstrators' just demands.

An examination of the activities of the popular movement since its inception on 17 October 2019 shows that, on a number of occasions, the demonstrators exceeded the limits envisaged in international human rights law, particularly in terms of blocking citizens' access to roads.

The closure of roads by demonstrators as a way to express their opinions and to protest against public policies constitutes a criminal offence that is punishable under the Lebanese Criminal Code.

The Code contains measures and penalties intended to act as deterrents and to protect freedoms, public and private property and citizens' rights. It also contemplates penalties for riotous demonstrations and assemblies and underscores the importance of protecting public thoroughfares and inhabited areas in order to prevent vandalism and destruction of public squares and streets and the removal of signage and kilometre markers on roads and buildings.

The closure of roads also constitutes a violation of international norms enshrined in the aforementioned instruments, particularly in view of the fact that it undermines the following third-party rights:

- Citizens' freedom of movement, which is a fundamental right enshrined in article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Students' right to education and to go to school, which is safeguarded under article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Citizens' right to work and earn a living, which is safeguarded under article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The right to privacy, which is enshrined in article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- The right to liberty and security of person, which is enshrined in article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

No restrictions are imposed on freedom of assembly except when assemblies fail to abide by the minimum requirements necessary to protect the rights of others. This is in application of the principle whereby anyone seeking to exercise the right to freedom of assembly in a manner that leads to the destruction of the rights of others, effectively loses the right to assemble, and is consistent with article 5 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 30 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The special rapporteurs' communication emphasized the right of peaceful assembly – as enshrined in the Constitution and domestic laws of Lebanon – and the alleged violations to that right. However, it seems to have failed to address other freedoms and rights, particularly freedom of movement, which security forces struggled to guarantee for citizens, both supporters and opponents of the popular movement.

The communication also failed to mention the suffering of citizens who were stranded on blocked roads. It has been documented that these included pregnant women and sick persons who were unable to reach hospital for treatment. Moreover, ambulances were unable to transfer patients, including emergency cases, thereby endangering many people's right to life. On the coast road between Sidon and Khaldeh things reached the point that stones were thrown at passing cars, which may have been the cause behind the crash of a civilian motor vehicle that resulted in two people being burnt to death.

## **II. The role of the Army in maintaining order, in law and in practice**

Decree No. 1 of the Council of Ministers, dated 16 January 1991, delegates to the Lebanese Army the task of maintaining order, extending State authority to all Lebanese territory and assisting the Internal Security Forces in their duties.

To go into detail about Lebanese Army operations vis-à-vis the actions of the popular movement, the Army has not, in fact, intervened to restrict any right of citizens to peaceful expression, not even of citizens whose acts have constantly disrupted the movement of vehicles and pedestrians in vital areas and have aroused anger among other citizens who have suffered harassment and sometimes deliberate intimidation and degrading treatment at the hands of demonstrators.

In fact, the Army has consistently sought to strike the correct balance between, on the one hand, the right to assemble and demonstrate peacefully and, on the other, the rights of citizens who live, shop and engage in business in the locations affected by gatherings.

The Lebanese Army has been concerned to protect all gatherings of demonstrators, of which there have been many, extending to many areas in parallel and lasting for consecutive weeks. This, despite the attacks the Army has suffered in more than one place and on more than one occasion, which have resulted in the injury of a number of soldiers; for example, 3 soldiers were injured in Ashrafieh, 5 in Bikfaya, 10 in Ain al-Rummanah and 31 in Tripoli.

Ever since the beginning of the popular movement, citizens have been using the media and social media to express their praise and appreciation for the actions of the Lebanese Army in accompanying and protecting peaceful demonstrations.

Moreover, the Regional Representative for the Middle East and North Africa of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has issued the following statement: “We commend the Lebanese Army with the Lebanese security forces for the responsible role they have played in maintaining peace and security, while guaranteeing the right of demonstrators to peaceful assembly.” That statement was made on 21 November 2019 around six weeks after the start of the popular movement.

## **III. The role of the Directorate General of Internal Security Forces, in law and in practice**

From the first moment the popular movement was launched and for many weeks thereafter, the Internal Security Forces have been constantly on the streets, particularly in the areas where the demonstrations are taking place, where they continue to strive to protect the demonstrators and maintain the peace. The Internal Security Forces carry out their functions on the basis of the laws and procedures described below, and with the support of the Lebanese Army.

