

STUDY ON MONITORING MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE SECURITY SECTOR IN LEBANON

REPORT

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Study on Monitoring Media Coverage of the Security Sector in Lebanon

Section One:

Summary of conclusions & recommendations

1. Media monitoring findings:

Media monitoring of Lebanese media outlets reveals diverse policies regarding their coverage of security topics. These differences encompass the level of interest, editorial stance, and approaches taken towards events and security officials.

-Media outlets' choices:

The level of interest in security coverage varies significantly among media outlets. For instance, during the monitoring period, Al-Jadeed aired 42 security-related coverages, compared to 9 by MTV and 3 by Al-Manar during the same time frame. Media institutions also differ in their editorial stance. Their positions on security coverages can vary when dealing with specific issues. For instance, when covering the sinking of the migrants' boat off the coast of Tripoli, media outlets split in their approaches. Some focused on the army's narrative and the search efforts for survivors, presenting the incident from the military establishment's perspective. Others allowed for the presentation of survivors' accounts and cast doubt on the army's narrative, highlighting discrepancies in their accounts.

-Content analysis:

Monitoring reveals that the primary topics in security coverage with the highest frequency concern governance-related issues. These topics revolve around three main aspects: news about the General Directorate of General Security, including discussions about the extension of its director's tenure, news about the Army Commander and the debate surrounding his presidential nomination, and the disagreement between the legislative and executive authorities over Judge Ghada Aoun's decisions.

Analyzing subsidiary coverage topics within the monitored media content, it is evident that the main coverage is distributed between issues of the security sector's operational tasks as well as legislation and government policies, each making up about 20% of the content. Torture, the rule of law and accountability rank lowest in terms of topics presented. This indicates a limited role of the media in holding the authorities accountable, particularly in terms of their follow-up on issues as a means of exerting pressure on the political establishment.

Additionally, inclusivity is notably lacking in security coverage during the monitored period. Women, people with disabilities, migrant workers, and marginalized groups are absent from the coverage. Remarkably, local traditional media paid little attention to the Human Rights Watch investigation on the harassment and repression faced by LGBTQ+ people, despite extensive coverage by Arab and international institutions.

-Editorial form:

In observing the editorial form, it becomes evident that investigative journalism is nearly absent from security-related topics, with the majority of security coverage being news-based or reports relying on official data or news agency reports and correspondents. Print journalism, especially, is characterized by opinion and analysis, which can carry critical positions and evaluations of events. However, it is apparent that around 80% of opinion and analysis topics revolved around the administrative positions and political future of the Army Commander and the Director-General of the General Security, carrying several implications about the position of security apparatus leaders within the political system and the status they hold.

In observing the editorial type of coverage, it is evident that 88% of the coverage of security-related topics in various media has a news character based on recounting facts or presenting news details, which is the simplified type among journalistic genres for presenting daily events. Other in-depth news genres, such as investigation and reportage, make up less than 2%.

-Divergent positions:

In terms of divergent positions, it became apparent that alternative media was more stringent in advocating for human rights and directly accused the security apparatus. For instance, in the case of the death of the Syrian detainee Bashar Abdul-Saud, alternative media platforms appeared more critical than traditional media and increased their accusations against the security apparatus, citing similar cases. They also defended the LGBTQ+ community.

Additionally, the Al-Jadeed channel distinguished itself by covering a series of violations committed by security personnel affiliated with the security agencies, which were not addressed by other media outlets. These violations included incidents such as the assault on the protesters outside the parliament members' residence or a security agency's raid on the house of a money changer without a judicial warrant. The channel accused the security agency of violating established laws.

The Al-Akhbar newspaper arrived at the same conclusion in its investigation into the pursuit of money changers accused of manipulating the exchange rate. It found that the Lebanese central bank was behind these individuals, and they were working on its behalf.

-Analysis of news sources:

In terms of news sources, it appears that the majority of news related to the security sector have an unspecified source, meaning they are reported in the media without specifying their origin. This is followed by 30% of news from official sources or through official statements. Thus, it becomes evident that coverage related to media institutions is scarce, with the majority of security coverage originating from security agencies or news agencies, occasionally with contributions from reporters. Investigative journalism, on the other hand, is almost entirely absent.

-Syrian displacement issue:

During the study period in February 2023, Lebanese media did not address the Syrian displacement issue or the situation of Syrian refugees, neither from a humanitarian nor a security perspective. However, a review of media affiliated with security institutions reveals that this topic was prominently featured in the February issue of the General Security magazine, even making it to the cover.

2- Summaries of the focus groups with journalists:

Journalists in this group believe that coverage of security issues differs significantly due to their sensitivity. The approach to security news sources varies based on the topic's sensitivity, sometimes posing challenges in accessing information. They consider dealing with security news to require more precision due to the repercussions it may have.

Journalists unanimously agree that each media outlet has its approach to handling sensitive security news, each with its editorial policy on these matters. Some journalists complain about occasional security practices hindering their access to news.

3- Interview summaries with civil society organizations:

Civil society organizations advocating for human rights appear critical of the Lebanese press. While they acknowledge the important role played by the Lebanese media, some civil society organizations fault it for shortcomings in security coverage, such as relying on unverified news sources or official data.

Regarding the oversight role of Lebanese media, the organizations note that these media outlets should not be considered equal, as their performance varies. They appreciate these outlets for disseminating human rights organizations' data but criticize them for not playing a systematic oversight role. They call on the media to exercise oversight over security institutions to ensure better performance.

The organizations also express their criticism of security institutions concerning their handling of certain issues, such as migrant workers and the LGBTQ+ community. They unanimously believe that the media should verify and cross-check data and information provided by security forces rather than simply accepting it.

4- Interview summaries with security institutions:

The positions of security institutions underscore the necessity for collaboration between these institutions and the media. They express readiness to provide information and designate individuals to liaise with journalists regularly. They emphasize their commitment to respecting laws and public freedoms.

Some responses from security institutions express occasional reservations about providing detailed information to the media. However, concrete criticism of journalists is notably absent, with a focus on a desire for enhanced coordination.

General conclusions

The study aimed to answer several questions posed at the beginning about how the Lebanese media covers security events, how it deals with potential violations by security forces, the extent to which it respects human rights principles, and whether it plays a critical and oversight role in society. These questions were intended to shed light on the role of the media in society and its relationship with security authorities.

The study attempted to address these questions through various research tools: content analysis of various media outlets, analysis of a set of specific security event coverages (case studies), focus group discussions with journalists covering security issues, and interviews with officials from civil society organizations concerned with human rights, as well as officials from security institutions.

The results of this study revealed that security topics are sensitive subjects that the media approaches with caution. Additionally, security institutions are cautious when discussing their relationship with the media, although some journalists in the focus group preferred not to disclose their names. Some questions posed to the security institutions either received no answers or received routine responses, underscoring the sensitivity surrounding the security topic and the challenges of addressing it openly.

Civil society organizations concerned with human rights believe that there is still a significant effort that the media must exert, both in its professional work and its oversight role, to improve the quality of its security coverage. They criticized some transgressions by security forces and emphasized the media's role in supervision. However, they praised alternative media, seeing in it greater independence from political authority and a more advanced critical role.

Content analysis of media coverage revealed differences in media outlets regarding their interest in security coverage, their approach to security news, and the extent of criticism they level against security forces' transgressions. However, it also revealed media outlets' dependence on news sources and their weak editorial initiatives, such as investigative reporting or following developments. Additionally, it showed their weakness in covering human rights-related issues, such as the treatment of migrant workers or different minority groups.

Media outlets cannot be considered equal in performance, as the study demonstrated significant disparities between them in terms of the volume of coverage, the complexity of security issues they address, and their efforts to confront some of the transgressions of security forces. Journalists from the focus group and civil society organizations believed that the Lebanese media's ties to political and financial interests affect its editorial choices and its approach to security issues, as evidenced by the contradictory positions of some outlets in covering specific events.

However, despite these criticisms, civil society organizations that have raised concerns about the Lebanese media have also praised it for conveying their positions and data, stating that it plays a pivotal role in shedding light on security issues, as mentioned by Amnesty International. The diversity of the Lebanese media allows for the coverage of events from various angles and presents the majority of societal perspectives.

Recommendations

- **General recommendations:**

1. Organize workshops and courses to enhance journalists' understanding of the security sector and its governance, as well as to promote security expertise among journalists.
2. Foster mutual trust between journalists and security institutions by presenting a balanced treatment of security issues reflecting a diversity of views, recognizing that both parties complement each other in serving the public interest.
3. Establish a dedicated observatory to monitor media coverage to assess its compliance with professional standards, preferably with involvement from academic institutions like the Lebanese University.

- **Recommendations for the media and journalists:**

1. Adopt internal self-regulation mechanisms to enhance the independence and neutrality of the media, particularly when reporting on security issues, avoiding editorial policies that may restrict media institutions and undermine the professionalism of journalism, which is committed to the pursuit of truth.
2. Media organizations should assign specialized journalists with a deep understanding of the security issues to cover the sector as high-quality reporting can contribute to informing the public debate and policy discussions, as well as relaying the population's needs and perspectives.
3. Adhere to ethical and professional standards by balancing the right to privacy with freedom of expression. Moreover, journalists should always consider the presumption of innocence for the accused, not presenting a person as guilty until a conviction has been issued by a court.
4. Coverage of the security sector should be carried out in an accurate, fair and independent manner, with the aim to reinforce democratic accountability.
5. Enhance investigative reporting on security-related issues as journalists have a critical role to play in reporting on the effectiveness and accountability of security actors.
6. Raise awareness on human rights violations or breaches of the rule of law as all security sector actors have a responsibility to perform their roles and obligations in the public interest, upholding the rule of law and human rights.
7. Exercise caution during the field coverage of events or conflicts and coordinate with the security forces due to the multiple risks that may threaten journalists' safety, keeping in mind that the safety of journalists is a responsibility of the security forces.
8. Emphasize the need to be cautious about the risks and disturbances that may arise from the dissemination of disinformation or rumors, particularly in cases related to refugees or border clashes, which may threaten social stability.



- **Recommendations for security institutions:**

1. Facilitate the work of journalists through a collaborative approach, avoiding viewing them as adversaries to the security institutions.

2. Establish a channel of communication between security institutions and the public to foster dialogue, thereby increasing trust in the security sector and enhancing transparency.

3. Respect individuals' right to access information in accordance with Law No. 28, dated 10/2/2017, including responding to information requests within a reasonable timeframe, considering that the security sector is bound by the obligation of transparency.

Section Two: study framework

1. Study's problematic

This study examines media outlets' coverage of the roles of military and security forces in the public sphere in Lebanon. It seeks to monitor how security events and facts related to the activities of various military and security agencies are covered by the Lebanese media in the aim of determining the relationship between the media outlets and the security sector, allowing for the answering of several questions:

- How are security events covered by the Lebanese media?
- Are there gaps and shortcomings in the media coverage of security issues?
- Does the media shed light on any transgressions by security agencies in the performance of their duties?
- Does the media take into consideration the human dimension in the practices of the security sector and its adherence to laws and human rights principles?
- How does the media deal with its sources and access to information in its security coverage?
- What are the security-related topics that are most followed by the media?

Answering these questions is crucial for the safety of society and the proper functioning of public affairs. Security forces, including the army, internal security forces, and multiple security agencies, constitute an extension of the executive authority, reflecting the existing political system. Simultaneously, these agencies constitute the first guarantee for public stability in the country. That is why the security and military institutions are entrusted with fundamental roles, including combating organized crime, pursuing fugitives, safeguarding borders, maintaining security, and thwarting any attempts that threaten public stability, among other responsibilities. Furthermore, the security forces, with their various agencies, are in constant interaction with citizens, which carries both positive and negative implications.

Lebanese media outlets occasionally report on some activities of security agencies, such as army raids targeting fugitives from justice, pursuing wanted individuals, dealing with detainees, border control, and smuggling operations of goods and individuals, as well as occasional assaults targeting security forces. Media outlets are entrusted with vital responsibilities in the practice of good governance through their oversight and alerting role, but also through shedding light on any misconduct by security forces in the performance of their duties.

And for the media to provide an effective oversight, there must be trust established between the security agencies and media as well as understanding the roles and challenges of their missions by also remaining neutral in their roles. In fact, one of the preconditions for the security forces to trust media is the media independency and professionalism

Therefore, the importance of overseeing the security sector through tracking security agencies: their performance, practices, Legal compliance, and respect for human rights.

However, it is essential to take into consideration the reality of the Lebanese media, which suffers from financial, political, and sectarian affiliation, restricting its freedom and sometimes rendering its coverage incomplete or biased. The prevailing political situation in Lebanon and the disorientation in political practice, as well as the interferences between the various branches of government, also reflects on the media, as well as on the roles of security and judicial authorities. The interdependence between the executive and judicial branches restricts media framework and judicial freedom, undermining the principles of good governance. Having an impartial and effective judiciary is necessary to protect the media from the influence of political power and to safeguard the rights of citizens while regulating the performance of the security forces.

Security agencies have their own media institutions through which they promote the news they desire. They also widely utilize social media, making them a source of security news that some civil media outlets rely on at times.

While security-affiliated media strive to promote a positive image and establish public relations with the public opinion, the role of other media is to convey objective facts to provide the public and general opinion with the necessary news to shape an informed and sound judgment. Therefore, it appears that what is required from this media is to professionally cover the news of security and military institutions, monitor their success or failure in performing their activities, shed light on their roles, and assess their compliance with laws and regulations.

"When the actors in the security sector disregard the rule of law, it can lead to corruption, abuse of power, and human rights violations. At the same time, this also means that the security sector has a duty to reject unlawful orders in cases where governments seek to intimidate those perceived as opposition figures, harass them, or even kill them."¹

1- Chappuis, F. (2020). DCAF. Toolkit: Security Sector Reporting, Media, Journalism, and Security Sector Reform (p. 5). Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. <https://www.dcaf.ch/toolkit-security-sector-reporting-media-journalism-and-security-sector-reform>

Based on this reality, this study seeks to understand how the Lebanese media covers news related to security and military institutions by answering the following questions:

- How do the media cover security issues?
- What types of media coverage is found concerning security matters?
- What sources do media rely on when preparing their reports and informing about the security events?
- How do media portray the security and military forces?
- Does the coverage differ between various media outlets based on their political affiliations?
- Is there a specific editorial policy regarding security issues that media adopts in its coverage of this sector?
- How do media outlets handle reporting in case security forces are being accused for violating existing laws or not respecting international conventions, such as resorting to torture or conducting arbitrary arrests?
- How do media portray the interaction of security agencies with various groups in society, including refugees, minorities, women, the LGBTQ+ community and others?
- How do media address the situation of institutions that are under the authority of security forces, such as certain administrative bodies and prisons?

2- The importance of the role of journalism in covering security events:

Security institutions play a crucial role in ensuring the safety of citizens, supervising the implementation of the rule of law, ensuring justice, equality and safeguarding human rights as enshrined in constitutions and laws. These security forces are subject to the authority of the executive branch and are responsible for enforcing state laws and regulations.

However, these forces may sometimes engage in transgressions of the law or exceed their powers, either through decisions from supervising authorities or autonomously. Such actions can infringe upon the rights of citizens and endanger public safety. In some cases, political or security forces may attempt to cover up these violations. This shields them from accountability, allowing them to persist in such practices, obstructing the enforcement of the laws, and conflicting with the public interest and the principle of good governance.

Therefore, the role of journalism appears to be essential in tracking how security forces carry out their duties. It is based on the responsibility of the media to report on facts and inform the public about the performance of security institutions. This should include reporting on the oversight exercised by the political authorities. This is where the critical role of the press comes into play, evaluating the performance of security forces, both in terms of their adherence to the law and their proper execution of their duties, all while serving the nation and its citizens, thereby serving the public interest.

Therefore the press must avoid favoritism directed towards particular political and security authorities and assess performance of the security forces with independence, neutrality and in a responsible way. By doing so, the press can pose important issues for public discussion, facilitate resolution of problems, hold wrongdoers accountable, and approach matters with the legal perspective to ensure compliance with the law. This grants the media credibility in the eyes of the public, making it a genuine authority. Conversely, if the press loses its role, it loses the trust of the audience. This is the case in authoritarian states that enforce strict policies against free press, transforming the press into official or semi-official media serving the agenda of the political authority, thus losing its primary role.

3- Methodology for monitoring media coverage of the security sector

Journalists covering the security sector possess unique professional advantages in developing specialised knowledge and building networks of connections between security service providers and stakeholders. Journalists play a crucial role in democratic accountability and in preparing reports that reveal to the public the extent of security authorities' commitment to fundamental principles. These principles are as follows:

- **Civil sovereignty and democratic oversight:** Civil government determines public policies in the security sector.
- **Respect for the Rule of Law:** The security sector in a democratic system is responsible for operating within the framework of the law, refraining from violations of individuals' fundamental rights through unlawful surveillance or acting against the law to achieve its goals, like arbitrary detention."
- **Protection of Human Rights:** The legitimacy of the security sector ultimately depends on its ability to serve all members of society, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, wealth, or ability. Protecting human rights is fundamental to public safety and national defense alike.
- **Effectiveness:** This encompasses efficiency, financial support, and coordination.
- **Democratic Accountability:** The security sector has an obligation to demonstrate to the public that it has used its powers and resources in the best possible manner. The security sector must be accountable through various levels, channels, and processes that allow legitimate political authorities to supervise its work.
- **Transparency:** Working in a way that respects the public's right to access decisions and developments that affect them, while also considering the security sector's need for confidentiality in its work. Transparency measures should also include protecting freedom of expression, access to information, and journalists' rights and work.

