

Racism



Monitor

Issue 1:
Racist Highlights



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We have compiled the most prominent racist content and incidents of 2021 and the past few months which contributed to reinforcing and perpetuating racism against migrants and refugees in Lebanon, including those that incited violence and published misinformation and false figures.



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Send us details of **racist incidents and media reports** you come across:

Contact us on social media

 @armlebanon

 @ARMLebanon

 @ARM_Leb

Or fill the form on bit.ly/32pkcVT



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“Mysterious Deaths”



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Eight migrant women were found dead in 2021, amounting to a **total of 18 cases** documented by ARM since April 2020.

Authorities and media often referred to “mysterious conditions” leading to the deaths. Of course, potential homicide by employers was often ruled out despite evidence of abuse and threats of murder, and many deaths were deemed as suicide without actual or enough evidence.



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Most of these women were neither identified by name nor nationality, with barely any follow-up by the media on the course of investigation or context of the deaths, and some were first covered only by random media outlets online.



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"Mysterious Deaths"



Faustina Tay,
Ghana



Tulashi,
Ethiopia



Rugiato,
Sierra Leone



H. Arbiu,
Ethiopia



Tila,
Bangladesh



Unknown,
Unknown

X 4



Unknown,
Bangladesh



Unknown,
Ethiopia

X 8



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Racist Policies



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Racist Policies

In 2021, we documented at least 7 racist policies by municipalities that issued circulars addressed to “foreign” workers, often without specifying migrants and/or Syrian refugees perhaps to avoid backlash.



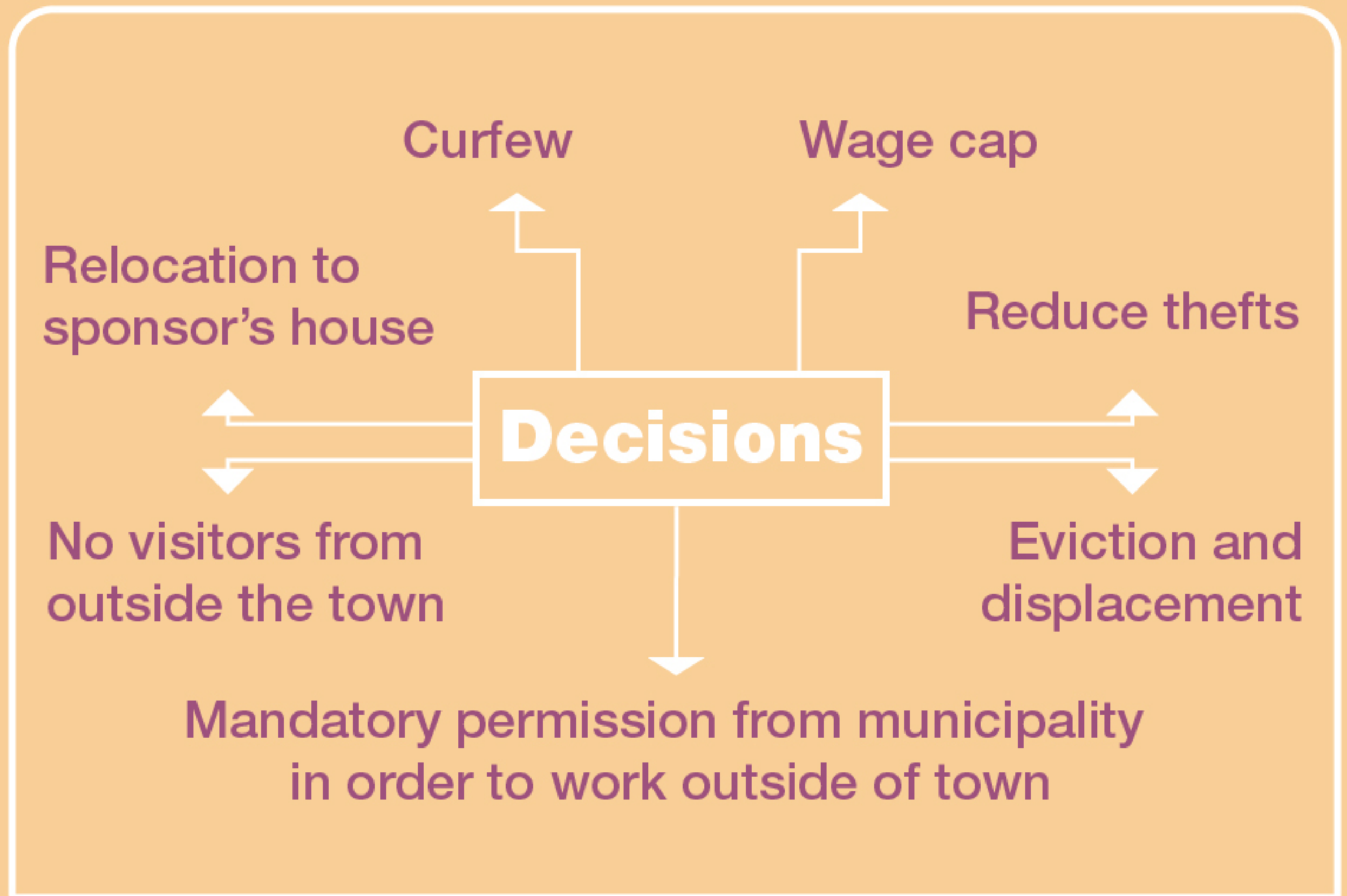
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Racist Policies