In conducting operations and intervening in situations, the Internal Security Forces are guided by Internal Security Forces Act No. 17 of 6 September 1990. The Act defines the functions assigned to the Forces by the administrative authorities; i.e., maintaining order, consolidating security, ensuring public peace and protecting persons, property and freedoms. The Internal Security Forces also exercise the functions of the judicial police, which means that they carry out assignments and instructions from the judiciary, enforce rulings and warrants and undertake other activities one of the most important of which is guarding public offices and institutions, at the command of the competent authorities.

Act No. 17 of 6 September 1990 also identifies seven rights that members of the Internal Security Forces have, chief among them the right to arrest, the right to seize prohibited items, and the right to use weapons.

The Act also addresses the duties incumbent upon members of the Internal Security Forces whereby they may not infringe individual freedoms other than in circumstances identified in the Act itself and, in carrying out their duties, they may not use force other than where necessary.

The actions of the Internal Security Forces are also regulated by Decree No. 1024 of 2006 of the Minister of the Interior and Municipalities, according to which organizers of demonstrations or protests are required to submit an application to the competent administrative authority; i.e., the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities and the

governor or acting governor. In the application, the organizing body must inform the authorities about the event and explain the reasons and purpose behind it, the plan of the march and the gathering place. In this way, the Internal Security Forces can accompany and protect participants and prevent any violations.

The Internal Security Forces have adopted a manual for their law-and-order operations, which is used to train officers of the Forces as well as other law enforcement personnel about their roles and responsibilities. The manual includes guidance on how to manage demonstrations, which is consistent with binding international standards such as the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the United Nations 1979 Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

On the basis outlined above and with the support of the Lebanese Army, the Internal Security Forces has sought to create a secure environment in which people can assemble and demonstrate, while maintaining civil peace and protecting public and private institutions.

The Internal Security Forces have also acted to prevent any violations against the demonstrators. This, despite the physical and moral pressures security personnel have had to face and the scarcity of human and material resources such as riot gear and modern technology.

Further details regarding the security operations that accompanied the popular movement throughout Lebanon between 17 October and 20 November 2019 are to be found in annex 1 of the present document.

#### **IV. Use of force by the Lebanese Army**

Lebanese security personnel did not use force against the demonstrators, except when the latter attacked the Lebanese Army and the Internal Security Forces. That force took the form of the use of tear gas and rubber bullets and it was exercised in full respect for international rules and standards governing the use of force. Thus, the claim made in the communication of the special rapporteurs that the use of force was excessive is factually and legally unfounded.

Details about the actions of the popular movement are as follows. Demonstrators in different parts of Lebanon (Jall al-Dib, Zouk Mosbeh, Beddawi, Sidon, etc.) attacked passers-by and used force to hinder their movements, obstructed normal life for the majority of citizens and caused harm to those citizens by damaging public facilities and preventing them from operating. Moreover, they burned tyres, thereby threatening public health and safety, and they threw stones, sharp objects and incendiary devices against security forces. In some places, this degenerated into the throwing of grenades.

Despite all of this, the Lebanese Army respected the right of those citizens to demonstrate. Army units called upon participants to disperse and this communication with the demonstrators continued over a long period of time during which they were asked to stop what they were doing and to abide by the peaceful aims their movement proclaimed.

In a number of places, the Army intervened to separate groups of demonstrators with divergent views and demands, and force was used only to guarantee the right of movement and public safety and to protect the demonstrators and the rights of third parties alike.

The Lebanese Army used force only when certain citizens refused to comply with its demand to cease aggressive actions and the Army units were thus compelled to intervene to break up the demonstrations through the gradual use of force.

The use of force by the Lebanese Army is subject to the principle of gradual escalation enshrined in its own Code of Conduct on the Use of Force and Firearms during Law Enforcement Operations. Such use follows the basic principles of “necessity”, “proportionality”, “legitimacy”, “accountability” and “non-discrimination”.

The Lebanese Army took precautions by first using peaceful means then gradually escalating their reaction while providing the greatest feasible degree of protection to the persons involved and minimizing injuries to the extent possible.

As proof of the fact that the Army did not resort to excessive force or inhumane treatment, it may be noted that no gunshot injuries were recorded among demonstrators despite the fact that some of them were being aggressive, rioting and behaving violently.