4- Challenges in media coverage of the security sector

Journalists may encounter various obstacles in their coverage of security issues, including:

- Political propaganda and misleading information: The security sector might use media and journalists to spread misleading information and fake news
- Reluctance of security forces to cooperate with journalists
- Legal Framework regulating security forces and journalists' rights
- Journalistic professionalism and building credibility (objectivity, accuracy, integrity, responsibility)
- Governance management style
- Legal protection (Criminal Prosecution of Journalists under national laws restricting press freedom and expression)
- Handling leaked and prohibited information
- Producing conflict-sensitive reporting when necessary
- Other

5- Research Tools

The study relies on three research tools:

- Monitoring security activities in the media,
- Studying the media's handling of specific security cases (case studies).
- Engaging in discussions through a focus group with journalists covering security issues and conducting interviews with officials from CSOs dedicated to human rights and officials from security agencies.

A. Monitoring

- **Monitoring Period:**

The monitoring of media institutions for the purposes of this study extended from the 1st till the 28th February 2023.

- **Monitored Media Outlets:**

The study is particularly based on media outlets covering daily events, including newspapers, television channels. The online platforms represent a form of alternative media, addressing events differently from traditional media and holding a significant place on the media landscape.

- **Sample of Daily Lebanese Newspapers:**

Five print newspapers (also available online) were selected: Annahar, Al-Akhbar, Al-Joumhouria, Nidaa Al-Watan, Aliwaa, and the Francophone newspaper L'Orient-Le Jour.

Various articles and coverages from these newspapers that addressed the security sector were documented for analysis.

- **Sample of TV channels:**

The sample includes five local channels (also broadcasted via satellite): LBCI, MTV, Al-Jadeed, Al-Manar, and OTV.

These channels are diverse politically and are widely followed, covering the general television scene in the country.

The monitoring was limited to their evening news bulletins as they constitute the main news segments.

- **Sample of alternative media:**

A sample representing alternative media was chosen, including the Daraj and Megaphone platforms.

- **Other media outlets:**

The study was enriched by monitoring certain media outlets affiliated with security and military institutions to understand the topics they cover, their coverage methods, and comparing the topics they share with other media outlets.

Daily events covered by security institutions in their social media accounts can be tracked and compared with what is reported by other social media platforms or other media outlets.

B- Study of specific cases in security coverage:

In addition to the specified monitoring period, the study tracks specific cases of important security events reported by the media. This allows for understanding how the media deals with specific security issues, addressing challenges in their coverage. "Traditional" security news, such as law enforcement operations against smugglers or the arrest of a criminal gang, are generally reported by most media outlets based on official statements issued by security agencies. Some of these specific cases studied include:

1. Drowning of migrants' boat off the coast of Tripoli
2. Death of a Syrian detainee in security agencies custody after torture
3. Municipal police officer assaulting a Syrian child in the Koura region
4. The summoning of activists by security forces for interrogation
5. The security forces confronting individuals visiting the two deputies protesting in the Parliament
6. Pursuit of security forces of the LGBTQ+ Community
7. State Security raiding the home of the money changer Ali Nimr and his family
8. The investigative report "Bring down corrupt rule" on corruption in security agencies
9. The security forces' prevention of an attempt of trafficking of a minor girl.
10. Arrest of security forces members accused of assaulting Al-Jadeed TV channel.

These cases were reported by the media during the monitoring period, except for the first two cases, which were included in this report due to their significance and the impact they had on the media and the public.

C- Field interviews:

After completing the initial phases of the study and deriving preliminary conclusions, the third phase involves field research. Focus group discussions were organized with journalists covering security issues, along with interviews conducted with human rights organizations aiming to prevent torture. Additionally, interviews were held with officials in military and security agencies. Subsequently, a final report was drafted, summarizing the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Section Three: Monitoring study results

The monitoring focused on analysing the media coverage of the security sector in five Lebanese political newspapers, the evening news bulletins of five television channels, and two alternative media websites. The monitoring period extended from 1 to 28 February 2023.

The analysis of the media content revealed that during the month of February, a total of 306 different coverages related to the topic of security were reported across these media outlets. Among them, 55 coverages were incidental, appearing within the context of other topics, while 251 were primary coverages addressing security issues (see Chart 1).²

1. Distribution of coverages across media outlets

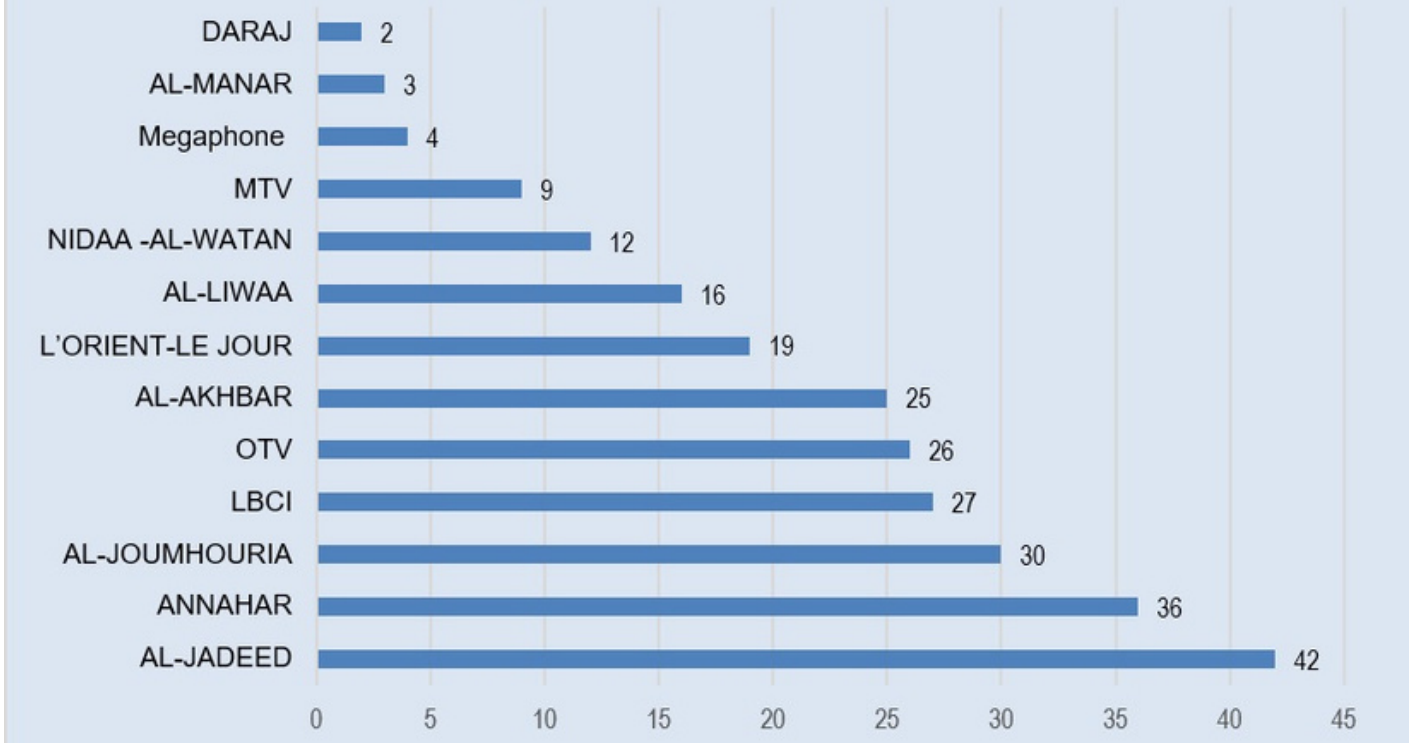
The analysis revealed that Al-Jadeed TV channel had the highest coverage of the security sector in its evening news bulletins, followed sequentially by LBCI, and OTV, followed by MTV and Al-Manar. Regarding newspaper coverage, Annahar newspaper had the highest coverage, followed by Al-Joumhouria, Al-Akhbar, L'Orient-Le Jour, followed by Al-Liwaa and Nidaa Al-Watan.

As for the monitored alternative media websites covering the security sector, there were six coverages distributed between the Daraj and Megaphone websites.

The number of coverages related to the security sector in the monitored media outlets was distributed as follows:

2- These numbers can be compared with those presented in a 2014 study by Maharat Foundation titled "Media Coverage of the Security Sector." The current study differs in several aspects: it covers 5 television stations, 6 daily newspapers, and 2 digital platforms, extending over a full month. The 2014 study, on the other hand, monitored 7 daily newspapers and 7 television stations over a period of 3 weeks, with a total of 277 coverages. In the current study, the total number of coverages reached 306. The numbers between the two studies appear to be close, and finding similar studies for drawing conclusions from the current statistics proved difficult.

Distribution of Security Sector-Related Coverage in Monitored Media.
 Sample of 251 Coverages
 Chart No.1



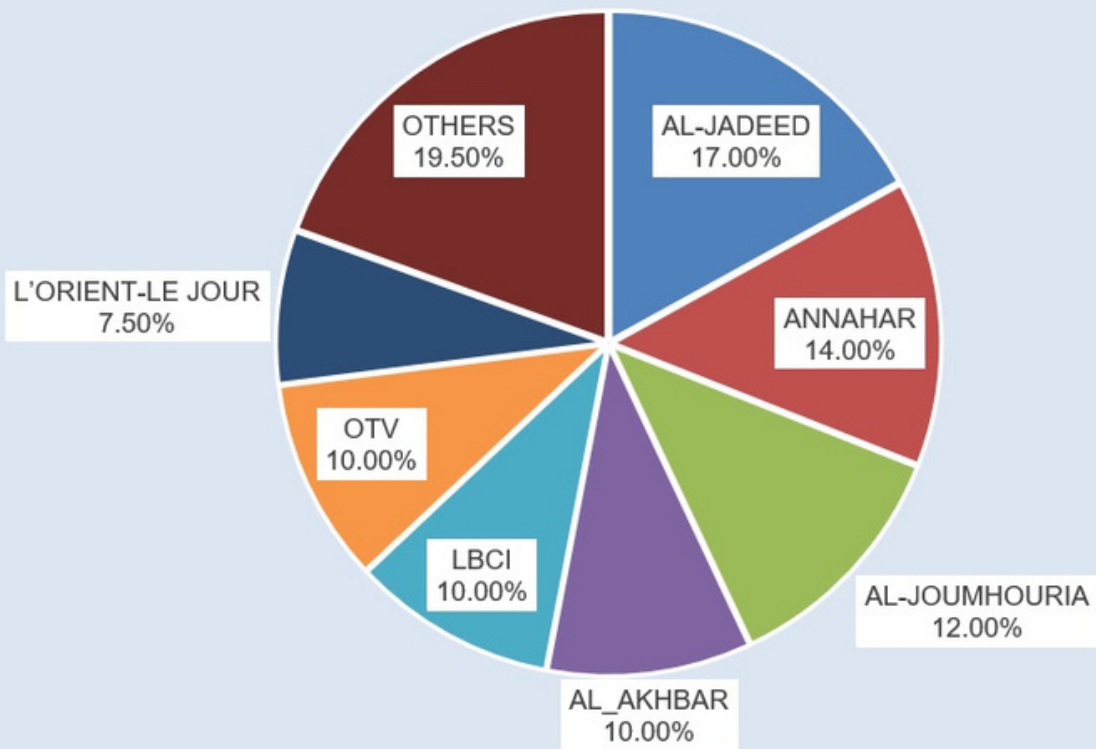
From Chart 1, it is evident that Al-Jadeed TV channel covers security issues the most, surpassing written press coverage despite the fact that the monitoring was limited to the evening news bulletins of television stations, and the broader space available in print newspapers compared to television news bulletins.

Al-Jadeed covered approximately 17% of the total security coverage across various monitored media outlets. It is followed by Annahar with approximately 14%, then Al-Joumhouria with around 12%. LBCI and OTV come next, each accounting for approximately 10%. The coverage percentage is almost the same for Al-Akhbar newspaper. L'Orient-Le Jour follows with approximately 7.5%. Meanwhile, MTV's coverage does not exceed 3.5%, and Al-Manar channel accounts for only 1%.

These percentages suggest that security news coverage aligns with the editorial policy framework of the media institution. Some media outlets follow and cover these news items, while others do not.

Al-Jadeed TV channel had 42 security coverages, whereas MTV had only 9, and Al-Manar had 3 (see Chart No.2).

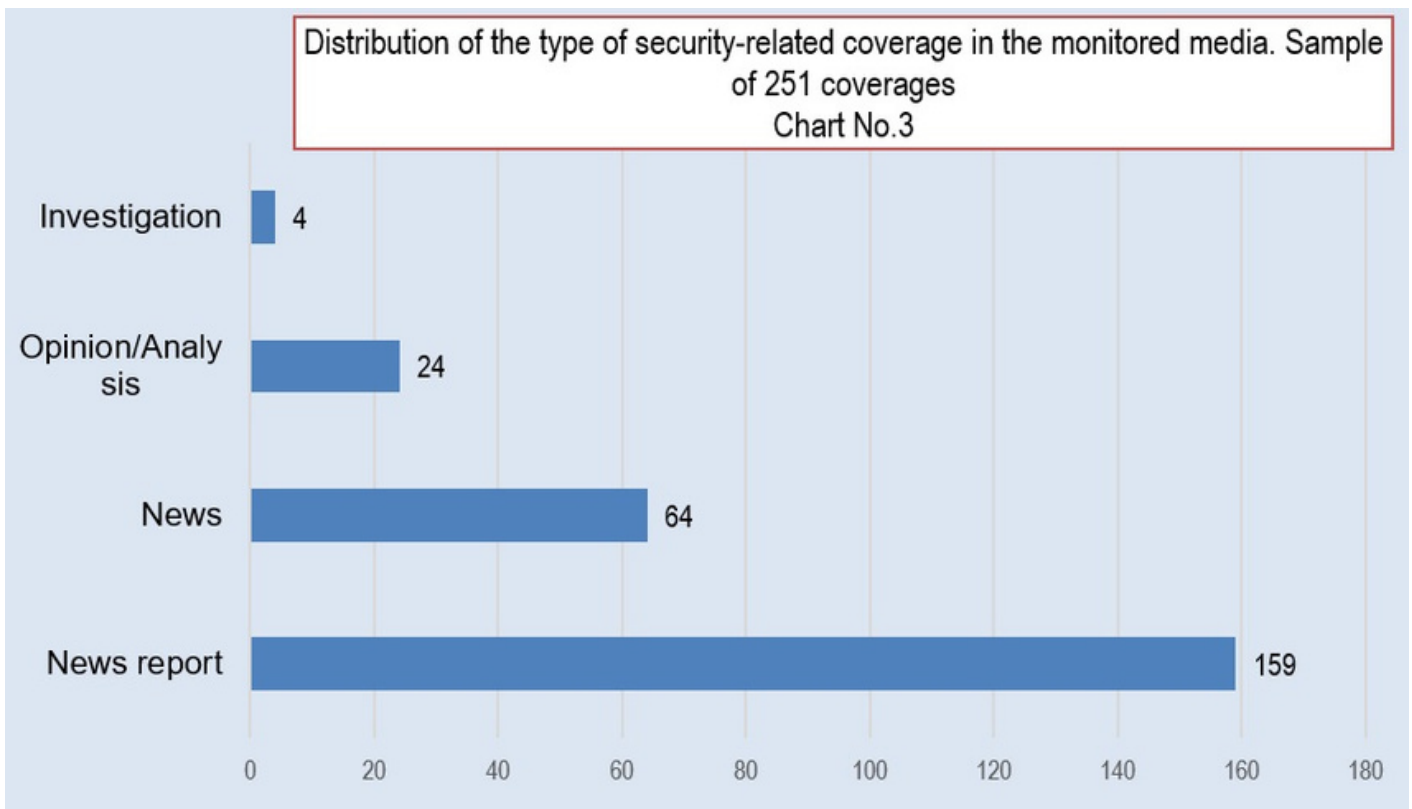
Percentage of Security News Coverage in Monitored Media.
 Sample of 251 Coverages
 Chart No.2



2- Editorial type

In analyzing the editorial type of the coverage, it becomes evident that 88% of the security-related topics covered in various media outlets is of a news format, revolving around narrating facts or presenting news details. This type represents a simplified form within journalistic genres for presenting daily events.

Other in-depth news types such as investigation, reportage, which delve into the depth of events and explore them, do not exceed 4%, less than 2% each. Opinion and analysis articles accounted for 10% (see Chart No.3).



3- Investigative reports

Considering that the number of investigative reports was limited to only 4, it was crucial to review these investigations to understand their nature and implications. Upon reviewing the four investigations, it is evident that they were published in the newspaper "Al-Akhbar" and addressed the following topics:

A- "Confiscated Items Chaos"

The investigation stated: "Security forces seize hundreds of confiscated items monthly, most of which are buried in court warehouses awaiting their fate, making them vulnerable to damage and manipulation due to the chaos. This situation distorts the course of justice, especially since these items are crucial criminal evidence upon which judicial investigations rely..." (Al-Akhbar, February 18).

