



Statement

Beirut, 15/11/2022

Suspension of Minister of Interior's Homophobic Decision

On 1/11/2022, the State Council, Lebanon's high administrative court, decided to suspend the execution of Minister of Interior Bassam Mawlawi's decision banning any meeting or gathering that promote what he called "the phenomenon of sexual deviance", which was issued in June 2022 and targeted events and meetings related to the LGBTQ community. The court decision came in response to the lawsuit filed by The Legal Agenda and Helem before the State Council in August 2022, which challenged the Minister's decision on grounds of infringing on constitutional rights and inciting violence and hatred against marginalized communities, which should be protected by the State. The State Council's decision is a temporary suspension of Mawlawi's decision until the State Council issues its ruling on the lawsuit.

Mawlawi had responded to the requests of religious authorities and issued a decision on 24 June 2022 banning these meetings on the grounds that they "contradict social traditions and the principles of the Abrahamic religions". His decision led to the cancelation of events and meetings for the LGBT community in the summer of 2022 and to a wave of hate speech and incitement against queer individuals and organizations.

In this context, the judicial decision comes as a positive step towards protecting marginalized communities in Lebanon and builds on precedents in which the State Council strengthened the public freedoms of marginalized communities, including freedom of speech and participation in public debates related to queerness. As such, security agencies can no longer rely on the Minister's decision in order to ban meetings or gatherings or conferences that tackle queer issues or to restrict the work of organizations that advocate for queer rights.

Finally, it is noted that the decision was issued by the First Chamber of the State Council comprised of Judges Fadi Elias (President), Patricia Fares and Carl Irani.

Legal Agenda and Helem