Around eight tear gas cannisters were used in the most critical situations, which shows that the Army used force proportionally against demonstrators who were rioting, despite the large numbers of injuries in the Army's own ranks.

Any violations that did occur as the Lebanese Army accompanied the popular movement did so on an individual level and are being investigated and pursued by the competent authorities.

Further information about the use of force on the part of the Lebanese Army during law enforcement operations, and the training provided to Army personnel, are to be found in annex 1 of the present document.

#### **V. Use of force by the Internal Security Forces**

Details of the operations conducted by the Internal Security Forces, during the course of the popular movement and up to the date of the special rapporteurs' communication – 20 November 2019 – are as follows. The Internal Security Forces used minimal levels of force when demonstrations began to hinder the rights of others and to disrupt the flow of traffic. By then the demonstrations had become a kind of itinerant source of strife that was harming the national economy and preventing sick persons from reaching hospital for treatment, despite peaceful attempts at mediation with protesters to get them to reopen roads.

The use of force by the Internal Security Forces arose as the result of attacks against citizens, security personnel and public and private property in a number of parts of the country. These attacks took place in front of the media. The Internal Security Forces employed force only after its personnel had applied the principle – which is part of the Internal Security Forces' operational procedures – of holding back for 100 minutes.

In cases where demonstrations degenerated into riots, which happened in more than one area, the Internal Security Forces sought to apprehend the miscreants, draw up a record of their actions, conduct investigations and inquiries to discover their identities and whereabouts then pursue broader investigations, acting upon instructions from the competent court.

Since the beginning of the popular movement, the use of force against demonstrators by the Internal Security Forces has been the subject of much discussion. However, any observer of the events may see that cases where force has been used have been isolated and perpetrators have been duly punished.

Further details regarding Internal Security Force operations that accompanied the popular movement between 17 October and 20 November 2019 –the date of the special rapporteurs' communication – are to be found in annex 2 of the present document. The details given there show how the Forces' field units dealt with the popular movement when it was acting peacefully and when – at certain times and in certain areas – it descended into rioting.

Annex 2 also gives numbers regarding physical injuries suffered and equipment lost by the Internal Security Forces as a result of the popular movement.

If those numbers mean anything then they clearly show the extent of the losses suffered by the Internal Security Forces, particularly in terms of personal injuries. The Internal Security Forces were charged with stopping riots and played that role by separating demonstrators and rioters, on more than one occasion and in more than one location, while under a bombardment of stones from both sides.

#### **VI. Investigations to hold law enforcement personnel accountable in cases where excessive force was used against demonstrators**

It should be emphasized that the Lebanese Army and Internal Security Forces did not arrest any demonstrators – the majority – who were peacefully expressing their opinions. Arrests were carried out only against demonstrators whose actions had degenerated into rioting and those who were using sticks and stones to attack the Lebanese Army and Internal Security Forces.

In line with instructions from the competent courts and with the relevant provisions of domestic law, civilians detained by the Lebanese Army during the demonstrations were

held in prison. Once safely there and away from an angry public, they were verbally informed of the charges against them.

Civilians detained by the Internal Security Forces either had their statements taken down without being detained or were held in detention. Those arrested were not subjected to torture of any kind and their rights were not violated in any way. They were treated in line with international humanitarian standards and were informed of their rights under article 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The Ministry of Justice has stated that a group of lawyers filed complaints against a number of law enforcement officials before the Office of the Public Prosecution at the Court of Cassation. Those complaints have been referred for investigation, which remains ongoing.

#### **VII. The killing of a demonstrator in Khaldeh**

The death of ██████████ in the area of Khaldeh did not occur while the Lebanese Army was dispersing demonstrators who were blocking roads, as stated in the special rapporteurs' communication. The incident occurred when an Army vehicle carrying two persons came across demonstrators who had blocked the road and who were acting aggressively towards passers-by including the occupants of the Army vehicle. At that point an argument broke out and there was a shooting that resulted in the injury and death of a citizen, ██████████. The case was referred to the competent court, where the two Army personnel are being prosecuted in accordance with Lebanese domestic law. The legal team engaged by the family of the late ██████████ to pursue his case until justice is served has expressed its satisfaction at this.