B- "The Army Sells Weapons for Free"

The investigation stated: "Contracts that bypass the law": Through the two contracts posing numerous question marks, the Lebanese army sold a massive quantity of individual weapons last year for an amount not exceeding three million dollars. According to informed military sources, the prices of the sold weapons were remarkably low, to the point where the "sale" could be described as "closest to a donation," as the prices were significantly lower than the actual market price, with a significant difference ranging between 70% and 90%," while many questions surround the two voluntary agreements that did not undergo bidding or competitive processes and did not pass through the Council of Ministers... (Al-Akhbar, February 20)

C- "Facts from the Investigations: How Do Money Changers Manipulate the Dollar?"
"Investigation Reports with 18 Money Changers and Speculators: This Is How We speculate to Increase the Dollar's Price"

The investigation stated: "...Investigations conducted by the Information Branch with 18 money changers documented their manipulation of currency through speculation to achieve greater profits. The investigations revealed that some WhatsApp groups were behind the rapid increase, and that the activities of many detainees were not limited to money exchange but extended to speculation on the national currency. It became evident that these detainees were part of a group numbering up to a thousand money changers operating on WhatsApp applications and spread across all Lebanese territories. Contrary to what is rumored about the amount of cash controlled by a few money changers, it was revealed that the Central Bank's monthly need for dollars ranges between 250 and 400 million dollars. The money changer, Ali Nimr Al-Khalil, admitted that he alone was delivering between 8 to 12 million dollars to the Central Bank daily."

"The investigations revealed that most of these individuals were working in favor of the Central Bank of Lebanon through four agents appointed by the central bank governor to collect dollars on its behalf. By listening to the testimony of the Director of the Foreign Exchange Unit at the Central Bank of Lebanon, Abbas Awwad, it was indicated that dealings with these companies are carried out in accordance with circulars issued by the Central Bank and the Law of Money and Credit, and that the Central Bank purchases between 250 million and 400 million dollars monthly according to its needs." (Al-Akhbar, February 21)

D- "UN Investigations: The Al-Aqbieh Incident Was Not Premeditated"

The investigation stated: "The Irish soldiers' car that got lost encountered three men blocking their way. The investigation did not question why they didn't step out of the car to explain to these men that they were lost and needed assistance to return to the main road. Later, amidst the alleged chase, they encountered a large group of citizens leaving a café after a World Cup football match; why didn't they stop among these people, get out of their car, and defuse the tension? UNIFIL's investigation did not inquire about these incidents or dwell on them..."³

3- Al-Akhbar, 25 February

What can we deduce from these investigations?

It appears that Al-Akhbar newspaper adopts an editorial approach based on investigative journalism, conducting in-depth investigations beyond the commonly circulated news. The issue of the chaos in seized items is unique to them and hasn't been covered by any other media outlet. The investigation titled "The Army Is Selling Weapons for Free" is also an exclusive piece. The other two investigations regarding the interrogations with the money changers and the United Nations' investigations into the killing of the Irish soldier are topics covered by various media outlets, but Al-Akhbar delves deeper into them, presenting new details and raising questions about the course of these investigations.

They have expressed doubt about these two investigations, pointing out that the investigation with the money changers implicates the Central Bank of Lebanon, while the investigation into the killing of the Irish soldier raises questions about the investigation's course and its credibility. Here, Al-Akhbar is playing its critical role, and it is expected that the judiciary will provide answers to the questions raised.

4- Opinion/Analysis category:

This editorial style is particularly prevalent in print journalism, where there is ample space for opinion articles and analyses. However, it can also be found occasionally in television broadcasts and on websites.

Upon reviewing the opinion and analysis articles monitored during this period, totaling 24, it became evident that the vast majority, approximately 80% of them, revolved around two main topics. The first was General Joseph Aoun, whose name frequently arose regarding the presidency and the likelihood of his candidacy. The second topic concerned Abbas Ibrahim, the General Director of General Security, whose term concluded at the end of February, reaching the retirement age. There was increasing discussion about finding a solution to extend his term.

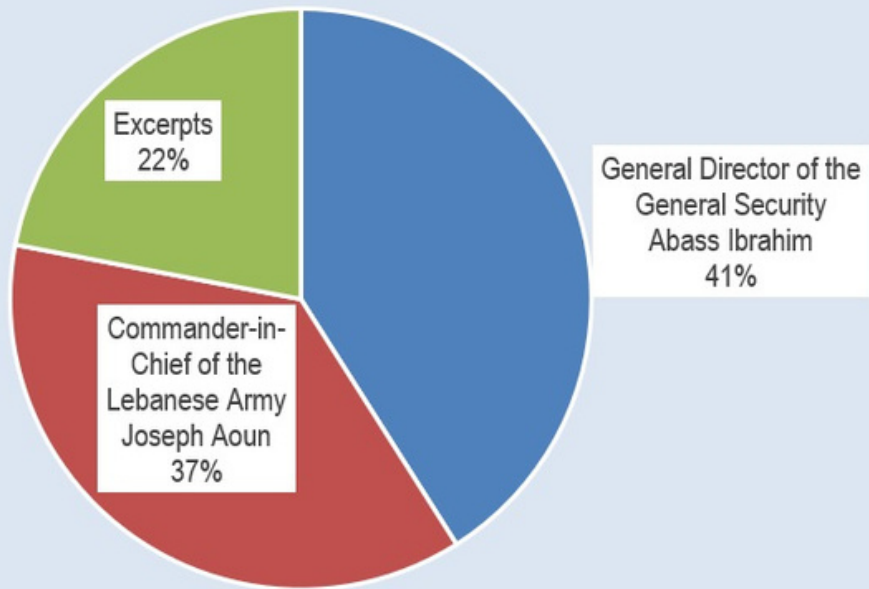
The percentage of opinion/analysis topics focusing on Abbas Ibrahim, the General Director of General Security, reached around 41% of the total topics. These articles covered his career, achievements, prospects for renewal, ongoing discussions about extension possibilities, and even his political future after leaving General Security. The topics about General Joseph Aoun constituted approximately 37%, with most of them relating to his implicit candidacy for the presidency.

Through media coverage, it is notable how Lebanon's security leaders receive significant attention. They are portrayed as key policymakers, with media outlets covering various activities such as their visits, meetings, receptions of personalities and ambassadors, and more.⁴ The media treats these security leaders as figures of top-tier importance.⁵

4- In democratic countries, the leaders of security agencies, including the military, internal security, and public security, rarely appear in the media except in exceptional circumstances.

5- The chart no. 9 illustrates that the coverage of "Role of Security Leaders" accounted for 10.75% of the total security coverage. There has been an increased interest in covering news about security leaders, particularly considering the Army Commander as a potential presidential candidate and the fact that the Director General of General Security is at the end of his term. However, a study conducted by the Maharat Foundation on the same topic in 2014 observed a 14% coverage of "Activities of Security Leaders," confirming their significant role in public life.

Distribution of the percentage of topics of opinion and analysis articles in newspapers.
 Sample of 24 monitored articles
 Chart No. 4



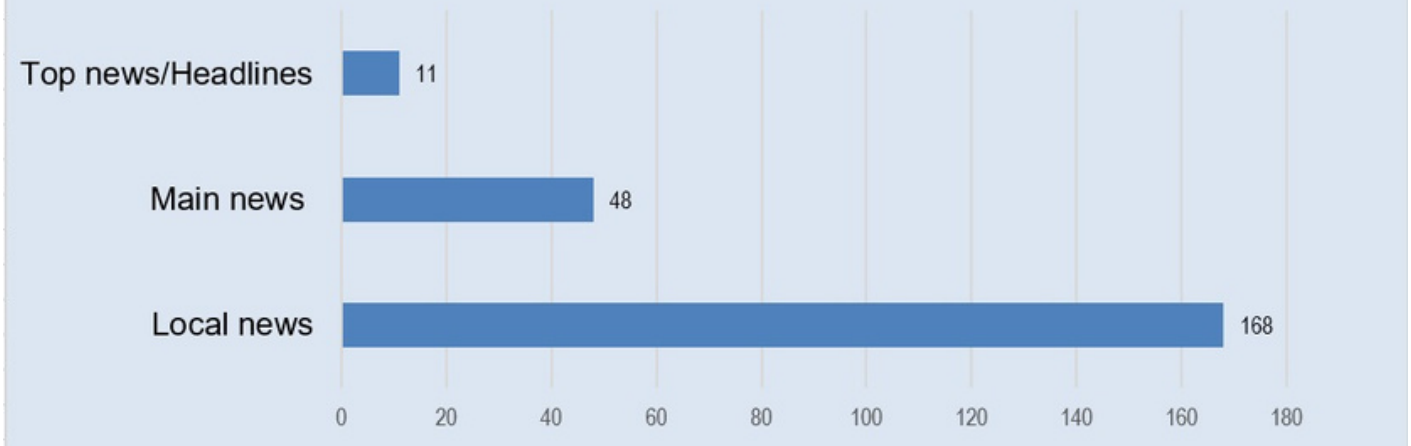
5- Media coverage ranking based on the editorial line

Media coverage is hierarchized across three levels in the editorial line:

- Top News/Headline: Whether on the front page of newspapers or as the first report in television broadcasts.
- Main News: The second most important, occupying a prominent position in newspapers, typically spanning two to three pages and often exceeding a quarter of a page. In television broadcasts, it appears in the 2nd and 3rd positions.
- Local News: These are news items that follow in newspapers or television broadcasts without receiving special attention. They are featured in the inner pages of newspapers alongside other miscellaneous news or appear in television broadcasts as part of regular, non-top news segments.

The hierarchy of news related to the security sector is distributed according to the following chart (Chart No.5).

Ranking of media coverage related to the security sector in the monitored media.
Sample of 227 news coverages
Chart No. 5



A. Top News/ Headlines

The news related to security forces that made headlines on the front page of printed newspapers or as the lead story in television news headlines amounted to 11 news items, accounting for 4.84% of the total security-related news. These were featured in three newspapers exclusively: Annahar, Al-Akhbar, and L'Orient Le Jour, distributed as follows: 6 in Al-Akhbar, 5 in Annahar, and 2 in L'Orient-Le Jour.

In Al-Akhbar, three of the headlines focused on the extension of Abbas Ibrahim's term as the head of General Security. Two headlines accused the "presumed candidate" for the presidency, General Joseph Aoun, of financing the military institution and selling weapons. Another topic covered the investigation into the killing of the Irish soldier in the south.

In Al-Nahar, the headlines covered the army's dispatch of elements to Turkey to assist with the earthquake, the army's pursuit of drug traffickers, the controversy surrounding Prime Minister Najib Mikati's request for the security forces not to support Judge Ghada Aoun in her judicial investigations, and the news of the disappearance of Sheikh Ahmed al-Rifa'i.

In L'Orient-Le Jour, the headlines focused on the reactions to Gebran Bassil's criticism of the army commander and the extension of Abbas Ibrahim's term.

The editorial choices of newspapers varied according to the political orientations they represented. Al-Akhbar addressed political dimensions, whether related to the extension of General Abbas Ibrahim as the head of the General Security, or the accusations directed at the Army Commander, who is a potential presidential candidate, in cases that could be described as corruption. The sixth editorial covered the investigation into the killing of the Irish soldier.

Annahar covered the "positive" activities of the army, such as its contribution to rescue operations in Turkey and counter-terrorism efforts. It also mentioned a security/judicial piece of news about the Prime Minister's request to security agencies not to support Judge Ghada Aoun in her raids, and a security news about the disappearance of Sheikh Ahmed al-Rifa'i.

L'Orient-Le Jour covered news item with a political dimension regarding the statements of the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, Gebran Bassil, against the army commander, and the news about the extension of Abbas Ibrahim's term.

It appears that the news related to security forces in the editorials is mostly political. The Prime Minister's request to halt the support of Judge Aoun only appeared in Al-Nahar's editorial. This news reflects the troubled political situation in Lebanon and the absence of proper governance. The Prime Minister requested that security agencies not support Judge Aoun in her planned raids, indicating an overlap between the executive and judicial branches.

B. Main news:

• In Newspapers:

In the security news reported in the media as main news, L'Orient-Le Jour stood out with 15 news items, compared to 8 in Al-Nahar, 8 in Al-Akhbar, 2 in Al-Joumhouria, and 1 in Al-Liwaa. On television stations, there were 5 news items on OTV, 4 on LBCI, 3 on Al-Jadeed, and 2 on Al-Manar.

In L'Orient- Le Jour, 5 news items were related to the army commander and the military institution, 5 were security-related, and 2 were about the extension of Abbas Ibrahim's term. There were also 2 news items related to human rights: the first one was about an attack targeting the LGBTQ+ community, and the second was trafficking attempt of a minor girl. Administrative news items were also present.

In Annahar, there were 3 news items about the military institution and the army commander, 2 security-related items, and 2 items about the extension of Abbas Ibrahim's term, along with a judicial news item.

Al-Liwaa reported a security news item about the decision to pursue the intruders of banks.

- **In Television Channels:**

- LBCI: Covered the funeral of the soldiers who fell in Hortaala, a judicial news, and an administrative news about passports, and the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed al-Rifa'i.

- OTV: Presented 3 judicial news items and 2 security news items about the assassination of al-Rifa'i and news about the extension of Abbas Ibrahim's term.

- Al-Jadeed: Covered 2 news items about General Ibrahim and a security news item about Sheikh al-Rifa'i's assassination.

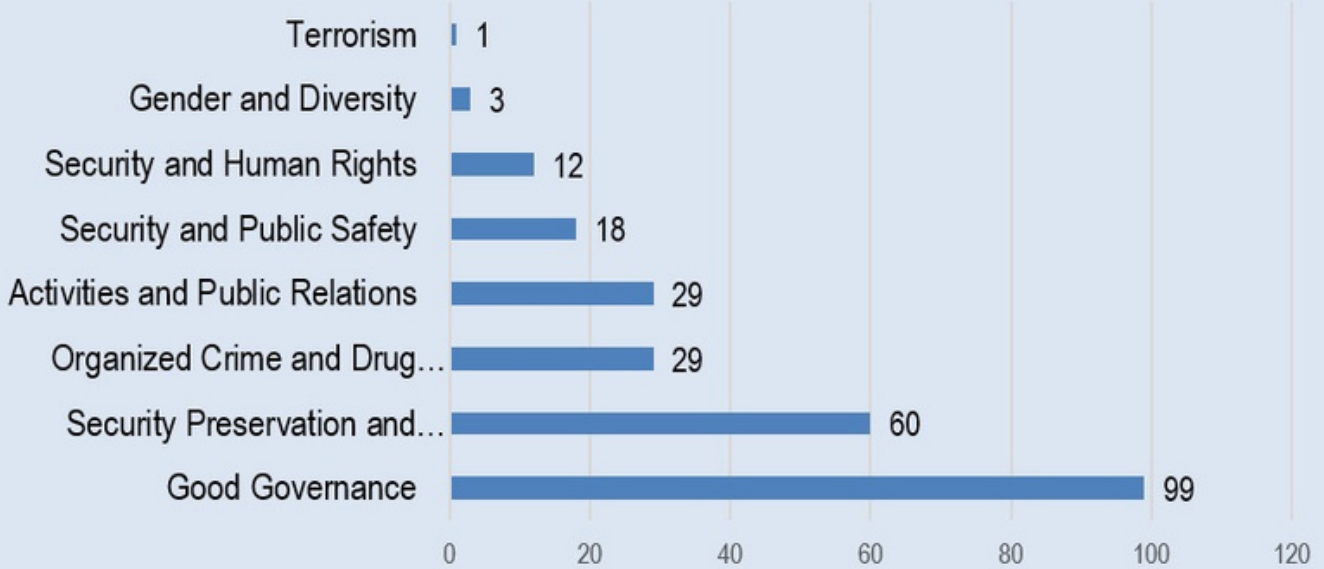
- Al-Manar: reported 2 news items about the extension of Abbas Ibrahim's term and the crime of Sheikh al-Rifa'i's assassination. The channels focused on the most important news due to their implications or those anticipated by the audience.

C. Distribution of Primary Coverage Topics in Media:

- **In various monitored media outlets:**

The number of main coverage topics related to good governance was 99, accounting for 39.4% of the total observed main coverage. This percentage was approximately 23.9% for topics related to security preservation and criminal pursuit, 11.5% for organized crime and drug trafficking, and the same percentage (11.5%) for activities and public relations topics. About 7.2% of the coverage was dedicated to public security and safety, 4.8% for security and human rights, 1.2% for gender and diversity, and less than 0.5% for terrorism-related topics (See Diagram 6).

Distribution of primary coverage topics related to the security sector in the monitored media.
 Sample of 251 coverages.
 Chart No. 6



• **Topics related to good governance:**

It was notable that the topic of good governance was predominant in the categorization of security-related coverage topics and received the highest percentage among the topics (see Chart No. 6). Through a review of these topics, it becomes apparent that they revolve around three main axes:

- News about General Abbas Ibrahim, General Director of General Security, and discussions about his extension at the helm of the security institution.
- News about the Army Commander and debates and positions regarding his nomination for the presidency.
- Conflict between the Legislative and Executive Authorities regarding Judge Ghada Aoun's decisions.

In the first axis, the media extensively discussed possible scenarios to find a solution that allows Abbas Ibrahim to remain the Director of General Security (extensions of terms, reserve recall). However, the media, in general, did not oppose this matter but rather reported what was happening in the corridors of power.

In the second axis, concerning news about the army commander, two trends emerged: one criticizing the army commander, and the other defending and supporting him. Newspapers like Al-Akhbar published multiple investigations and reports revealing violations in the management of the military institution: "Candidate Joseph Aoun: When the Army Turns into a Non-Governmental Organization Funded by Foreigners"; "Conflict Explodes Between Sleem (Minister of Defense) and Aoun (Army Commander)."