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Racist Policies

“Unjustified movement”

“Increasing number
of Syrian residents”



Reasons



“Public health concerns”

“Protecting
Lebanese workers”



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Racist Policies

Between January 2020 and June 2021, at least 330 municipalities had issued curfew decisions targeting Syrians specifically.

Private hospitals also started demanding payment in USD from foreign patients, and several schools refused to admit non-Lebanese children despite several memos and circulars by the Ministry of Education that announced all children must be admitted.



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**Exclusion from
COVID-19 Vaccination
Campaigns**



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Exclusion from COVID-19 Vaccination Campaigns

Concerns were raised about the exclusion of undocumented migrants and refugees from the national vaccination campaign, given the mandatory requirement to enter an identification document number. Officials did not address this publicly for a long time, leaving a high number of undocumented non-Lebanese residents thinking either that they were not eligible to register or that they might be arrested or deported due to their undocumented status.



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Exclusion from COVID-19 Vaccination Campaigns

Despite unofficial communication that identification documents did not need to be valid or renewed, several migrants and Syrians told ARM and other organizations that they were denied the vaccine due to lack of a valid document. Many of them had indeed registered on the platform and received an SMS for their appointments.



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**Misinformation
on Wages,
remittances and
USD shortage**



Mainstream News Websites:

A main reason for the shortage in US Dollars from the country are the remittances sent by migrant domestic workers to their countries.



Facts:

The money MDWs send is their salary for the labor that they do.

A high number of MDWs have not been getting paid for years to send money in the first place even before the ongoing crisis.



Mainstream News Websites:

The hourly wages of domestic workers increased from 5,000-7,000 in 2020 last year to 30,000 LBP in 2021.

Ethiopian domestic workers are paid a salary of 300USD.



Facts:

The numbers of salaries seem to be exaggerated by the media and not based on research given the ongoing deterioration of living and working conditions of migrant workers.

Mainstream News Websites:

Imply that daily wages made by migrant domestic workers would exceed those of Lebanese workers.



Facts:

Scapegoating given that it fails to contextualize the issue of unpaid wages and the structural reasons for the crisis.

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**Misleading numbers
and figures**



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Misleading numbers and figures

- Information International: ~900,000,000 USD was spent on MDWs in 2018, compared to 550,000,000 now.
- ➔ Omitting the details of what exactly the money was spent on.
- ➔ Insinuating that MDWs do share part of the blame for the dollar shortage, instead of mentioning that recruitment agencies are among the main recipients of the money along with the General Security and Ministry of Labor.



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**Misleading numbers
and figures**

**Example: MTV's Reports on Impact
of Crisis on Migrant Workers and
Impact of Evacuation**



A video by MTV on the evacuation of migrant workers reported the gap in the sectors employing them, emphasizing the uncertainty of being replaced by Lebanese workers.



