



## Justice Working Group Minutes of Meeting

<b>Meeting chairs</b>	UNDP Resident Representative, <b>Ms. Blerta Aliko</b> EU Ambassador of Lebanon, <b>Ms. Sandra De Waele</b>
<b>Meeting attendees</b>	UN Resident Coordinator for Lebanon, Minister of Justice, President of the Higher Judicial Council, President of the State Council, President of the Administration & Justice Parliamentary Committee, Lebanese Judges Association, Independence of Justice Coalition, Beirut Bar Association, Tripoli Bar Association, Embassy of Italy, Embassy of France, Embassy of Germany, Embassy of the United States of America, Embassy of the Netherlands, Embassy of Canada, Embassy of Switzerland, European Union, OHCHR, IOM, UNODC, IMF, UNHCR, UN Women, UNRCO, Restart Center, CLDH, LAW, and Justice Forum Secretariat.
<b>Location</b>	UN ESCWA, Downtown, Beirut
<b>Date</b>	10 November 2025
<b>Duration</b>	1.5 hours
<b>Meeting nr.</b>	8
<b>Agenda</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Opening Remarks</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- UNDP Lebanon Resident Representative, Ms. Blerta Aliko</li><li>- UN Resident Coordinator for Lebanon, Mr. Imran Riza</li><li>- EU Ambassador to Lebanon, Ms. Sandra De Waele</li></ul></li><li><b>2. Strategic Overview of the Justice Sector</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Minister of Justice, <b>Maître Adel Nassar</b></li><li>- President of the Higher Judicial Council, <b>Judge Souhail Abboud</b></li><li>- President of the State Council, <b>Judge Youssef Gemayel</b></li><li>- President of the Administration and Justice Parliamentarian Committee, <b>MP Georges Adwan</b></li></ul></li><li><b>3. Progress of the Justice Forum</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Update from the Justice Forum Secretariat</li></ul></li><li><b>4. Discussion on the Way Forward</b></li></ol>
<b>Link to previous minutes</b>	<a href="https://www.lebanon3rf.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/3RF%20Justice%20WG%20-%20MoM%2019.06.2024.pdf">https://www.lebanon3rf.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/3RF%20Justice%20WG%20-%20MoM%2019.06.2024.pdf</a>

### Minutes of meeting

#### 1. & 2. Opening Remarks and Strategic Overview of the Justice Sector

The meeting opened with remarks from the **UNDP Lebanon Resident Representative, Ms. Blerta Aliko**, the **UN Resident Coordinator for Lebanon, Mr. Imran Riza**, and the **EU Ambassador to Lebanon, H.E. Ms. Sandra De Waele**.

Following this, a strategic overview of the Justice Sector was provided by the sector's leadership: **H.E. Maître Adel Nassar - Minister of Justice, Judge Souhail Abboud - President of the Higher Judicial Council,**

**Judge Youssef Gemayel - President of the State Council, and MP Georges Adwan - President of the Administration and Justice Parliamentary Commission.**

The full texts of these introductory and strategic statements are published and available on the [Justice Sector Lebanon 3RF website](#).

### **3. Progress of the Justice Forum**

**Ms. Rina Constantine, representing the Justice Forum Secretariat,** proceeded to provide a comprehensive update on the Forum's progress. She recalled that the concept for the Justice Forum originated during a 3RF Justice Working Group meeting, initiated by national authorities. Launched in February 2024, the Forum was established as a nationally led and owned platform designed to convene a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Its core mandate is to collaboratively develop a comprehensive roadmap for the substantive reform of the justice sector.

The Forum progressed as follows:

- **Thematic Group 1 on Judicial Independence and Accountability:**
  - This group's work is complete; 12 sessions were held between May 29, 2024, and February 25, 2025.
  - Its recommendations were presented to the Minister of Justice, the President of Parliament's Administration & Justice Committee, and the Presidents of the High Judicial Council and State Council.
  - These recommendations served as a basis for an informal commission established by the MoJ, which led to the government-approved draft law on judicial independence.
- **Thematic Group 2 on Efficiency, Transparency, Digitalization, and Accessibility:**
  - The group was launched on May 21, 2025; 11 meetings have been held to date. It is expected to conclude late November.
- **Thematic Group 3 on Criminal Justice and Human Rights:**
  - The group was launched on August 27, 2025. Five meetings have been held, with two more scheduled for November. This group is more technical in nature and less contentious.
- **Thematic Group 4 on Juvenile Justice:**
  - The initial structuring and preparatory work for this group have been completed. The group could start meeting in late November 2025.
- **Thematic Group 5 on Administrative Justice:**
  - A decision to start this group is linked to negotiations on the draft law for administrative judicial independence.