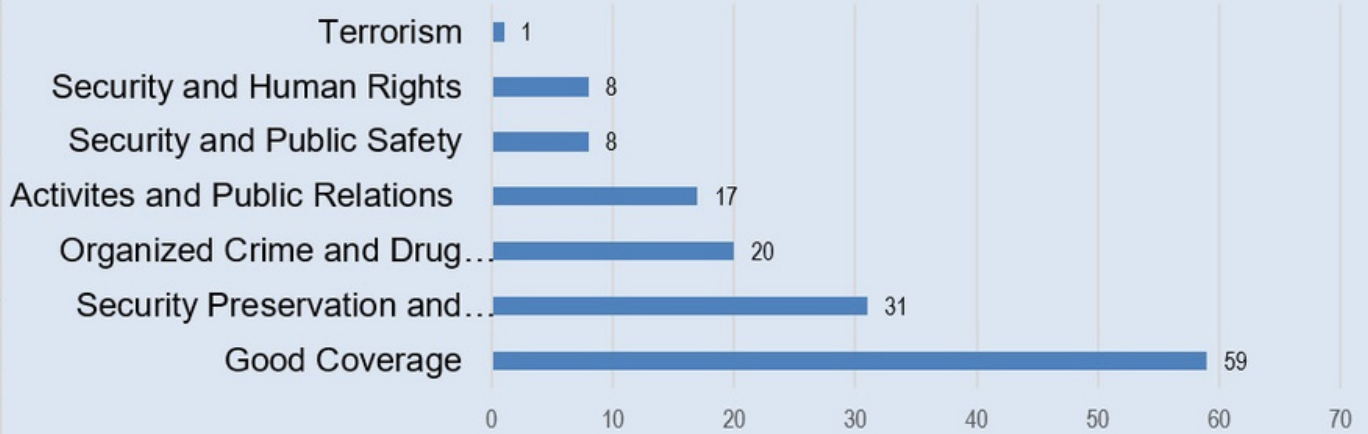
On the opposite side, Annahar and Nidaa Al-Watan published reports going in the opposite direction: "The political impasse after taif pushes the presidency towards the army leaders" (Al-Nahar); "Army Commander: What He Has and What He Doesn't: Where Is the Truth?" (Annahar); "Campaign Against the Army Commander to Prevent Him from Reaching the Presidency" (Nidaa Al-Watan).

In the third axis about the disagreement between the judiciary and the executive authority concerning Judge Ghada Aoun's decisions, the media conveyed the disagreement among the power holders on the subject. Annahar appeared to remain neutral: "Conflict Between Executive and Judicial Authorities: How Will the Judicial Police Act? Continued Discussion About Mikati's Decision for Security Agencies Not to Support Ghada Aoun" (Annahar). Al-Akhbar was more critical of the executive authority, accusing the Prime Minister of being subservient to the Association of Banks: "Mikati Takes Orders from Sayf (Head of the Association of Banks): Pursuing Banks Is Forbidden; Mikati's Decision for Security Agencies Not to Implement Ghada Aoun's Decisions."

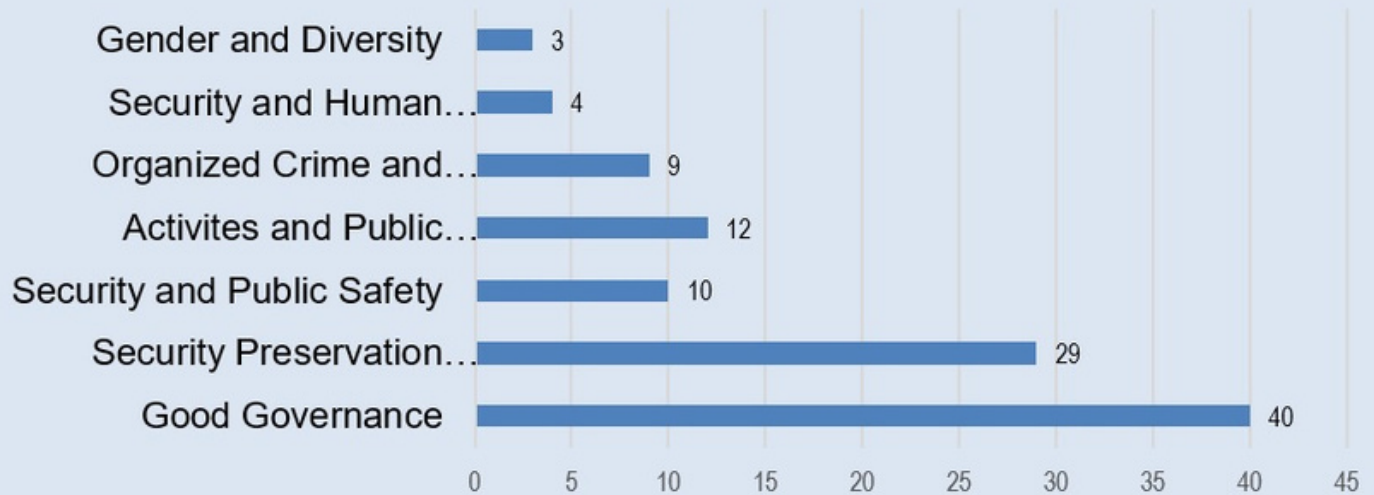
- **Primary coverage topics according to mediums:**

Based on Chart 6, illustrating the distribution of primary coverage topics in various monitored media outlets, the main topics were observed in print media and online websites on one side and television channels on the other side in order to highlight the differences between the mediums and whether interests differ between the written and audio-visual mediums (Chart No.7 and Chart No. 8).

Distribution of primary security-related coverage topics in the monitored newspapers and websites. Sample of 144 coverages. Chart No.7



Distribution of primary security-related coverage topics in the monitored television news bulletins. Sample of 107 coverages. Chart No. 8



In comparing the main coverage topics in newspapers and websites (Chart No. 7) on one hand, and television channels (Chart No. 8) on the other hand, it becomes evident that the topics are relatively similar in both type and quantity. Notably, topics related to good governance, security preservation, and public relations activities are prominent in both charts.

D- Subsidiary coverage:

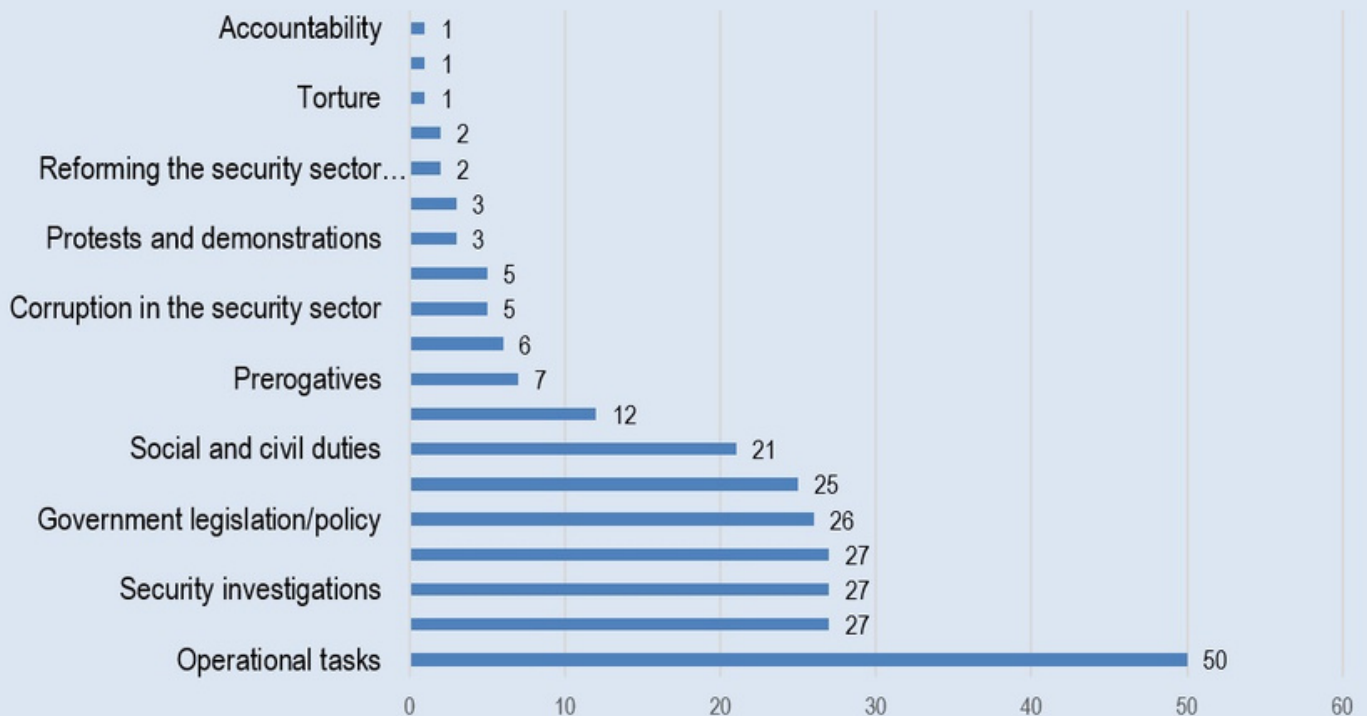
The subsidiary coverage topics in the monitored media outlets were distributed as follows:

The coverage encompassed 19 subsidiary topics related to the security sector in a sample of 251 media coverages monitored across various media outlets.⁶

The percentage of coverage related to operational tasks of the security sector was 19.92%. Approximately 20.32% was dedicated to legislative and governmental policy topics. Each of the media coverages related to the roles of security leaders, security investigations, activities concerning the security sector, and the relationship between security and politics accounted for 10.76%. Social and civil duties in the security sector represented 8.37%. The efficiency of the security sector was covered at a rate of 4.78%. The topics of prerogatives, mismanagement, and reform in the security sector were covered at 4.38%. Topics such as the right to life and physical safety, protests and demonstrations, privacy and personal freedoms, and torture represented 5.18%. Corruption in the security sector as well as accountability were covered at a rate of 2.39%. The same percentage, 2.39%, was observed for topics related to the rule of law and the execution of judicial warrants (Chart No.9).

6- The list of subsidiary coverage topics can be reviewed in the appendix.

Distribution of subsidiary coverage topics related to the security sector in the monitored media.
 Sample of 251 coverages.
 Table Number 9

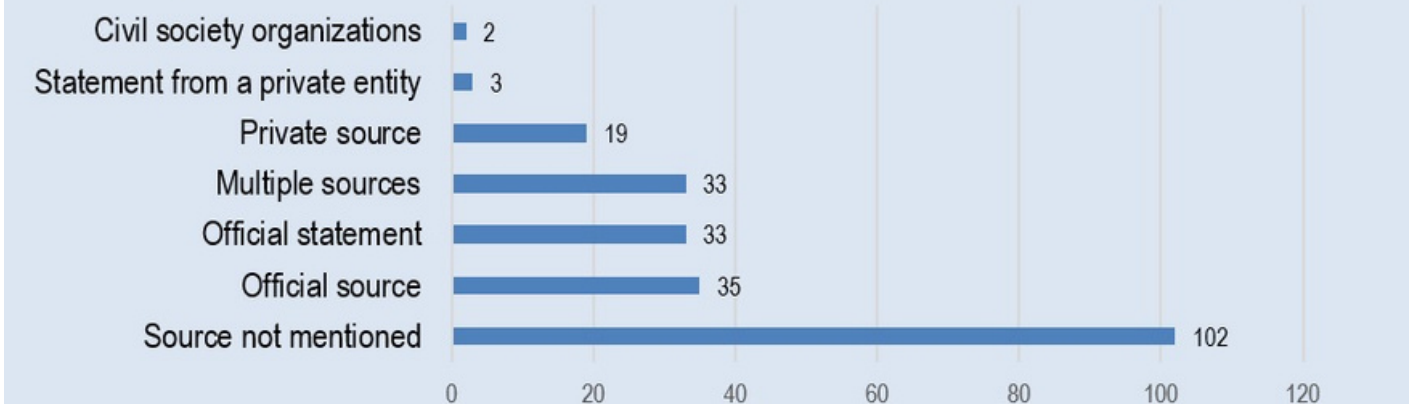


E- Sources of coverage:

The sources of coverage related to the security sector were distributed as follows (Chart No.10):

- Approximately 45% of the coverage was not directly attributed to a specific source mentioned by name (media source, official statement, official information).
- About 15.3% of the coverage was attributed to an official source (named or unnamed individuals holding official positions relevant to the news).
- Around 14.5% of the coverage came in the form of an official statement (issued by an official government entity or security apparatus).
- Roughly 14.5% of the coverage relied on multiple private and official sources (named or unnamed).
- About 8.3% of the coverage primarily relied on private sources such as eyewitness testimonies, institutions, or relevant individuals.
- Around 1.4% of the coverage relied on data from private entities.
- Approximately 1% of the coverage was based on reports from civil society organizations.

Distribution of media coverage sources related to the security sector.
 Sample of 227 news coverages (excluding opinion and analysis articles)
 Table No. 10

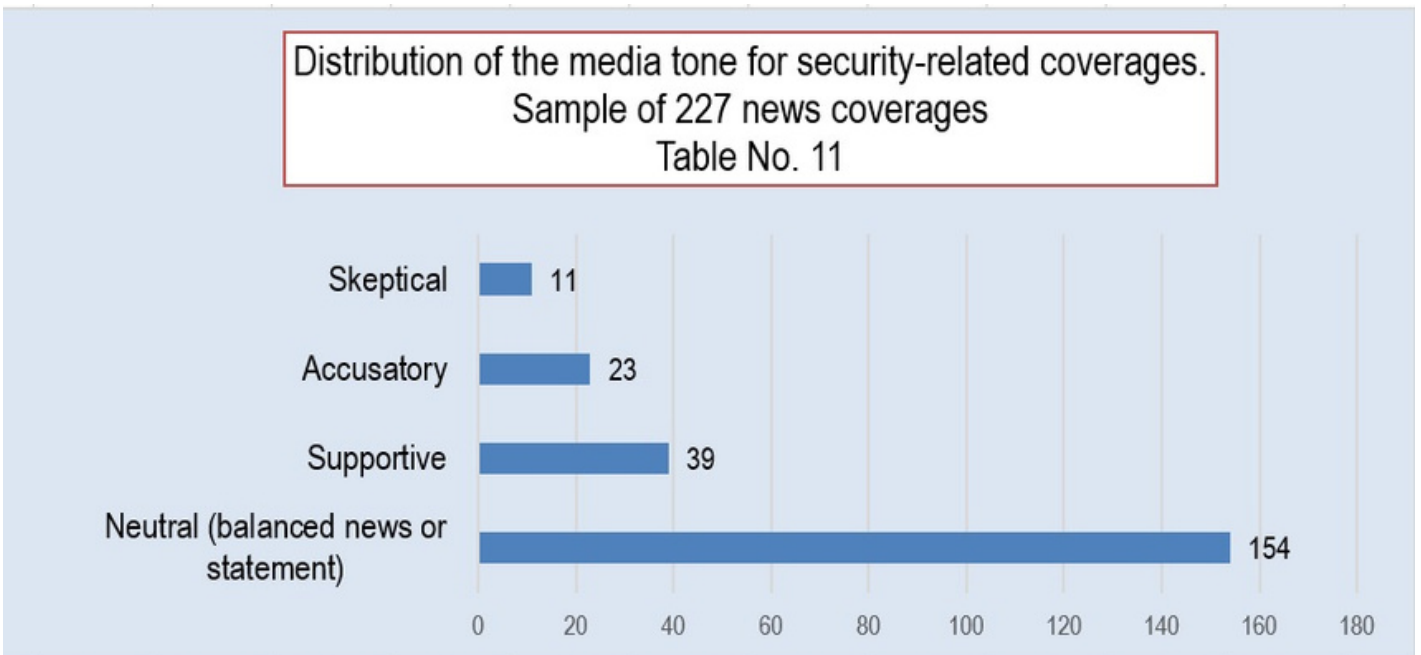


The chart number 10 illustrates that the majority of news related to the security sector is from an unknown source, meaning it is reported without specifying the source. This is followed by 30% of news from official sources or official statements. There are also coverages where multiple sources are involved, especially witnesses or individuals directly involved in the events, constituting 15%. The coverage from private sources is approximately 8%. Thus, it becomes evident that media coverage originating directly from media institutions is very limited. The majority of security-related coverage comes from security institutions or news agencies, occasionally from correspondents.

F- The media tone

The media tone adopted by the media outlets regarding security news appears to be mostly neutral, considering they rely on official sources to convey the news and data. This tone encompasses 68% of the coverage. Following this, there is a positive tone, especially towards security institutions, constituting 17%. This tone appears supportive or endorsing these institutions.

However, 15% of security-related coverages seem to have a negative tone, including accusations (around 10%) and skepticism (around 5%) (Chart No. 11).



Through analyzing the coverage that includes skepticism, it becomes evident that this tone was mainly present in Al-Akhbar newspaper (8 times), An-Nahar (3 times), and twice in L' Orient-Le Jour, as well as once in both Annahar and Al-Jadeed.

- **The skeptical tone:**

Coverages that conveyed a tone of skepticism:

- Al-Akhbar covered the following topics: “The arrest of money changers... What about the operators?”; The Ammonium phobia in the port; Secret movements to break banks; the disappearance of Sheikh Ahmed al-Rifai... Political exploitation and calls to avert strife; UN investigation into the incident of the Irish soldier's killing: Witnesses exclusively from UNIFIL, and the incident was not premeditated; competition between intelligence and information in the Rafai case; tension between the army commander and the defense minister; investigation with money transfer companies by the Information Branch.

- Nidaa Al-Watan covered the following topics: Campaign against the army commander to prevent him from reaching the presidency; Extending Ibrahim's term "by the thread"; Joseph Aoun's candidacy seriousness raises concerns among his opponents.
- L'Orient Le Jour covered in two topics the chances of extending Abbas Ibrahim's term: Will Abbas Ibrahim's term be extended?; The limits of Hezbollah's authority: Abbas Ibrahim towards departure.
- Annahar: prosecuting money changers: Seriousness or a repetition of the 2020 experience, Judge Ibrahim to "Al-Nahar": Dozens are detained, and the judiciary is doing its duties.
- Daraj: "Military rule"... Has the debate on electing Joseph Aoun as President of Lebanon been settled?
- Al-Jadeed: Press conference for the people of Hortaala after the army raid, expressing their disapproval of the focus on them and on some individuals wanted for minor crimes while leaving the country's larger problems unaddressed.