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Misleading numbers and figures

- The report concludes that the various sectors should not be constrained to certain “nationalities and claims that otherwise dollars would still be drained by remittances of migrant workers.”
- “Salaries of the domestic worker have become higher than the employers” in many cases, adding that the salaries are being paid in USD cash.
- ➔ False! An employer would not pay an employee more than they can afford! How can they if they don't have the money?



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Misleading numbers
and figures

- “A migrant domestic worker can always get back home”, “abandoned migrant domestic workers were freelancers.”

Head of Syndicate of Recruitment Agencies
in Lebanon (SORAL) to AI Monitor

→ This has rarely ever been the case.



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Misleading numbers and figures

- “Cases of unpaid wages were a minority” and “the majority of employers reach an agreement with a potential new employer to hire the worker or with the recruitment agency to pay for the return ticket.”

Head of Syndicate of Recruitment Agencies in Lebanon (SORAL) to Le Commerce du Levant

- Unpaid wages were too rampant to be considered a minority. Employers were extremely uncooperative.



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Misleading numbers and figures

- Former minister of labor Camille Abou Sleiman to Al Jazeera was quoted describing the mass evacuation of migrant workers as positive to decrease the “draining of dollars” due to remittances sent to migrant workers’ countries.
- ➔ Migrant workers’ remittances are their salaries and do not belong to Lebanon. Claiming they contributed to the USD shortage is scapegoating to take attention away from the real reason for the crisis.



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**Coverage of Syrian refugees:
Scapegoating, incitement, &
disinformation**



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**Coverage of Syrian refugees:
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Many media reports and articles depict Syrian refugees as “immigrants”, often including outright disinformation about their living conditions and claiming they are far better than Lebanese citizens.

- Clickbaity headlines and photos/thumbnails.
- Dehumanizing & inaccurate language.
- Outlets close to/affiliated with political parties often associating individual behavior with whole group & including misinformation.



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**Coverage of Syrian refugees:
Scapegoating, incitement,
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- Inconsistent/contradictory information often on same platforms.
- Demonizing humanitarian work whose scope of work is limited.
- Inciting violence by spreading misinformation & disinformation about aid, often by platforms defending banks and/or certain politicians/parties.
- Reposting exact same content widely by mainstream and random outlets.



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Example 1:

**MP and FPM Leader Calls for Return of
Syrians ahead of Parliamentary Elections,
Insists on Calling them Economic Immigrants**

The Member of Parliament and head of the Free Patriotic Movement Gebran Bassil posted a video as part of his electoral campaign calling for the return of Syrian refugees from Lebanon, and insisting on referring to them as “economic immigrants”.



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Bassil claimed that Syrians receive aid “**despite being immigrants**” and alleged that they are taking jobs away from Lebanese workers, once again without citing any numbers or data to support these generalizing claims and accusations.





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Coverage of Syrian refugees:
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Example 2:

Racist Report Associates Syrians with Crimes and False data published by Nidaa Al Watan



Capitalizing on the unfortunate murder of a Lebanese citizen in the southern town of Kfarroumman by a Syrian individual.

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“Syrian [migrants] have become a ticking time bomb that could explode and cause death and destruction at any moment, and decisions such as curfews and other reformist approaches will not work anymore.”

- Explicit incitement of aggression against Syrians by pitting Lebanese people against them and portraying them as the sole source of the crisis. It also builds on the dominant discourse around the economic crisis that stipulates superficial solutions to reform the current conditions rather than radical solutions.



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'[...] This is all besides the fact that they steal garbage and sort it to find recyclable hard material.'

➤ Our research did not yield any results reporting on Syrians "stealing" garbage. However, it should be clear that stealing garbage is not a thing, and that people do not resort to this to make ends meet unless they do not have any other way.

The author may be exaggerating the act of sorting material to find recyclables in order to cause outrage among Lebanese readers by making up the part about picking trash to portray them as the different outsiders that do not resemble the Lebanese.



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Example 3:

**The General security issued a document
in July 2021 informing the Public
Prosecution of Cassation that
“Syrians were erecting agricultural rooms
in the Bisri Dam area.”**

- **The Lebanese Eco-Movement denied the claims, confirming that the land owners had returned to their land, and employed Syrian families to support them with agricultural work.**



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Another attempt to use Syrian refugees as a fear-mongering political pressure card in controversial issues. In this case, the aim was to sway public attention from the dam issue to make it about Syrian refugees.