#### **VIII. Guaranteeing freedoms including media freedom**

From the very beginning of the popular movement, the Lebanese authorities were careful not to restrict the freedom of the media or of social media. The authorities' actions in that regard are informed by their belief in absolute freedom for the media, which is one of the pillars of the Lebanese system.

It is very clear that the majority of the demonstrators are safe, to the extent that they are able to monitor and film, not just the activities of the popular movement itself, but also the operations to disperse those demonstrators who riot, use violence and assault security personnel.

Moreover, there is continuous communication at all operational levels between security agencies – the Lebanese Army and Internal Security Forces – and human rights organizations in order to facilitate actions and to clarify orders, according to need.

#### **IX. Number of injured demonstrators according to the Lebanese Red Cross**

Following contacts between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants and the relevant agencies, it has emerged that the figure given in the communication of 1,702 persons injured between 17 and 30 October 2019 includes all cases handled by the Lebanese Red Cross during that period. This includes injuries to demonstrators but also other cases involving injuries from other causes such as traffic accidents as well as illnesses.

This correction should serve as a reminder of the need to verify the accuracy of information of such sensitivity before using and circulating it in a special rapporteurs' communication.

#### **X. Information concerning measures the Government intends to take to address the economic causes of the movement**

Following the resignation of the Government, consultations are still ongoing to form a new administration, one of the priorities of which will be to develop a plan of action to improve the economic and financial situation and to take steps to address the causes behind the launch of the popular movement on 17 October 2019.

**Annex 1****Information from the Ministry of Defence (Army Command)****Training in the use of force during law enforcement operations**

The Lebanese Army's Code of Conduct on the Use of Force and Firearms during Law Enforcement Operations, which was developed in collaboration with the Middle East and North Africa Office of OHCHR, stands as a testament to the unwavering vision the Army has developed over the course of its history as a disciplined regular force that abides by national and international laws and standards.

In addition to the Code, there are strict instructions to restrict the use of force to the minimum necessary. The instructions envisage disciplinary and criminal proceedings against Army personnel who violate any of the provisions they contain.

Determined to respect human rights in both word and practice, the Ministry of Defence (Army Command) has set up the Directorate of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. In addition to its other duties, the Directorate receives and pursues complaints regarding rights violations by military units. It also communicates and coordinates with governmental and non-governmental human rights organizations to promote rights during the course of Army operations.

In order to give effect to the measures outlined above, international human rights law has been incorporated into the Lebanese Army's educational curricula, and a training textbook on international human rights law has been developed, which includes an entire chapter on the use of force during law enforcement operations.

Training in this area for Army personnel of all ranks has been made a number-one priority thanks to cooperation with governmental organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and OHCHR and non-governmental organizations.

## **Annex 2**

### **Information from the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities (Directorate General of Internal Security Forces) regarding the activities of the popular movement across Lebanese territory between 17 October 2019 and 22 November 2019**

As a consequence of the popular movement, 251 members of the Internal Security Forces were injured between 17 October 2019 and 7 January 2020, while 43 vehicles belonging to the police and the mobile division have been damaged at different dates.

As for civilians in central Beirut, three were injured on 18 October 2019, as a result of fire and rioting, while one was injured on 21 October 2019.

#### **Beirut**

In order to accompany the activities of the popular movement, police chiefs in Beirut have taken a series of measures in line with guidance from the Directorate General of Internal Security Forces. According to that guidance, the Forces are to act in a controlled and disciplined manner, with strict measures envisaged for anyone who fell short of those standards.

The chiefs of operation and the two control rooms involved held several analytical and planning meetings to consider what guidelines to follow in order to maintain order and consolidate security, with a particular focus on the following:

- Discipline and patience coupled with firmness and determination while avoiding the excessive use of force or losing sight of the task in hand;
- The importance of making the forces involved understand the nature of their task, providing them with explanations and encouraging them not to act impulsively;
- The need for officers to tell their subordinates to follow the Code of Conduct of the Internal Security Forces in all the actions they intend to take;
- Using weapons such as tear gas and rubber bullets only when ordered to do so.

#### **First Regional Brigade**

As thoroughfares were blocked, tyres burned, waste containers scattered and barriers raised within their area of jurisdiction, commanders of the First Regional Brigade sought to reopen the roads through consultation and coordination between their officers and the demonstrators. They did so using peaceful means in order to avoid any friction or clashes with the demonstrators.