- **The critical tone:**

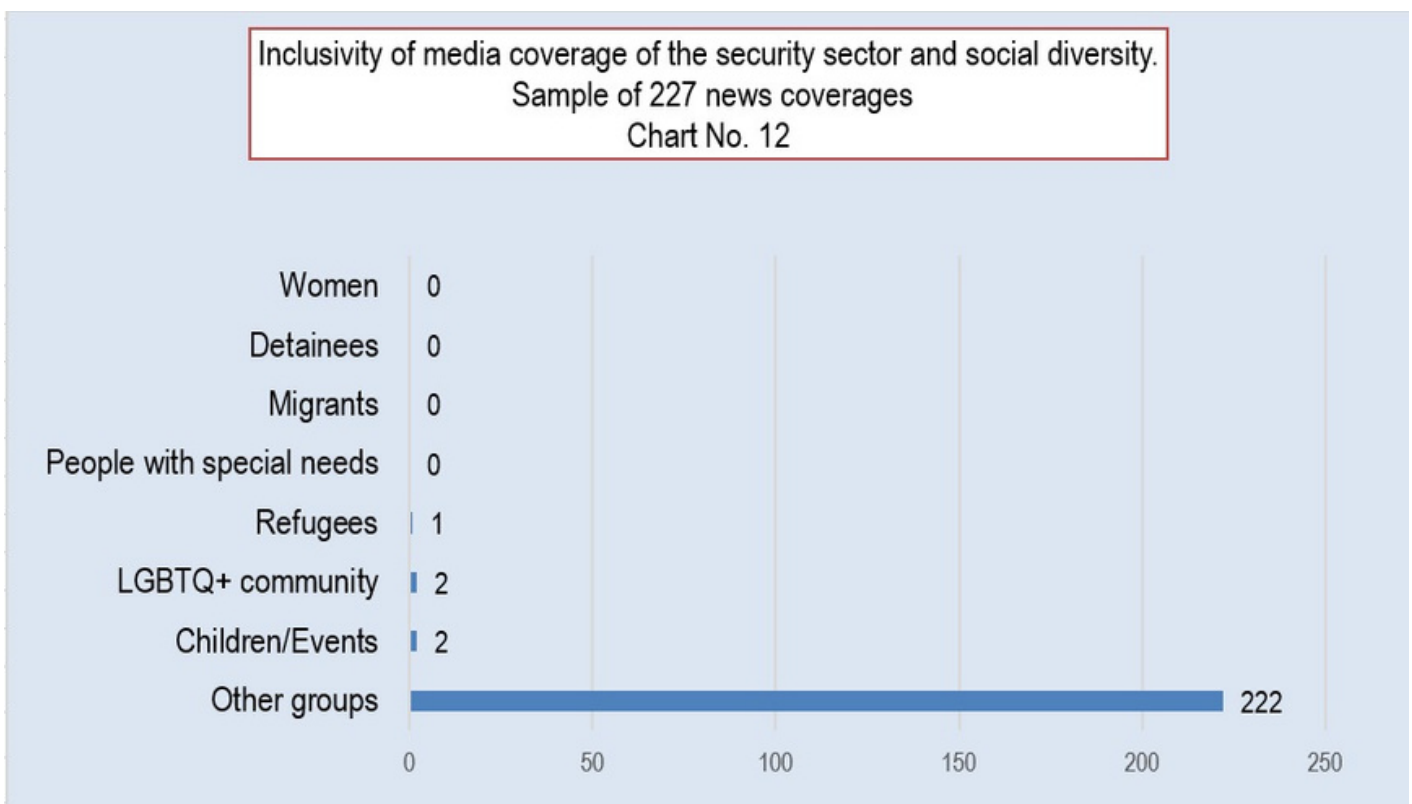
In coverages with a critical tone, Al-Akhbar comes first: 6 coverages; OTV: 5 coverages; Al-Jadeed: 4; Megaphone: 3; L'Orient-Le Jour: 2; Al-Joumhouria: 1; Annahar: 1; Al-Liwaa: 1; Daraj: 1.

- Al-Akhbar covered the following topics: Seized properties prone to sabotage: properties seized in Bawra; Candidate Joseph Aoun: When the army turns into a non-governmental organization funded by foreign powers; The army sells weapons for free: contracts circumvent laws; Conflict erupts between Sleem (Defense Minister) and Aoun (Army Commander); Mikati orders: banks are not to be pursued; Mikati's decision to security agencies not to implement Ghada Aoun's decisions.

- OTV covered the following topics: Supportive stand for Judge Aoun after Mikati's decision and his request to the Interior Minister not to support Judge Ghada Aoun; Free Patriotic Movement comments on Mikati's decision and attacks him; Supportive stand for Judge Aoun after Mikati's decision and his request to the Interior Minister not to support Judge Ghada Aoun; Bassil comments on Mikati's decision and attacks him; Excerpts from talks by Sheikh Ahmed al-Rafai attacking the security forces for not fulfilling their roles and statements by Khaled al-Daher accusing the "Guardians of the Revolution" of being behind the kidnapping and killing of Sheikh Rafai with the help of security agencies.
- Megaphone: Cited a Human Rights Watch report documenting the use of social media and dating apps by security forces to hunt down, blackmail, arrest, and fabricate charges against members of the LGBTQ+ community; Municipal police beating a Syrian minor; Extension of General Ibrahim's term.
- Al-Jadeed: Investigation into the State Security's invasion of the home of the money changer Ali Nimr and their failure to comply with the laws; Parliamentary Police and the security around Parliament attacking visitors to deputies Khalaf and Saliba; Investigations with 5 activists by Beirut Investigation Department on charges of assaulting soldiers during a sit-in in front of the Ministry of Justice; Investigation from the program "Bring down corrupt rule" about security forces elements that are assigned to individuals.
- L'Orient-Le Jour: Criticisms against Joseph Aoun shake Gebran's circles; Human Rights Watch condemns the systematic exposure and persecution of the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon and the region.
- Al-Joumhouria: Mikati settled it with Judge Aoun, so will the banks end their strike?
- Annahar: Reactions continue to Mikati's decision regarding the request to the Interior Minister to prevent security forces from implementing Ghada Aoun's decisions.
- AL-Liwaa: Mikati's condolences to the three army soldiers who fell in the Bekaa.
- Daraj: According to Human Rights Watch, security forces in 5 countries, including Lebanon, trapped individuals from the LGBTQ+ community through social media and dating apps.

G- Social diversity in security coverages:

Social diversity appears to be marginal in security coverages during the monitoring period (Chart No. 12). In the observed coverages, which numbered 227, women, people with disabilities, migrant workers, and marginalized groups are absent. The topic of refugees appeared in the context of a migrant boat sinking in Tripoli. The LGBTQ+ community appeared in one case, presented through a Human Rights Watch report, and the related events were covered in two cases. These cases will be presented later in the case study section.



H - Syrian displacement in security institutions' media:

During the study period, February 2023, Lebanese media did not address the topic of Syrian displacement or the situation of Syrian refugees, neither from a humanitarian nor a security perspective. However, through reviewing the media affiliated with security institutions, it becomes apparent that the topic was prominent in the February issue of the General Security magazine and was featured on the cover.

Lebanon's security agencies possess various media outlets, including magazines and other publications, as well as online platforms on Facebook, Twitter, and others, allowing them to maintain continuous communication with both their personnel and citizens.

The role of these outlets significantly differs from traditional media; they do not cover daily political or security news. However, they do publish their official statements regarding certain incidents and activities. The three main security agencies in Lebanon - the Army, Internal Security Forces, and General Security - publish monthly magazines available both in print and online. For the purposes of this study, these magazines for the month of February 2022, the monitoring period, were consulted. It was found that the Army's magazine was not published during that month, whereas issues were released by both the General Security and Internal Security Forces.⁷

These publications are characterized by their efforts to promote the institution's activities, particularly covering the activities of the agency's chief, prominently featuring his photographs, statements, and positions from the cover to the inside pages. These magazines cover various topics related to the agency's activities and its chief, as well as diverse sections covering culture, arts, politics, economics, international politics, and more.

Notably, in the General Security magazine for this month, the cover story focused on the topic of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The main headline read, 'Hope for a Change in International Decision Regarding the Return of Refugees.' A secondary headline on the cover stated, 'Lebanon Will Undergo Demographic Changes Within Ten Years.'

In detailing the cover story, it was reported that Major General Abbas Ibrahim visited the Makassed Philanthropic Association, where he met with its board of trustees on January 7, 2023. The magazine covered the internal discussion session, which primarily revolved around the Syrian displacement issue. The concerns of the board members and several faculty members were discussed with Major General Ibrahim, given his central role as the official overseeing this file, assigned by the former presidency and the current government. This role continued the voluntary return efforts initiated in 2017, which led to the return of 450,000 Syrian refugees. However, around 2,080,000 remain displaced, including 837,000 registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In addition to them, there are approximately 500,000 individuals registered with the agency under a personal "code" issued to them for tracking, as the Lebanese state prevented the international agency from registering new refugees as of 2015. This can be seen as a way to circumvent official decisions.

7- <https://www.general-security.gov.lb/ar/magazines/magazine/127>

The coverage includes a question directed to Ibrahim about "how to address the Syrian displacement issue in Lebanon, which poses problems for the country, and ways to help solve this burden on Lebanon." General Ibrahim responded: "We were recently appointed to address this issue by the decision of prime minister Najib Mikati. However, prior to this decision, specifically in 2017, we at the General Directorate of General Security developed a plan for the return of displaced individuals. It resulted in the return of approximately 450,000 Syrians, through both voluntary returns facilitated by General Security and voluntary return with the provision of facilitations at border crossings. Through your platform, I would like to say that there is no international will for the return of the displaced. However, we have noticed a change in the attitude of some European countries recently, becoming more flexible. Therefore, there are still countries at the forefront of refusing the return of these Syrian brothers."

He also pointed out that "this path may lead some to consider Lebanese as racists, and this is not true; we are not like that. I say that we reject this label because they are the ones who refuse to receive the numbers coming to their country, which we have received. We continue to work on this issue, and the modest numbers returning to Syria are being used as a basis for us to be ready when the international decision changes, and there is hope for a change. I will visit at the end of this January at the invitation of the European Union based on this file to discuss what needs to be done. I hope that I can convince them of our perspective for the return of thousands of Syrians to their country."

In the same issue, there was an interview with Dr. Ali Faour, a member of the National Council for Scientific Research, under the title: "Lebanon will undergo demographic changes within ten years." The interview covers four pages and includes a map of Syrian presence in Lebanese regions. It states:

"...Operations to integrate Syrian refugees into various Lebanese regions are taking place due to the insistence of associations and international organizations scattered on Lebanese territory and their support. This is equivalent to recalling the experience adopted in managing the issue of Palestinian refugees through settlement on Lebanese lands for the past 74 years. Despite its numerous crises, international pressures continue on Lebanon to prevent the return and integration of Syrian refugees. This ongoing process, in place for over 11 years, further fuels internal conflicts and exploits the Lebanese leadership's need for international cover to protect themselves. This makes it easier and speeds up the process of consolidating extensive demographic change, sinking Lebanon further into chaos and hastening its collapse.

This was discussed by the General Security in terms of numbers, information, and scientific research by Dr. Ali Faour, a professor of geography and former dean at the Lebanese University, who focused on the imbalance and modification of the diverse Lebanese formula among the sects, placing Christian presence in jeopardy, with upcoming years expected to change the face of Lebanon”.

The same issue carried an article under the title "Issue" about "The number of Syrian immigrants surpasses half of the Lebanese." The file stated that a census conducted by the Central Statistics Administration confirmed that the total number of residents in Lebanon during 2018-2019 was 3,840,000 people. Last October, the Director-General of General Security, General Abbas Ibrahim, announced that the number of Syrian immigrants in Lebanon had reached 2,080,000. These facts confirm that the number of Syrian immigrants in Lebanon has surpassed half of the Lebanese population. Statistics also indicate that for every six births, there is only one Lebanese birth among them..."

Thus, the issue of Syrian refugees is the most important topic in this issue of the General Security Magazine and was extensively addressed in three articles.

Section Four: Security sector coverage through case study

The methodology of the study relied on the analysis of a set of cases to illustrate how the media deals with important issues on the security level. The cases varied between humanitarian, security-related, corruption, and assaults by security forces. Each case and how the media approached it will be presented, noting that some of these issues were not covered by all media outlets; some were indeed ignored. The studied cases are as follows:

1. Drowning of migrants' boat off the coast of Tripoli
2. Death of a Syrian detainee in security agencies custody after torture
3. Municipal police officer assaulting a Syrian child in the Koura region
4. The summoning of activists by security forces for interrogation
5. The security forces confronting individuals visiting the two deputies protesting in the Parliament
6. Pursuit of Security Forces of the LGBTQ+ Community
7. State Security raiding the home of the Nammour Family
8. The investigative report "Bring down corrupt rule" on corruption in security agencies
9. The security forces' prevention of an attempt to sell a minor girl
10. Arrest of security forces members accused of assaulting Al-Jadeed TV channel

These cases were reported during the monitoring month, except for the first two cases, which were selected due to their significance and the impact they had on the media and the public. (The full analysis of cases studies can be found in Annex A)

Summary of Cases

Case #	Topic	Date	Analysis Summary
Case 1	Migrant Boat Sinking	April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media coverage categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The first category conveyed the army's version and exclusively focused on it, defending the military's account. The second category reported both versions, presenting the army's narrative alongside the survivors' accounts. The third category reported both versions and criticized the official narrative, calling for accountability and scrutiny.
Case 2	Death of Syrian Detainee After Torture	August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On television channels, Al-Jadeed had an accusatory tone against the security apparatus, while LBC channel focused on the apparatus addressing the issue and military justice taking hold of the case. In print journalism, the accusatory tone was evident in Annahar and Al-Liwaa newspapers, which accused the apparatus. Meanwhile, Nidaa Al-Watan newspaper featured the incident on its fifth page, casting doubt on the accusations against the security apparatus and placing the issue in the hands of the judiciary. Alternative media platforms went further in their criticism of the security apparatus, addressing the practices of these agencies in general.
Case 3	Police Officer Assaults Syrian Minor	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few media outlets covered the following incident
Case 4	Summoning Activists for Investigation	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al-Jadeed channel distinguished itself by covering the news, which appeared unimportant at first glance, as it was about a summons for questioning that other media outlets didn't prioritize. However, the channel framed it as a violation of laws and encroachment on public freedoms, contrary to the principles of the democratic system and what the constitution stipulates.
Case 5	Assault on Visitors of Protesting MPs	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al-Jadeed TV reported in a news report about the MPs that lawyer Shakri Haddad, one of the lawyers of the victims of the Port explosion, was assaulted in Martyrs' Square during his visit to them. They issued a statement affirming that the blatant assault is a direct targeting of them. The General Secretariat of the Parliament did not issue any statement, but its sources mentioned that the reason was not recording the name before entering Martyrs' Square.

Case 6	Persecution of the LGBTQ+ community by Security Forces	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The targeting of the LGBTQ+ community did not attract the attention of traditional local media despite Arab and international organizations covering the investigation. However, alternative media outlets seem more attached to social groups, minorities, and human rights issues.
Case 7	State Security Raid on the Home of Ali Nimr's Family	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Al-Jadeed TV channel stood out by presenting a report on the raid, focusing on the violation of the laws by the security agency and accusing them of providing false information.
Case 8	Corruption in Security Agencies	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al-Jadeed TV channel included excerpts in their news from their program titled "Bring down the corrupt rule," conducted by the investigative unit of the channel, discussing the violations of security agencies regarding the law protecting individuals. The channel points out that "the emphasis is on implementation" , hinting that security agencies tend to ignore decisions made by the political authority instead of being under its control.
Case 9	Minor girl trafficking	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This incident was covered by two television channels: LBCI and Al-Jadeed, as well as reported in the newspapers Al-Joumhouria and L'Orient- Le Jour. Other monitored media outlets did not cover it. No additional information was provided in the media beyond the official statement, and the incident did not receive further attention from any of the media outlets that aired the video. Only L'Orient Le Jour attempted to dig deeper into the story but did not receive substantial answers.
Case 10	Attack on Al-Jadeed TV channel	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annahar newspaper reported what Al-Jadeed stated and also quoted a statement issued by the Central Media Office of the Amal movement, responding to Al-Jadeed's report. it becomes evident that the persistence in pursuing the matter led the security forces to arrest the suspects. Additionally, the media condemnation prompted the Amal movement to issue a clarifying statement, disassociating itself from the detainees.

Section Five: Field interviews

The field study aimed to understand the opinions of three directly involved parties in security news: journalists, civil society organizations concerned with human rights, and official security institutions. Interviews were conducted with journalists in a focus group consisting of 8 members. Additionally, interviews were held separately with 5 civil society organizations. As for the official security institutions, interviews were conducted with 3 entities: the Army, the Internal Security Forces, and the General Security. All three institutions responded to the questions addressed to them in writing.