### **4. Discussion on the Way Forward**

#### **The Minister of Justice and MP Adwan on Legislative Timelines**

- **The Minister of Justice** referred to MP Adwan's statement that the Law on Judicial Organization (Law 1) would be reviewed after the media law's completion and requested an estimated timeline to determine when work on Law 1 might begin
- In response, MP Adwan noted that, as chair of a parliamentary commission, the pace of discussions depends on its members, making it impossible to impose a binding timeframe. He

reaffirmed the commission's commitment to accelerating consideration of the Law, recognizing its importance.

- The Minister of Justice proposed setting a parallel legislative track to advance both the media law and the Law on Judicial Organization, noting that amendments to the latter are already finalized. MP Adwan took note of the suggestion.

### **Stakeholder Interventions**

The representative of the **Beirut Bar Association (BBA)**, **Mr. Joe Karam**, announced the launch of **e-barreau**, an electronic platform designed to digitize the Bar's services. He asserted that this move will centralize services and simplify processes, thereby facilitating access to justice. He further underscored that enacting legislation is not sufficient; it must be complemented by adequately equipping the justice sector and allocating a more substantial budget within the State's financial plan.

**The Executive Director of Legal Agenda, Mr. Nizar Saghieh**, speaking for the Independence of Justice Coalition, deplored the protracted legislative processes, particularly those concerning judicial independence. He noted that the basis for returning the law to Parliament was mostly "concerning the shape of the law" and that only one article truly warranted substantive debate. He stressed that if judicial independence is genuinely a national priority, accelerated action is necessary, especially before the conclusion of the Council of Ministers' current mandate.

**Judge Fatima Maged, representing the Judges' Club**, affirmed the Club's initial participation in drafting the law and its subsequent submission of formal observations once the text was finalized and under parliamentary debate. She noted that the Club's input is based on the Justice Forum's recommendations, as well as the legal opinion provided by the Venice Commission on the Law. She expressed hope that, given the law is now under parliamentary revision, these observations will be duly integrated. She also flagged the crucial need to increase the budget allocated to the justice sector.

### **International Community Remarks**

**The Ambassador of Switzerland, Ms. Marion Weichert**, affirmed her country's continuous support for justice sector reform since 2021, citing achievements such as the Justice Forum and efforts related to the Law on Judicial Organization (Law 1). While acknowledging numerous positive steps, she noted the slow pace of implementation. She expressed satisfaction with Mr. Adwan's readiness to consider a parallel review track. She emphasized that the new legal framework must lead to tangible change on the ground, cautioning that without full implementation, the reform risks remaining symbolic.

**The Chargé d'affaires of France, Mr. Bruno Pereira da Silva**, commended the progress made under the Minister of Justice's patronage, including the recent judicial permutations and the resumption of the Beirut Blast investigation. He asserted France's steadfast support for the Ministry's reform agenda, reflected in the French Ministry of Justice's high-level delegations to Lebanon. However, he raised concerns regarding the adoption process of Law 1. He affirmed France's willingness to accompany Lebanon throughout the lengthy reform path.

**The Ambassador of Netherlands, Mr. Frank Mollen** reaffirmed his confidence in the Government of Lebanon, while noting with concern the slow progress of reforms. He acknowledged the difficult circumstances facing the country and emphasized the importance of sustaining public trust in institutions during this challenging period.

**The First Secretary at the Italian Embassy, Mrs. Valeria Bianconi**, stressed the importance of approving Law 1 to showcase Lebanon's firm engagement with reforms, all while respecting the Parliament's procedural authority.

**The Head of the EU Delegation, Ms. Sandra De Waele**, asserted that the international community's drive for reforms echoes the priorities of national counterparts. While acknowledging that discussions within the parliamentary commission cannot be arbitrarily restricted, she urged that they be accelerated.

#### **Follow-up Remarks**

**MP Adwan** highlighted the difference between cooperation and sovereignty, while sharing the concerns that were raised. However, he maintained that the precise manner of addressing these concerns ultimately falls under the purview of Parliament. While cooperation with the international community is always welcome, certain limits pertaining to national sovereignty must be respected.

**The Minister of Justice** noted that Lebanon is a democracy that, inevitably, entails anomalies. He explained that, in his interpretation, sovereignty lies in ensuring the State's monopoly on arms, and asserted that sovereignty and democracy should not be confused. He maintained that criticism is always welcome when constructive.

**The Executive Director of Legal Agenda, Mr. Nizar Saghieh**, reflected that sovereignty is demonstrated by how a nation builds its institutions. Once institutions fail to be built, the country often finds itself having to resort to the international community.

**The President of the Higher Judicial Council** announced the plan to recruit 40 new judges into the Judicial Institute.

**The BBA's representative, Mr. Joe Karam**, addressing the subject of reform, noted a recent initiative to cancel the Capital Market Authority (CMA) which was refused by the State Council. He pointed out that Law 161, which established the CMA in 2011, also created a specialized court whose members were never appointed. He suggested that activating this court could be of extreme importance in addressing contemporary anti-corruption efforts.