As regards confrontations between supporters of certain political parties and demonstrators in front of the Verdun 730 Mall, which is in the area of jurisdiction of the Raouche Company, the necessary legal measures were taken, as recorded in the police report which was sealed and referred to the competent authorities for further investigation.

#### **Second Regional Brigade**

On 17 October 2019, following the announcement of increased taxes on the WhatsApp application, there was a sudden and rapid uprising on the Ring Bridge in Beirut whence demonstrators, accompanied by security forces, moved on to Riad al-Solh Square. As these events began to be relayed on television screens and across social media, some demonstrators attempted to break into the government building, the Grand Sérail, removing the barbed-wire security fence and the steel barriers. Security forces took the measures necessary to protect the building.

On 18 October 2019, the number of demonstrators increased and riots took place and roads were blocked across Beirut and other areas. Some demonstrators set fire to public and private property, resulting in the deaths of two Syrians in central Beirut. The Prime Minister then announced a 72-hour deadline in which to draw up a charter of reforms but the demonstrators continued to attack security forces by throwing bottles, stones and other objects and causing a number of injuries among security personnel. A total of 187 officers and enlisted men of the security forces were injured between 17 and 19 October 2019.

Although riot police continued to exercise restraint, the growing disorder led to a gradual increase in their response to the rioters including the use of tear gas and the arrest

of some 63 people. Those persons, who were not assaulted in any way, were handed over to the relevant bodies then subsequently released on court order.

On 29 October 2019, demonstrators on the Ring Bridge came face to face with a group of supporters of certain local parties, who had come in large numbers from the Al-Khandaq al-Ghamiq neighbourhood. They were confronted by riot police who – under a hail of sticks, stones and bottles – sought to separate the two sides and protect the demonstrators.

### **Third Regional Brigade**

This Brigade took several measures to maintain law and order in the area around Beirut Port, Électricité du Liban, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, the Value Added Tax Centre, the Beirut Palace of Justice and Sassine Square. The Brigade provided protection for demonstrators as well as support for other sectors.

Although some demonstrators deliberately attacked and provoked security forces, personnel remained highly disciplined. With support from the Lebanese Army, a number of rioters were arrested and handed over to regional bodies, which conducted the necessary investigations.

Some rioters, who were supporters of certain parties, entered Mar Youssef Street and Monot Street from the Tabaris Intersection where they attacked public and private property. They were dealt with in accordance with the law and human rights, with the support of the Lebanese Army.

### **Significant security incidents during the demonstrations in Beirut**

At 5.30 p.m. on 17 October 2019, in response to a call made by the activist [REDACTED], a group of about 100 people gathered in Martyrs' Square in the centre of Beirut to protest against the imposition of new taxes and difficult living conditions. They blocked the road in front of a convoy of government vehicles.

At 9 p.m., a group of around 400 people marched from the Phalange headquarters in Sayfi to the offices of the An-Nahar newspaper. There, the demonstrators came across a jeep belonging to a politician and attempted to block its way. Shots were fired into the air from inside the vehicle, which then continued its journey. Following this incident, the number of demonstrators in central Beirut grew, with many of them attempting to cross the security cordon in front of the Grand Sérail. A conflict broke out among the demonstrators, public property was attacked, windows in a number of local shops were broken and a building was set on fire, the latter action resulting in the death of two Syrian workers.

With many roads closed in the capital and its surrounding areas, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education announced that classes in schools and universities would be suspended on the Friday. For its part, the Association of Public Sector Employees announced a strike and, in response to the security situation, the banks were closed. To compound this problem, groups of citizens blocked roads across Lebanon.

At 3 a.m. on 18 October 2019, as a result of increased pressure from demonstrators, clashes between them and the security forces intensified in central Beirut. The demonstrators broke through the foremost barrier to reach the barbed wire enclosure surrounding the Grand Sérail and attempted to tear it down. This prompted the security forces around the Sérail to fire tear gas at demonstrators who, more than once, attempted to turn and enter the Sérail over its outer wall that gives onto Banks Street. As they fled, they destroyed a number of security vehicles parked in the area and attacked personnel with sharp instruments in an attempt to inflict as many injuries as possible.

At 3.15 a.m. on the same day, riot police drove away the demonstrators, who dispersed from Riad al-Solh Square into Banks Street, Martyrs' Square, Ring Bridge and Bechara El Khoury Road. The riot police themselves extinguished burning tyres and other fires in central Beirut while a Civil Defence vehicle arrived on the scene and put out other fires around the Al-Amin Mosque.