It is necessary to mention the circumstances accompanying these interviews. The way the involved parties dealt with these interviews demonstrates the sensitivity of the subject and the perspective on it in Lebanese society as a whole, considering it a delicate matter not easily approached openly. During the interviews with journalists, some preferred not to disclose their names, and others chose not to answer certain questions. The civil society organizations also did not respond to all the questions posed to them. Among the official security institutions, the Army answered 3 out of 7 questions. These matters highlight the intricacy of the issue in Lebanese society and the caution required in its public approach. (The complete interviews can be found in Annex B)

Appendix

In the Methodology of Analyzing Media Coverage Content:

Analyzed media materials:

Forms of coverage:

- Opinion/Analysis (Position)
- News (Report, Information)
- Investigation
- Interview (Personal Experience, Expert, Involved Party)
- Official Statement
- Guidance/Instructional Materials
- Campaigns

Reports on security issues address the following key topics:

1- Terrorism

2- Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking

3- Maintaining Security and Pursuing Criminals

- Legislation
- Government Policy
- Security Investigations
- Military Court
- Operational Tasks (Patrols, Security Operations, Raids)

4- **Good governance**

- Mismanagement
- Corruption in the Security Sector
- Security Sector Reform and its Governance
- Transparency and Access to Information
- Accountability
- Efficiency of the Security Sector
- Independence of the Security Sector from Political Subordination
- Rule of Law

5- **Security and human rights**

- Right to Assemble (Parliamentary Police Assault on Demonstrators)
- Right to Communicate and Freedom of Expression (Army Intelligence Violating Refugee Rights to Internet Devices)
- Right to Life and Physical Safety
- Right to Fair Legal Procedures

6- Gender and diversity

- Gender-Based Violence: Meeting Security Needs for All Citizens Without Discrimination (LGBTQ+ Rights in Assembly, Expression, and Freedom of Speech)
- Women's Rights
- Privacy and Personal Freedoms

7- Public relations and activities

- Advertising and Awareness Activities
- Joint Activities with the Private Sector and Civil Society

8- Public safety and security

- Activities and Measures Taken by Security Forces to Ensure Public Safety

1. Legislation/Government Policy
2. Government Policy
3. Security Investigations
4. Operational Tasks
5. Mismanagement
6. Corruption in the Security Sector
7. Security Sector Reform and its Governance
8. Transparency and Access to Information
9. Accountability and Accountability
10. Efficiency of the Security Sector
11. Security and Politics
12. Rule of Law (Compliance with Legal Provisions)
13. Military Judiciary
14. Protest and Demonstrations
15. Right to Communication and Expression
16. Right to Life and Physical Safety
17. Gender-Based Violence
18. Women's Rights
19. Privacy and Personal Freedoms
20. Right to Fair Legal Procedures
21. Roles of Security Leaders
22. Prerogatives
23. Execution of judicial warrants
24. Activities related to the security sector
25. Social and Civil Duties
26. Torture

Sources of Information Upon Which the Story Was Built:

- Official Security Narrative
- Official Source
- Private Source
- Multiple Sources
- Media Source
- Civil Society Organizations
- Circulated Information (Rumors, misinformation, Fabricated News)

✓ **Nature of the source:**

- Named
- Anonymous (Undisclosed)

✓ **Media tone:**

- Skepticism
- Critical
- Supportive
- Neutral (Balanced in the News - Statement..)

✓ **Specific categories of coverage subject:**

- Women
- Children/Events
- LGBTQ+ Community
- Refugees
- People with Special Needs
- Migrants
- Female Detainees

✓ **Media coverage ranking based on the editorial line**

Top News/Headlines
Main News
Local News

Annexes

Annex A: Case studies

Case Study 1: Migrant boat Sinking

On April 24, 2022, a boat carrying dozens of illegal migrants, including Lebanese and non-Lebanese nationals, sank off the coast of Tripoli in northern Lebanon. The passengers were attempting to leave Lebanon illegally, "in search of a better future," as some of them stated. The sinking of the boat resulted in the death of some and the disappearance of others, while some managed to survive. This incident was dubbed the "Boat of Death."

Two narratives circulated regarding the migrant boat sinking:

- The first narrative came from some survivors who claimed that the Lebanese Army's navy and the coast guard intentionally shocked the boat to sink it.⁸
- The second narrative, the official version by the Lebanese Army, announced the rescue of 48 individuals who were on a boat that was sinking during an attempt to smuggle migrants illegally.⁹

The Army's Directorate of Guidance issued a statement stating, "The Navy Forces of the Army rescued 48 people, including a deceased child, who were on a boat that was sinking during an attempt to smuggle them illegally off the coast of Qalamoun - North Lebanon, due to water leakage caused by high waves and excessive boat load... A citizen (R.M.A) was arrested on suspicion of involvement in the smuggling operation."

Regarding the reason for the boat sinking, Haitham Zanawi, the commander of the Lebanese Naval forces, stated, "The owner of the boat attempted to maneuver to escape from the army, which warned the boat to stop. The boat collided with the army boat, causing the sinking. The boat was old, manufactured in 1974, and was only meant to carry 10 people... The presence of the army contributed to the rescue of all these people."

However, survivors from the boat claimed that the army patrol intentionally sank the boat by colliding with it twice, creating a gap that allowed water to leak inside, leading to the sinking.

How Did Lebanese Media Cover the Incident?

8- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbctXj2mjLg>
9- <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/justice-law/537134/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A5%D9%86%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B0-48-%D8%B4%D8%AE%D8%B5%D8%A7-%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A8-%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%B3>

Media coverage of the incident took various formats, including news reports, detailed investigations, and live broadcasts. The incident received substantial coverage due to its tragic nature. The coverage varied depending on the media outlet and the source they relied upon. Some relied on official sources and the army's statements, while others sought information from survivors of the boat.

Media coverage details:

- **Tele Liban:** Aired several reports and live coverage of the latest events, including statements from the naval commander. Covered search operations, victims' funerals, and government procedures. Also presented a report based on special information, including documents stating that the boat was old, dating back to 1974, making it susceptible to sinking. It is worth noting that Tele Liban did not broadcast survivors' accounts or accusations against the army.
- **OTV:** Aired multiple reports on the developments of the boat sinking, the military commander's press conference, search operations, human trafficking networks, and government sessions related to the incident. The reports did not accuse the army.
- **Al-Manar:** Broadcasted several reports on the boat sinking, the military commander's press conference, official reactions, funerals, and governmental discussions. Al-Manar did not accuse the army in the reports.
- **Al-Jadeed:** Aired multiple reports on the incident, provided live coverage from the scene, and conveyed both narratives: the official security version and the survivors' account. The channel also gave space for survivors to explain what happened and express their views. Al-Jadeed criticized the military directly, with speakers accusing them of deliberately sinking the boat. One survivor recounted an army member saying, "I want to bury you, come swim, you dogs."
- **Nidaa Al-Watan Newspaper:** Front-page headline: "The Army Sinks the 'Auction Boat'." Wrote, "...Only the army commander, Joseph Aoun, was up to the challenge and responsibility, putting 'all officers and military personnel at the disposal of the investigation.' He attended the Cabinet session armed with evidence, documents, and photos that refute the Lebanese Navy's accusations of deliberately sinking the boat. In contrast, the 'Auction Boat', aiming to incite discord between the army and the people of Tripoli, ultimately sank, clearly indicating that all these accusations were aimed at 'covering up the smugglers...'"¹⁰

10- <https://www.nidaalwatan.com/pdf/1981>

This newspaper considered the accusations against the army as mere provocations and rejected all claims against them.

- Al-Akhbar Newspaper: Presented both perspectives, published an article about the incident and the official accounts. It also published an article that details the survivors' accounts, including doubts about the army's narrative. Some of the terms and sentences quoted by the newspaper from the survivors: "The yacht passed us twice... The yacht broke in front of us, causing us to sink... and he kept telling us, 'I want to bury you.'"

The newspaper reported that the military commander spoke about a dilapidated boat dating back to 1974 and an excessive load. However, at the same time, he did not explain how a dilapidated boat could execute a maneuver to collide with the fast military patrol boat, which raises doubts about the army's official narrative.

The article adds, "The colonel showed photos of two hits on the military patrol boat, but he did not present photos and videos that are supposed to be available to reveal what happened."

Nowadays, even the smallest grocery store has surveillance cameras. Is it reasonable to assume that the military patrol boat is not equipped with a camera?"

Here, the newspaper not only shares the survivors' narrative but also casts doubt on the army's account

- Annahar Newspaper: "Some of the developments witnessed in Tripoli, where a tragedy unfolded involving some of its sons and dozens of Syrian migrants, who have not yet been identified, on the 'Death Boat,' raised serious concerns about the spread of excitement and mobilization against the army, alleging that it bears responsibility for the boat's sinking. Although the army quickly revealed the details of the disaster, which prove the direct responsibility of the boat's captain for colliding with the army vessel..."¹¹

Despite Annahar's front-page headline on April 27th regarding the boat being "The Facts of the Death Journey Draw Attention on the Refugee Issue," the newspaper did not level any accusations against the military establishment but rather defended it. For instance, it reported on the proceedings of the Cabinet meeting attended by the army commander, the director of intelligence, and the naval forces commander, stating they provided a detailed presentation of the events involving the boat, backed by documents and photographs. It also conveyed statements from the President and the Prime Minister in support of the army, emphasizing their commitment to combating human trafficking.

¹¹- Tuesday, April 26, 2022

- Al-Liwaa: The incident was presented, and several reports were published on the matter, but, despite mentioning that there are multiple accounts, the majority of its coverage leaned towards the army and the official narrative. There was no space for presenting the survivors' accounts except in passing. The headline on the first page read: "The Tragedy of Tripoli: Security Leaders Face the Cabinet to Determine Responsibilities." In the detailed news on the fourth page, it was titled: "Tripoli Bids Farewell to Two Victims of the 'Death Boat.' The Army: 'It's Not Our Fault.'"¹² The newspaper provided the official follow-up of the case.

Al-Liwaa quoted the Minister of Information, who announced that the Army Commander had placed himself, along with the army's leadership and the military personnel, at the disposal of the judiciary. It also quoted the Acting Prime Minister's statement: "From my position, I refuse to make premature accusations before completing the investigation. I emphasize the need for the investigations to be comprehensive, from the moment the boat set off until what happened at sea..."

Furthermore, Al-liwaa featured a report with the title: "Families of the Missing Boat Victims Escalate: We Want to Meet the Army Commander." The report narrated the movement of the families, their tragedy, and the suffering due to the loss of their loved ones. It stated, "They blocked the roads leading to the port of Tripoli and staged a sit-in at the gate, demanding the retrieval of the boat and the bodies. They later threatened to move to the homes of politicians in Tripoli. Abu Timur Dandashi delivered a speech on behalf of the families, affirming that they have no problem with the army. Its members are our brothers and sons, and they suffer the same economic hardship we do, and what they receive is not sufficient. Our problem is with this ruling political class that has robbed the country, impoverished the people, and brought us to this great collapse, which forced our people to take risks with their lives and families to escape this difficult situation..."

Despite all these details, the newspaper avoided directly accusing the army and addressed the tragedy without delving into its causes.

12- <https://aliwaa.com.lb/paper-copy/50/414753/> <https://www.annahar.com/pdf/download?id=601>

Alternative media:

- Megaphone reported the incident as follows: The army leadership acquitted itself, saying the boat sank during an illegal smuggling attempt (...) after it flooded due to high waves and passenger overloading.” However, the accounts of the survivors contradict this narrative. One of them stated that the army vessel collided with their boat twice: “The yacht hit us to make us sink, and he kept saying: I want to bury you.” Others confirmed that the army boat deliberately collided with the migrant boat. This narrative has led to tensions between the army and residents of some neighborhoods in the city.

Megaphone provided reports on the incident and conveyed the accounts of the survivors. There was criticism of the army and skepticism about its narrative. The report was titled: "The Army is floundering in its narratives about the Migrant Boat that sank." "The army leadership acquitted itself, saying a leak caused the boat to sink." A comment under the video read: 'We drown you for your own good'...¹³

This is a report that not only questions the army's narrative but accuses and ridicules it. It also mocked the government's measures regarding the incident: "Today, the government summoned the army commander and the navy commander in the case of sinking the irregular migrant boat in Tripoli, concluding with assigning the army to investigate itself in the incident. This happens while the army is stumbling in presenting a coherent account of what happened, but its defense so far can be summarized as working according to the rule: 'We drown you for your own good.'

Megaphone presented a video showing the statements of the military commander and direct responses from survivors of the boat, casting doubt on the military's narrative. One of them stated, 'They stayed 200 meters away, they didn't come close to rescue us: Shame on you, you dog.' The witness refuted the army's narrative, saying, '(They said) the boat was loaded 15 times more, and because of the excess load, if it couldn't carry us, we wouldn't have reached the territorial waters.'

¹³- <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ccux31NvrwZ/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riNI33jodkl>

- Daraj:

The website allowed room for narratives from those who survived the drowning, launching a sharp attack on the army. It stated that the army intentionally drowned the boat.¹⁴ There was a first report titled 'In the House of the Man Who Lost His Sons in the Death Boat,' narrating that he intended to secure a new life for his children, different from what he experienced in Lebanon, enduring all the woes and injustices. He recounted what happened to him in the open sea, pointing to the deliberate action of the Lebanese officer who intercepted their boat, drowning them by colliding with the boat, which was about to leave Lebanese territorial waters. The man added that the officer showered the passengers with insults and struck them twice, leading to the boat sinking within moments."

In an article authored by Jihad Bazzi, the website took a direct accusatory stance against the army under the title: "Tripoli's Death Boat: The Army Floating Above a Sea of Corpses." It stated: "Before retrieving each drowning victim from the sea, the Lebanese army fulfilled its duty completely. It mourned the 'martyrs,' congratulated the survivors, delivered a sermon about the dangers of smuggling and smugglers, investigated the catastrophe, and concluded that the victims caused their own deaths."

"Colonel Haitham Dinaoui, the naval forces commander, found 25 minutes sufficient to hold the migrants accountable for their drowning. He argued that the boat was small, old, and overloaded beyond its capacity. The smugglers' boat captain maneuvered the naval patrol pursuing them, intentionally colliding with it to frighten them, leading to the boat sinking, including everyone on board, in less than five seconds. The colonel didn't forget to remind the surviving passengers that the patrol saved them; without it, the sea would have devoured them all later."

"The assigned officer spoke in the stern tone of the military establishment. It is likely he repeated exactly what his superiors instructed him to say while reciting pitiful supplications like 'God willing, this won't happen again,' and 'May God protect us'... and other expressions that we, the helpless spectators of dead children's wide-open eyes and mouths, repeat. Prayer is not the army's duty. Let them leave us the supplication to heaven and let them fulfill their sole duty after this tragedy, likely caused by them, which is not to trivialize the drowned, both survivors and deceased, their families, and the Lebanese people. Justifying a pursued boat's sinking isn't achieved with a few colorful photos presented by an officer in front of journalists or with baseless assumptions about the inevitability of the boat sinking."

14- <https://daraj.media/89885/> <https://daraj.media/89883/>

"As for the military 'establishment' rushing into this farcical display in response to what the survivors themselves accused it of, in that lies much resemblance to Lebanese politicians' ways. Accusing the deceased of their own murder and shifting the blame onto them. The Lebanese politicians' methods were applied to perfection, investigating themselves by themselves, and declaring their innocence even from technical errors. Neither their leader, the supreme commander of the armed forces and the president, nor their chief volunteered to announce that the boat's sinking requires an investigation carried out by an independent body, starting with questioning the patrol commander and ending with questioning the army commander..."

Conclusion on the coverage of the boat drowning incident:

Media outlets were divided on this issue. Some, such as television channels and newspapers like Tele Liban, OTV, Al-Manar, Annahar, Al-Liwaa, and Nidaa Al-Watan, focused on the army's narrative, the search for survivors, government procedures, and reasons for migration. They presented the incident from the military establishment's perspective and did not allow room for the victims' narrative.

On the other hand, despite conveying the army's version and its press conference, other channels and outlets provided space for the survivors' accounts, such as Al-Jadeed channel, which interviewed many survivors, and the Al-Akhbar newspaper, which conveyed their accounts, questioning the army, and its narrative.

Regarding alternative media, their coverage was critical. They published testimonies from survivors and used explicit accusatory language (Daraj and Megaphone).

It can be concluded that there are three categories of coverage of the boat sinking:

1. The first category conveyed the army's version and exclusively focused on it, defending the military's account.
2. The second category reported both versions, presenting the army's narrative alongside the survivors' accounts.
3. The third category reported both versions and criticized the official narrative, calling for accountability and scrutiny.

It is evident from monitoring this case that media coverage varies depending on the outlet, its editorial policies, and its stance towards the military institution and security forces. Alternatively, these differences might be a result of political and security evaluations that each media outlet makes. Some media organizations consider that the truth must be told regardless of the consequences, while others may believe that revealing the truth can harm national security and the military institution.

It also became apparent that alternative media was more stringent in defending humanitarian principles and directly accusing security forces compared to other traditional media outlets.

Case Study 2: Death of Syrian detainee after torture

Topic: Media Coverage of the Death of Syrian Refugee Bashar Abdul-Saud Under Torture During Interrogation by Lebanese State Security Forces, at the End of August 2022.

The detainee, Bashar Abdul-Saud, a Syrian refugee, suffered a heart attack (according to the forensic report) during his interrogation at one of the Lebanese State Security investigation centers on September 3, 2022, leading to his death, amid widespread information about his brutal torture at his place of detention.

Suspicious surrounding the victim, Bashar Abdul-Saud, varied, including allegations of currency forgery and affiliation with a "terrorist" organization. Especially since the General Directorate of State Security circulated news to the media about the arrest of a cell affiliated with ISIS and the interrogation of its members.

However, the fact that he was tortured by the State Security personnel, especially after images showing severe torture marks on his body were circulated on social media, sparked condemnatory and disapproving reactions. Accusations were made against the State Security apparatus regarding their involvement in this incident.