Rioting continued in central Beirut on 18 October 2019 as demonstrators tried to cross the security cordon around the Grand Sérail. Again, there was a clash between demonstrators and security forces, resulting in injuries on both sides, and a number of demonstrators were arrested.

Between 19 and 20 October 2019, roads continued to be blocked in several areas, most notably central Beirut, Sassine Square, Chevrolet, Ring Bridge, Jall al-Dib, Zouk, Jbeil, Tripoli, Halba, Beddawi, Sidon, Tyre, Nabatiyeh, Zahleh, Bar Ilyas, Dahr al-Baydar, Sawfer, and Aley.

The gatherings persisted in principal squares, particularly in the centre of Beirut, Tripoli, Jall al-Dib, Zouk and Sidon. No significant security incidents took place, and the security forces and the Lebanese Army monitored and protected the gatherings.

On 21 and 22 October 2019, roads remained blocked across many areas, most notably central Beirut, Sassine Square, Chevrolet, Ring Bridge, Jall al-Dib, Zouk, Jbeil, Tripoli, Halba, Beddawi, Sidon, Tyre, Nabatiyeh, Zahleh, Bar Ilyas, Dahr al-Baydar, Sawfer, and Aley. Gatherings also persisted in principal squares, particularly in the centre of Beirut, Tripoli, Jall al-Dib, Zouk and Sidon, without any significant security incidents.

At 1.30 p.m. on 26 October 2019, about 100 people gathered at the intersection of Burj al-Ghazal and Ring Bridge, and blocked the carriageway in both directions. Anti-riot personnel from the mobile division undertook to open one of the lanes, leaving the other one closed and occupied by the demonstrators.

Roads remained blocked in Beirut on 28 October 2019 when, at 4.20 p.m. on that day, seven individuals penetrated the barbed wire fence that security forces had placed at the entrance on Riad al-Solh Square leading to the Grand Sérail. To do this, they had first jumped over the steel barriers positioned at the beginning of Banks Street then entered the Roman amphitheatre to reach the back of the fence. The security forces intervened to block their way and took them back to Riad al-Solh Square.

At 11.40 a.m. on 29 October 2019, an incident occurred on Ring Bridge when around 60 demonstrators got into an argument with a group of some 250 people after the demonstrators had been directing chants against a certain political and religious figure. The security forces intervened to separate the two sides.

After this, a group of rioters tore down the demonstrators' tents on Ring Bridge and the two sides began pelting stones and beating one another with sticks.

A group of some 700 people then moved towards Riad al-Solh Square and Martyrs' Square where they tore down and set fire to protestors' tents, which had been pitched in the Azariyeh area and in front of the Al-Amin Mosque. Although the security forces intervened to separate the two sides, they were outnumbered by the rioters who moved very quickly and broke up into smaller formations and were thus able to cause damage. Initially, this caused the security forces to disperse across several fronts as they sought to repel the rioters, something they were finally able to do following the arrival of reinforcements.

These incidents caused various injuries in the ranks of the Internal Security Forces and among civilians. A total of 92 military personal from the Internal Security Forces were injured (69 of whom were taken to hospital while 23 were treated in the field) as were 173 civilians (32 were taken to hospital and 140 treated in the field). In all, 152 people were arrested for rioting in central Beirut, most of them on 17 and 18 October 2019, while a further 34 people were arrested for setting fire to the Tyre Rest House.

On 1 November 2019 – while the sit-ins and demonstrations persisted, roads remained blocked and tyres continued to be burnt – 12 demonstrators gathered in front of the Association of Banks in central Beirut and 4 of them managed to get in behind the gate of the Association, which they then closed with a steel chain.

At 10 a.m. on the same day, a rapid reaction force from the mobile division entered the Association of Banks, removing the four people in question from a rear entrance, who were then arrested and held in civilian custody at the Amil Helou Barracks. During the arrest, one of the individuals insulted and threw a punch at a member of the mobile division, at which the officer concerned and a colleague were compelled to defend themselves. The aggressor was arrested and taken to the Amil Helou Barracks, and legal proceedings were launched against him in coordination with the competent court.