How did the Lebanese media cover this incident? Did they investigate the victim's torture and pursue the case to reveal the truth and make it accessible to the public and those concerned with the issue?

LBC, in its bulletin dated September 3, presented a neutral report on the incident. It included the decision of the government commissioner to the military court, Judge Fadi Akiki, to arrest an officer and a number of State Security personnel who were involved in interrogating the victim on charges of belonging to a terrorist network. The report also featured a statement from the advisor to the General Director of State Security, confirming that the investigations would reveal the circumstances of the incident. He emphasized that the General Directorate of State Security does not tolerate any misconduct by any officer or personnel in any mission. He also added that the institution does not cover up for anyone and is always committed to human rights and opposes violence.

Al Jadeed TV reported in its evening news bulletin on September 4 under the title "Videos Expose State Security Torturing the Syrian Prisoner in the Serail of Tebnine," presenting the facts with an accusatory tone against the State Security apparatus, using phrases such as:

- The ugliest crimes are those committed by security forces wearing official uniforms in the name of the state and the law.
- State Security attempted to mitigate the impact of the crime by issuing a statement confirming the incident but claiming that the detainee confessed to belonging to ISIS.
- State Security leadership attempted to distance itself from torturing the detainee, but the forensic report proved otherwise.
- Torturing the detainee to death, a scandal, brutal torture of the detainee, boasting about the charge and considering it self-defense, a leaked weak scenario.

The report included a statement from journalist Radwan Mortada, who was the first to publish an investigation into the incident on his Twitter account. He harshly accused the security agency of being unproductive and looking for achievements: "They went ahead and arrested him claiming they stopped a cell from ISIS that was preparing for bombings." He also discussed updates on this case.

An audio recording was played of the Deputy Director General of State Security, Brigadier General Hassan Choucair, saying that the agency was in a position of self-defense against the detainee who attacked the investigator. He pointed out that the forensic report and criminal evidence confirmed that the detainee died due to a heart attack. The channel also reported contact with the prisoner's family, who denied their son's association with ISIS and stated that they were preparing a legal complaint.

The report also included videos showing the effects of torture.

However, OTV, Tele Liban, and Al-Manar did not mention this incident in their evening news bulletins.

How did the newspapers cover this event?

- Al-Akhbar newspaper, in its issue dated Monday, September 5, 2022, published an article on its front page by journalist Radwan Mortada, titled "Scandal: Torture of Detainee to Death by State Security: Forgeries... and Suspicions About the Forensic Report." In it, he accused the State Security leadership of not living up to its responsibility in dealing with a crime committed by personnel and officers in the apparatus who tortured the Syrian detainee Bashar Abdul-Saud to death. He accused them of continuing to cover up a heinous crime against an isolated detainee. He stated that they issued a pre-trial judgment on a detainee killed by its members, accusing him of belonging to a terrorist organization as if that justified his brutal torture.

Journalist Mortada used accusatory tones against the State Security leadership, directing his accusations through phrases such as "The State Security leadership was not up to the responsibility, scandal, heinous crime, cover-up of the crime, forgeries, the brutality suffered by the detainee, the scandal the agency is trying to control."

This article was also published on the newspaper's website, followed by a report on a statement issued by the State Security apparatus regarding the incident, titled, "State Security: We Will Punish Those Proven Involved in Bashar Abdul-Saud's Torture." The newspaper presented what was stated in the statement issued by the General Directorate of State Security, indicating that they will take "maximum penalties against anyone found violating the clear instructions of the Directorate, especially regarding human rights, opposition to violence, and torture." It accused some media outlets of defaming it and claimed that the detainee confessed to belonging to the terrorist organization ISIS. It urged the media outlets "not to broadcast news related to it, aiming to incite strife and trigger emotional reactions, especially in these delicate circumstances Lebanon is going through."

In the second part of the report, the newspaper reminded readers of the "State Security statement" about what was revealed in the report published by journalist Radwan Mortada regarding doubts about the forensic report, shifting responsibilities, and confusion within the State Security apparatus. It noted the continued absence of the Director-General of State Security from the directorate, remaining in Larnaca on his vacation without returning to follow up on the case.

It is evident that Al-Akhbar newspaper did not retract its accusation against the State Security apparatus as the cause of the detainee's death, despite publishing the statement from State Security, which accused some media outlets of slandering the agency and tarnishing its image. Here, it allows room for the security agency to provide its own narrative of the incident, but it insists on holding it responsible for the detainee's death.

- **Annahar Newspaper:**

Annahar newspaper, in its issue dated September 5, 2022 (p. 4 - Local News), published a news report under the title "Death of Syrian Detainee Under Torture: Reactions... Where is Law 65?" It included the statement issued by the "National Human Rights Commission" and a statement by the chairman of the Human Rights Commission condemning this heinous crime against humanity. The report also included the findings of the investigations and the arrests made following the incident. The report was accompanied by a photo showing signs of torture.

- **Al-Liwaa Newspaper:**

Al-Liwaa newspaper, in its issue dated September 5, 2022 (p. 4 - Local News), published a news report under the title "Wide Condemnation Wave for the Death of Syrian Detainee at State Security." It clarified the circumstances of the incident and the course of the investigations. It presented a series of condemnatory stances regarding what they considered the murder of the Syrian detainee, even if there were suspicions of terrorism around him. This context involved accusations against the State Security apparatus. Deputy Ibrahim Mneimneh described it as an apparatus "that has proven its failure, tyranny, and aggression." Deputy Ihab Matar expressed the necessity of "conducting an ethical cleansing operation for all security behaviors." Deputy Marc Daou described the crime as "brutal" and revealed the state's breakdown, lack of supervision, disrespect for laws, and blatant violation of international human rights standards. The report was accompanied by a photo showing signs of torture.

- Nidaa Al-Watan Newspaper:

Nidaa Al-Watan newspaper, in its issue dated September 5, 2022 (p. 5 - Local News), published a news report under the title "The Death Certificate of the Syrian Detainee: State Security Refers the Case to the Judiciary."

This report, according to a private source following the matter for Nidaa Al-Watan, included a narrative of the incident and observations about it, adopting a skeptical tone. In its issue dated September 6, 2022, Nidaa Al-Watan newspaper published a statement from the General Directorate of State Security under the title "General Directorate of State Security Affirms its Unified Decision," where the Directorate emphasized its unity of decision, highlighting its security and national capabilities. The Directorate called on the media not to broadcast accusations and news aiming to incite strife.

In newspaper coverages, there was a range of stances, starting from Al-Akhbar, which directly accused the security apparatus, to Annahar, which reported the incident and the accusations against the security apparatus without taking specific positions, then Al-Liwaa, which quoted statements from deputies and figures directly accusing the apparatus of responsibility for the detainee's death, and finally, Nidaa Al-Watan, which relied on a source close to the security apparatus, casting doubt on the accusations against this apparatus.

How did alternative media cover the event?

- Naqd:

Naqd criticized the news of the detainee's killing under the title "Detainee Killed after Torture by the Orange Apparatus," considering it not the first event of its kind, part of a series of torture crimes committed against detainees in various Lebanese security agencies. The website harshly accused Lebanon's security sector, stating, "Similar crimes have happened against Syrians and Lebanese in various agencies, including Army Intelligence, General Security, and State Security. There are multiple reports from international organizations condemning the torture practiced by Lebanese agencies against their detainees."

- Daraj:

Daraj published an article by journalist Pascal Souma on September 6, 2022, titled "Bashar Abdul-Saud's Brother: They Arrested Him in His Undershirt and Killed Him... Will the Family Sue the Lebanese State Security Apparatus?" She discussed the incident, accusing State Security of causing his death and attempting to justify the crime. The article also cited a medical report from Tannourine Governmental Hospital indicating that the deceased's body had been in the hospital since August 31, 2022, suggesting that the torture incident occurred before that. Additionally, Daraj referred to a previous report by Amnesty International documenting horrifying violations committed by Lebanese security forces against detained Syrian refugees, often arbitrarily, on charges related to terrorism, using the same gruesome torture methods employed in Syria's worst-reputed prisons.

In a piece published on September 8, 2022, titled "While Lebanese State Security Asked Him, 'Who is Your God, Bashar?'... And Killed Him!" Lebanese journalist Bassel Al-Amin accused the State Security apparatus of wanting Bashar Abdul-Saud to confess to things he hadn't done, considering his Syrian nationality as the real reason that led them to kill him (accusing State Security of racism). He also accused State Security of trying to claim imaginary achievements at the expense of innocent detainees. The article was based on the testimony of a former detainee at State Security, accused of collaboration, Ziad Itani.

On September 5, 2022, Megaphone published a news article titled "State Security Crimes: A Torture, Fabrication, and Sabotage Apparatus," describing the scandal involving this agency and highlighting the increasing transgressions and crimes committed by the agency in recent years. This news was accompanied by a series of photos depicting various cases where State Security was accused, such as the cases of Ziad Itani and Issac Dgheim.

Alternative media platforms also appear to be more rigorous in holding authorities accountable compared to traditional media. They have increased their accusations against security agencies, recalling similar cases.

Months after the incident, and following the developments closely, Daraj published a detailed report by journalist Pascal Saouma on December 8, 2022, titled "After the Publication of the Report on Torture in Lebanese Prisons: Judicial Decision Clears a Syrian Inmate and Acknowledges Torture of Detainees." The report discussed the latest developments in the case, specifically highlighting the decision of Military Judge Najat Abu Shaqra, who refuted the fabricated narratives surrounding the case and confirmed State Security's involvement, according to the article. This judicial decision was seen as a culmination of the work of human rights and media organizations, which considered the case of Bashar Abdul-Saud and torture in Lebanese prisons a matter of utmost importance.

However, on April 20, 2023, under the title "State Security 'Rewards' Accused in Detainee's Murder," Al-Akhbar newspaper published a report stating:

"State Security rewarded the officer involved, along with other individuals, in torturing a Syrian detainee to death at a detention center in Tannourine in September 2022, by appointing him as the head of State Security Bureau in Nabatieh. The agency, which tried to cover up the crime at the time of its occurrence by falsely claiming that the detainee died of a heart attack, did not wait for the military court's verdict regarding the officer, who was released pending investigation against a financial bail of 300 million Lebanese pounds. Additionally, the directorate allowed the rest of the released individuals, who were granted bail of 100 million Lebanese pounds, to return to service, leaving only one suspect, the assistant, Youssef B., detained."

"The investigations revealed that the latter had tortured the Syrian detainee Bashar Abdul-Saud, who was handcuffed, brutally leading to his death, with the responsible officer and bureau members present, without anyone intervening to stop him. After the detainee's death, the officer attempted to cover up the crime by informing his superiors that Abdul-Saud was under the influence of drugs, causing his heart to stop. The officer also tried, in collusion with the forensic doctor, to suggest that the death was natural. Despite the heinousness of the committed crime, the directorate's leadership acted with unprecedented leniency. The officer was rewarded for the scandal by justifying the crime, claiming that the detainee confessed to being affiliated with 'ISIS.' The directorate, by reassigning the officer and the members, seems to encourage its officers and members to violate the law, rewarding a perpetrator instead of suspending him from work, freezing him, or rehabilitating him".

This incident's media coverage showcased the different editorial policies of various media outlets regarding sensitive security issues. On television channels, Al-Jadeed had an accusatory tone against the security apparatus, while LBC channel focused on the apparatus addressing the issue and military justice taking hold of the case, assuring that the wrongdoer will be held accountable. Other channels did not mention this issue in their evening broadcasts.

In print journalism, the accusatory tone was evident in Annahar and Al-Liwaa newspapers, which accused the apparatus, albeit on their inner pages (page 4). Meanwhile, Nidaa Al-Watan newspaper featured the incident on its fifth page, casting doubt on the accusations against the security apparatus and placing the issue in the hands of the judiciary.

Alternative media platforms went further in their criticism of the security apparatus, addressing the practices of these agencies in general. Naqd stated that: "This is not the first event of its kind in a series of torture crimes suffered by detainees in various Lebanese security agencies." Daraj delved into the details of the arrest, strengthening the accusation: "They arrested him in his undershirt and killed him." It also accused the security apparatus of attempting to justify the crime, expanding its criticism to include: "Lebanese security forces use the same horrifying torture methods practiced in Syria's worst prisons."

Megaphone also went beyond accusing the agency of the crime, describing the security apparatus as a "torture, fabrication, and sabotage apparatus."

Case Study 3: Police officer assaults Syrian minor

Megaphone reported an incident of assault on a minor of Syrian nationality. The incident is narrated as follows:¹⁵ "Chayath Al-Basha (15 years old), a Syrian refugee, was brutally beaten by a municipal police officer in Bezbina, in the Akkar region named Daniel Shahda, simply because the latter suspected the minor of stealing a wallet. Later, it became clear that Al-Basha had no connection to the incident, and he filed a complaint with the Beino Municipality."

15- - #ChayathAlBacha #Akkar #SyrianReugee #Racism #Lebanon
غياث الباشا #عكار #اللاجئين السوريين #عنصرية #لبنان

"It was revealed that Shahda kidnapped Al-Basha from his workplace at a local café on Sunday and took him to a remote area where he beat him, threatened him with death, and fired shots near him, according to the statement provided by the minor. Shahda also forcibly extracted a confession from Al-Basha, which he recorded on video. Bezbina Municipality covered up Shahda's actions and his resort to mafia-like practices, stating in a released statement that the 'incident is personal' and not related to his duties as a municipal policeman. No action was taken to investigate or suspend him from duty. Suspicion also surrounds Al-Basha, with his family denying any involvement in theft, despite his criminal record. Meanwhile, tensions against Syrians in the town have risen, as refugees are perceived to be asserting their rights at the expense of Lebanese citizens, a recurring racist scene in Lebanon."

Case Study 4: Summoning activists for investigation

Al-Jadeed channel reported the summoning of 5 activists for questioning regarding the events at the Palace of Justice on the 10th of February. They were accused of assaulting security forces during a demonstration supporting the investigation process of Judge Bitar. Al-Jadeed channel conveyed the testimony of the activists: "I have evidence that they were the ones who attacked us, not the other way around. If they had an ounce of honor and dignity, we shouldn't be here... they should summon the wanted individuals for questioning first" (referring to those accused of the Beirut Port explosion). Demonstrators supporting the activists were shown on camera, with one of them saying: "Some people are consistently treated unfairly. This is arbitrary summoning. If the intention is to silence and turn back the clock to a police state by taking revenge on specific people expressing the opinion of the revolution, we are watching..."¹⁶

Al-Jadeed channel distinguished itself by covering the news, which appeared unimportant at first glance, as it was about a summons for questioning that other media outlets didn't prioritize. However, the channel framed it as a violation of laws and encroachment on public freedoms, contrary to the principles of the democratic system and what the constitution stipulates.

16- Al-Jadeed TV, February 22, 2023, Evening News.

Case Study 5:

Assault on visitors of protesting MPs

Context: Parliamentary Police Practices

After the 11th session of the Parliament to elect a President, MPs Melhem Khalaf and Najat Saliba decided to stage a peaceful sit-in inside the Parliament's General Assembly to pressure the election of a president. Khalaf stated: "We decided, and my colleague Najat Saliba, to stage this sit-in to break the deadlock. Other MPs joined us, and we are waiting for the rest of the MPs. This step is not symbolic; its goal is to push towards electing a president, a duty of every MP."¹⁷

Al-Jadeed TV reported¹⁸ in a news report about the MPs that lawyer Shakri Haddad, one of the lawyers of the victims of the Port explosion, was assaulted in Martyrs' Square during his visit to them. They issued a statement affirming that the blatant assault is a direct targeting of them. The General Secretariat of the Parliament did not issue any statement, but its sources mentioned that the reason was not recording the name before entering Martyrs' Square. Lawyer Haddad stated: "He hit me, and friends intervened to stop the situation (...) The person who attacked me was not in military uniform, and later they said he is a colonel, but he shouldn't have addressed me like that (...) The place is a public road, and no citizen should be targeted, not just a lawyer."

Al-Jadeed TV also reported that the former minister Yousif Salameh had a similar encounter, which was limited to verbal insults, as confirmed by Khalaf and Saliba's statement. Salameh was quoted as saying: 'Is the security group that is part of the parliamentary police an independent militia? This is wrong behavior... There should not be such a security breach in the vicinity of the House of Representatives in this manner.' The channel concluded: 'It was a deliberate provocation and tension, according to the two deputies, and it will not deter them from their sit-in until a president is elected.'¹⁹

17-<https://www.almarkazia.com/ar/news/show/453319/%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%81-%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B5%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A2%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%B6%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86>

18- Al-Jadeed TV, February 22, 2023.

19- In this case, "When security sector actors neglect the rule of law, this can lead to corruption, abuse of authority and the violation of rights. At the same time, it also means the security sector has an obligation to refuse illegal orders in cases where governments might seek to intimidate, harass and even kill those who are viewed as opposition."

Chappuis, F. (2020). DCAF. Toolkit: Security Sector Reporting, Media, Journalism, and Security Sector Reform (p. 5). Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. <https://www.dcaf.ch/toolkit-security-sector-reporting-media-journalism-and-security-sector-reform>

Case Study 6:

Persecution of the LGBTQ+ community by security forces

Megaphone reported the targeting of the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon, citing Human Rights Watch.²⁰ The website stated that the international organization published a report documenting the use of social media and dating apps by security forces to lure, blackmail, arrest, and fabricate charges against members of the LGBTQ+ community in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia.

The report was based on interviews with ninety individuals who were digitally targeted by security forces and ordinary individuals in these countries to gather or fabricate digital information against them. According to the victims of the targeting, security forces downloaded the Grindr app on the phones of detained individuals to accuse them of homosexuality, prostitution, and debauchery.