#### **Measures taken by the command of the regional gendarmerie**

**Southern district (Tyre Company).** On 17 October 2019, demonstrations took place across the city of Tyre and surrounding villages in protest against the economic and

social situation in the country. Demonstrators blocked access roads to the city with burning tyres and chanted slogans insulting the State and its leaders.

On 18 October, demonstrators set fire to part of the Tyre Rest House and 18 persons were arrested. A police report was drawn up under judicial oversight and none of the arrested persons suffered any form of violence or harm.

On 25 November 2019, supporters of local parties held a vigil to protest against attacks on the Beirut international highway, which had led to the deaths of two people. They also broke into the area where the sit-in was taking place (Al-Alam Square) where they broke up the gathering and tore down the protesters' tents, burning one of them. An estimated 300 persons took part in this incident.

They used burning tyres to block roads in the Saf al-Hawa area of the city of Bint Jbeil and in front of the government Séraïl in Bint Jbeil, and chanted slogans insulting the State and its leaders.

As the demonstrations were unfolding, security forces protected the demonstrators and called upon them to reopen the roads and to stop burning tyres, particularly in front of the Martyr Salah Ghandour Hospital in Bint Jbeil. As a result of these negotiations, the roads were reopened without recourse to use of force.

On 21 October 2019, about 150 people gathered in front of the government Séraïl in Bint Jbeil chanting slogans against the State and hurling insults at certain official figures who give rise to extreme sensitivities in the local area. A dispute arose between that group and a large gathering of youths and local residents from the Bint Jbeil area, and stones and bottles were thrown.

The Internal Security Forces intervened to keep the two sides apart until such time as the demonstration dispersed without any physical injuries or any attack against public or private property. A report on the incident was duly drawn up.

Around one week later, a group of people – duly protected by the security forces – gathered to exercise their right to demonstrate peacefully without blocking roads, attacking official facilities or chanting provocative slogans.

**(Nabatiyeh Company).** Security measures were put in place at locations where demonstrations were taking place every day of the week, particularly at the Kafr Rumman roundabout and in front of the government Séraïl in Nabatiyeh. A platoon was sent to ensure the safety of the demonstrators and a number of investigations were duly conducted during the course of which a police report was drawn up at the Nabatiyeh station regarding an incident in which certain demonstrators, who were followers on a local political party, attacked other demonstrators in the city of Nabatiyeh and sought to reopen a road by force. However, no injuries were reported and no one was brought in to be charged.

A dispute arose in Nabatiyeh between demonstrators and other parties, which led to nine persons being taken for treatment for minor injuries at the emergency room of Nabatiyeh Government Hospital. Under instruction from the courts, charges were levelled against the head of the Nabatiyeh municipality and others.

Some demonstrators closed the Ogero and Liban Post buildings in Nabatiyeh, a scuffle broke out while an attempt was being made to block the road and demonstrators attacked one another with sticks and stones, resulting in a number of minor injuries.

**Northern district (Tripoli Company).** Measures were taken to protect protestors, government buildings, prisons and public and private property.

In the first two days after the start of the popular movement, some demonstrators attempted to get into the Séraïl building in Tripoli. After they had been dispersed and prevented from entering, using peaceful means, the necessary security measures were put in place with the deployment of a fixed force to protect the Séraïl and the Palace of Justice in Tripoli. At the same time, a standing force was assigned to provide 24-hour protection to the sit-in at Nour Square and to prevent any kind of conflict from arising among citizens. Regional companies began making patrols to gather information about the sit-ins and to support the Lebanese Army. There were patrols by emergency squads, reinforced security patrols and the deployment of anti-riot personnel from the mobile division, according to need. Using peaceful methods, they worked to reopen roads and to address issues arising

from peaceful demonstrations in the vicinity of houses belonging to members of the Chamber of Deputies. Measures were also put in place to protect prisons and prisoner transfer operations and a standing force was deployed in front of the municipality building in Tripoli Port following demonstrations against the municipality and its head after the roof of a building in the city had collapsed, resulting in the deaths of two people. Lastly, security measures were put in place at the Bank of Lebanon in Tripoli as well as at other banks and public offices.

**Mount Lebanon.** A number of demonstrations, strikes and road closures took place across the Mount Lebanon area in response to which officers and enlisted personnel were operationally deployed and were able to handle the demonstrators without resorting to force. Most of the time, the task of reopening roads was entrusted to the Lebanese Army.

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