The report documented twenty cases of targeting individuals from the LGBTQ+ community, where security forces created fake accounts impersonating LGBTQ+ individuals on Facebook and Grindr to expose and arrest them. According to testimonies, transgender women are subject to arbitrary arrests based on their appearance, and they are detained in men's prisons where they are subjected to sexual, verbal, and physical abuse.

Human Rights Watch held security forces and ambiguous laws accountable for these violations, emphasizing the need for Facebook, Instagram, and Grindr to take necessary measures to protect users and manage content, especially regarding cases of publicly exposing members from the LGBTQ+ community on social media.

Daraj reported on this issue: "The targeting of the LGBTQ+ community online is due to their unstable legal status, given the absence of protection under the laws or safety standards on digital platforms." The platform quoted from Human Rights Watch's report: "According to the organization, security forces targeted individuals from the LGBTQ+ community through social media and dating apps, blackmailing and harassing them online, relying on illegally obtained images, chats, and information in judicial pursuits. This constitutes a violation of the right to privacy and other human rights."²¹

The targeting of the LGBTQ+ community did not attract the attention of traditional local media despite Arab and international organizations covering the investigation. However, alternative media outlets seem more attached to social groups, minorities, and human rights issues.

20- <https://www.instagram.com/p/Co7OxG-qsj5/?igshid=ZjE2NGZiNDQ%3D>
<https://www.instagram.com/p/ComXMe2o1SV/?igshid=ZjE2NGZiNDQ%3D>

21- Daraj, 22 February.

Case Study 7: State security raid on the home of Ali Nimr's family

The Al-Jadeed TV channel reported on a video documentary about the raids conducted by the State Security agency in the Chyah area, targeting relatives of Ali Nimr Al-Khalil, the money changer who is currently detained by the Information Branch. The report stated that the State Security agency raided the shops of Ali Nimr Al-Khalil and the homes of his relatives by force and without permission. The report included testimony from one of the money changer's relatives, who narrated that the raid took place at one in the morning by the State Security agency, despite the Information Branch having visited and inspected the house previously. The citizen questioned: "Why does the State Security agency conduct raids at one in the morning? Are we dealing with a terrorism case or a financial matter?"

The Al-Jadeed TV report described the violations, including the unauthorized opening of two safes without witnesses or the presence of their owners, which contradicts the laws. The report showed video footage of the aftermath of the raid and the destruction in the house. The channel mentioned that they questioned the State Security agency about the legality of these raids, and the response was that the procedures were legal and were carried out under the authorization of the public prosecutor, and with the presence of the local mayor.

However, the channel reported that they found out that "there was no authorization from the public prosecutor for the raid, and the mayor who was present was the mayor of another district," indicating that the raid was illegal. They concluded that the raid turned into a violation of the laws governing house searches and an overstep of authority.²²

The Al-Jadeed TV channel stood out by presenting a report on the raid, focusing on the violation of the laws by the security agency and accusing them of providing false information.

22- ["Fake Raids" by Dollar Security Targeting Relatives of Ali Nimr al-Khalil... What's the Story? - YouTube](#)

Case Study 8: Corruption in security agencies

The Al-Jadeed TV channel included excerpts in their news from their program titled "Bring down the corrupt rule," conducted by the investigative unit of the channel, discussing the violations of security agencies regarding the law protecting individuals. It mentioned that dozens of individuals, including judges, ministers, politicians, and individuals without any official status, are provided with security protections and vehicles by the State Security agency, contrary to the law. Among these individuals is the former minister Salim Jreissati, who justified his situation by stating that the General Security agency provided him with an armored vehicle "when he felt threatened."

The channel's report stated: "The State Security agency responded to these accusations by claiming that this distribution is legal, although it was later revealed in official documents that 151 individuals were distributed contrary to the law. The Prime Minister took action and sent a memorandum to the Supreme Defense Council, requesting a genuine study and the cessation of violations. He also sent a letter to the Minister of Interior Affairs, urging the Internal Security Forces and General Security to withdraw the personnel responsible for protecting individuals in violation of the law. Similar letters were sent to the State Security agency, demanding the same. The emphasis is on implementation and security agencies should not ignore the letter of Mikati."²³

The channel points out that "the emphasis is on implementation" , hinting that security agencies tend to ignore decisions made by the political authority instead of being under its control.

Case Study 9: Minor girl trafficking

A statement from the Internal Security Forces on their official website reported that they thwarted the sale of a minor girl by her mother and stepfather to engage her in prostitution. The statement mentioned that the Anti-Human Trafficking Office set up a "carefully planned trap" through which they successfully foiled the operation and arrested the network in the act.²⁴ The involved individuals include the mother of Syrian nationality, her Lebanese stepfather, and a middleman of Lebanese nationality, while the girl's father is of Palestinian nationality. The minor girl does not have any identification documents and claims, according to her statements, to be born in 2006 and of Palestinian nationality. The report noted that the interrogation of the minor was conducted in the presence of a representative from the Child Protection Association in Lebanon.

23- Al-Jadeed TV, February 28, 2023, Evening News.

24- Internal Security Forces - Official Website. Foiling an operation to sell a minor girl by her mother and her husband to work in the field of prostitution, the Human Trafficking and Moral Protection Bureau arrests those involved in the operation with the support of the Special Forces.

In addition to publishing the news, the security forces distributed a video (including on Twitter) documenting the arrest of the group during the "sale" operation. The video shows individuals with concealed faces receiving a sum of money, after which the security forces intervene in the background with the voice saying, "Nobody move," and proceed to arrest the individuals.

This incident was covered by two television channels: LBCI and Al-Jadeed, as well as reported in the newspapers Al-Joumhouria and L'Orient- Le Jour. Other monitored media outlets did not cover it.

How did the media report the incident?

The LBCI channel reported the news based on the statement from the Internal Security Forces and shared the same video without any additional commentary. They mentioned that the girl is 14 years old, and the video's duration was 50 seconds.

Al-Jadeed channel also reported the news, along with the video, containing only what was mentioned in the Internal Security Forces' statement. The video on Al-Jadeed was 153 seconds long, and they noted, "The girl, according to her testimony, was born in 2006 and is of Palestinian nationality, with a Syrian mother."

Al-Joumhouria newspaper simply relayed the Internal Security Forces' statement without any additional comments.

L'Orient Le Jour newspaper reported the news based on the statement from the security forces, but it included an additional detail not mentioned by other media outlets. They mentioned that an investigation was conducted with the girl in the presence of a representative from the Child Protection Association in Lebanon, as stated in the official statement from the security forces. The newspaper attempted to expand on the story by contacting the mentioned association, but the representative stated that she couldn't provide additional information due to "the girl having a judicial file." The newspaper also mentioned that they tried to contact the police regarding the matter but were unable to reach them.

No additional information was provided in the media beyond the official statement, and the incident did not receive further attention from any of the media outlets that aired the video. Only L'Orient Le Jour attempted to dig deeper into the story but did not receive substantial answers.

Case Study 10: Attack on Al-Jadeed TV channel

Al-Jadeed TV channel stated in a news report²⁵ that the Information Branch arrested the attackers of the channel after more than two months since the attack. The report stated: "After more than two months since the attack, the perpetrators were identified as Ali Haydar Assaf and Mahdi Ali Aqeel, both affiliated with the Amal movement. They admitted to firing shots... but beyond the accused individuals, what about their political cover? How will 'Amal' justify this attack, which might potentially be granted legislative status tomorrow by Nabih Berri? Al-Jadeed, while following this case with Beirut's investigation and the judiciary, questions roles higher than just two individuals, as Assaf and Aqeel seem to be acting with calculated minds."

Annahar newspaper reported what Al-Jadeed stated and also quoted a statement issued by the Central Media Office of the Amal movement, responding to Al-Jadeed's report, stating that "the movement has no connection with the shooting at this channel. The Amal movement also affirms its 'respect for legal frameworks'."

From the case, it becomes evident that the persistence in pursuing the matter led the security forces to arrest the suspects. Additionally, the media condemnation prompted the Amal movement to issue a clarifying statement, disassociating itself from the detainees.

25- Al Jadeed TV, February 26, 2023, Evening News.

Annex B: Field Interviews

1. Journalists' group:

The focus group comprised 8 journalists, including 5 women and 3 men, working in various media organizations: television, radio, print newspapers, online newspapers, websites, news agencies, and freelance journalists. The questions revolved around the challenges faced by journalists while covering security-related issues. However, some questions did not yield clear or decisive results. For instance, the question of whether there should be a specialized journalist in the media organization focusing on security matters elicited varied and inconclusive answers. Similarly, when asked about the number of journalists specialized in security issues, it was challenging to answer due to the group members' lack of knowledge in this area. One participant believed that specialization in security matters was unnecessary.

Considering the length of the discussion in the focus group, efforts were made to highlight answers allowing useful conclusions for the study.

- **Is it easy to access security information or news related to security institutions?**

Journalists agreed on 3 points: communication with security institutions has become less difficult, these institutions provide journalists only with information that suits them, and the journalist's personal relationship with their security sources is crucial for obtaining information, along with their personal experience.

The ease of a journalist's access to security information varies based on several factors:

1. The way each security institution's media and public relations department interacts with journalists, which differs from one institution to another.
2. Access to information depends on the type and sensitivity of the security event for the security institutions.
3. The security sources available to the journalist, which can help them obtain specific information not accessible to other journalists.

- **What are the sources of security news?**

Journalists' sources for handling security topics are diverse and include official media offices of security institutions, high-ranking security officials, and journalists' friendships with security officials. The definition of security sources varies among journalists. Some consider the security source to be the institution's media and public relations department, while others view these institutions' social media accounts as sources of information. Some journalists regard high-ranking security leaders and officers who have relationships with certain journalists as security sources. One of them pointed out that "the security institution avoids providing journalists with information even if it exists when the topic is sensitive."

- **Do you have easy access to the media officer or media department of various security institutions?**

There were few responses to this question, and they were contradictory. However, it can be concluded that accessing the media officer is not always easy. Moreover, having access to the media officer does not guarantee access to information. This difficulty arises from the procedures required for conducting an interview with the security officer. The complexity increases with the sensitivity of the subject, leading journalists to seek private news sources to obtain information.

- **How do journalists handle security information they receive, and should information from security forces be verified?**

The majority of journalists responded that they verify security information before publishing it to ensure its accuracy and its impact on the public, "not considering information from security agencies as reliable." Additionally, "some security agencies may intentionally provide softened or incomplete information."

Most participating journalists emphasized the necessity of respecting sensitive security information and refraining from publishing it if doing so could incite discord or security disturbances, as a form of social responsibility.

- **How do you, as a journalist, deal with corruption issues within security forces?**

Journalists agree on the need to follow up on corruption cases related to security agencies and shed light on them, treating them like any other corruption case. However, some mentioned that "media organizations avoid dealing with these issues for fear of damaging their relationships with these institutions or their officials."

- **Can the political affiliation of the media institution orient the news coverage on security matters? Are there red lines in security topics?**

The majority of journalists agree that media outlets may shape news related to security coverage and topics. However, this occurs primarily in sensitive security issues, such as security investigations or specific practices by security agencies, which can have political consequences. Regarding routine security news that does not reflect a political stance or press releases, it is generally dealt with normally and is not subject to interventions from the media institution's management.

- **Is there an editorial policy within the media institution specifically for security news?**

Some journalists mentioned that most media institutions adopt specific editorial policies or terminology when dealing with security issues. There might be a particular editorial tone regarding security matters due to the media institution's desire not to clash with security agencies.

One journalist explained: "In most Lebanese media institutions, there is an editorial policy and specific sources that provide the media outlet with security news. If the news does not align with the outlet's policy, it might be ignored. For example, Al-Manar channel cannot publish a story about misconduct within the General Security during General Abbas Ibrahim's term as general director . Similarly, Future TV cannot report on the Internal Security Forces. The same applies to OTV channel, where it is 'illogical' to publish news about the Republican Guard during former President Michel Aoun's rule."

- **What are the challenges in dealing with security agencies, and do security forces use security necessities as an excuse to prevent journalists from covering or approaching specific locations? How should journalists respond to this?**

According to the participating journalists in the study, one of the main challenges they face is being prevented from taking photographs for various reasons and pretexts, often revolving around security requirements and the prevention of chaos. They also pointed out direct attacks on them by security agencies, noting that the situation varies from one agency to another, and some security agencies are slow to defend them. They give an example of what happened during the October 2019 protests when journalists were harassed by protesters and left without protection.

Some forms of prevention they mention include, for example, the prohibition of photographing security forces, the restriction of approaching the entrance to the Parliament to interview MPs under the pretext of the chaos that occurs and reducing work teams, and the recent prohibition of photographing the Governor of the Central Bank in the Palace of Justice.

- **Do you feel that during your interactions with security agencies, you are considered as a serious element for discussion as a journalist?**

The interaction between security agencies and journalists varies based on several factors: the nature of the security media agency, with some agencies handling media better than others; the nature and sensitivity of the topic, which can lead to varying degrees of positivity in dealing with journalists; and the journalist himself, including his professionalism, expertise, and the institution he represents. All these factors are taken into account in the positive or negative interaction between security and the media.

- **Should journalists undergo training on how to cover and analyze issues related to the security sector? If so, who should provide this training?**

Participants emphasize the need for journalists to undergo training on how to cover and analyze security-related topics. Some of them have undergone specific training, but it is not sufficient. Journalists who have not had the opportunity for such training often seek alternative ways to improve their coverage, typically by relying on their colleagues within the media institution who have experience and expertise in these issues.

2- Civil Society Organizations

Interviews were conducted with 5 civil society organizations concerned with human rights issues to discuss their assessment of Lebanese media coverage of security matters, the watchdog role they should play, and the extent to which security forces respect the law in the course of their duties. The participating organizations are:

- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) - (Hassan Abdul Reda)
- Amnesty International - (Rina Wehbe)
- Alef - (George Ghali)
- MENA Rights Group - (Saad Eddin Chatila)
- Human Rights Watch

Some notes on the responses of civil society organizations:

There are many points or issues on which the participating organizations generally agreed, although their interpretations of them sometimes differed.

Some organizations did not answer all the questions, for example, Alef answered 6 out of 7, MENA Rights Group answered 5 out of 7, and Human Rights Watch answered 2 out of 7.

The responses of the organizations carried critiques of the performance of some Lebanese media outlets and security agencies. Therefore, we present the responses of the organizations as they were provided, considering their relevance in explaining their field of work and their monitoring of media coverage in human rights issues.

- **Are you satisfied with the Lebanese media's coverage of security issues? Do you consider it to be fulfilling its role in shedding light on events, or do you see it as falling short in this regard?**

The opinions of participating organizations were divided regarding their satisfaction with the media's coverage of security issues. Some believed that the Lebanese media falls short in fulfilling its role, merely relaying official statements without delving deeper into the topics or attempting to uncover their various aspects. This is attributed to the difficult conditions faced by media institutions and the fear of potential security pressures they might encounter. On the other hand, some argued that the media plays a pivotal role in shedding light on security issues, and the problem lies not in its shortcomings but in its reliance on inaccurate sources for security information.

Responses from some of the organizations include:

-Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH): "Lebanese media is generally falling short in covering security issues. The reasons for this are not clear and could be related to economic constraints or specific factors within the media, or due to restrictions imposed by security agencies."

-Amnesty International: "The media in Lebanon plays a pivotal role in illuminating security-related issues, and news often disseminates through it before reaching relevant human rights organizations. However, a practice has emerged within the Lebanese media, where it closely follows social media, extracting information and rumors from them and promptly publishing them as news. Consequently, the primary concern is not with media coverage but, at times, with the reliance on information sources that are not subjected to journalistic verification and professional standards."

-Alef: "No, most often the reports merely relay official data from security agencies without delving deeper."

- **Do you see the media playing a watchdog role in ensuring authorities respect human rights?**

When asked about the watchdog role of the media in shedding light on authorities' respect for human rights, the prevailing view was that the media plays some roles to a certain extent, though they are limited. These roles include disseminating human rights data from civil society organizations and monitoring human rights issues. However, several observations about their performance were noted, such as:

- Not all media outlets can be classified uniformly, as some have affiliations and connections with specific institutions and may monitor particular entities over others.

- Failure to follow through on issues once they are raised.

- Reliance on civil society organizations or authorities for information dissemination.

- Failure to consistently analyze issues with human rights activists.

- Alternative or emerging media plays a more impartial watchdog role towards the authorities.

- Alef: "It does not play its role as a monitoring authority systematically, and we believe that the issues it addresses are extremely rare and periodic. For instance, the media heavily focused on the early October 17 protests, but now it is no longer significant, and, for example, it did not follow up with security agencies regarding the measures they took for accountability and reform."

- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH): "Regarding respect for human rights by authorities, the media usually relay information from others. They often rely on information provided by authorities or civil society organizations. Except in a few cases, they don't investigate on their own. Most human rights violations committed by security authorities, which have been reported publicly, were documented primarily by civil society organizations, not the media.

However, when civil society organizations report on authorities' human rights violations, many media outlets often publish this information. The presence of international media in Lebanon also contributes to promoting authorities' respect for human rights."

-MENA Rights Group: "Yes, in a few cases, but in most instances, the news may not be analyzed from a human rights perspective or even involve discussions with human rights activists or lawyers with a human rights background. Most of the time, the media acts as a disseminator of news from official sources. In the rare cases that we have witnessed and had a positive role in shedding light on events, it was related to the authorities respecting human rights, such as the passing of the Anti-Torture Law in 2017 in the Parliament. However, we have seen that modern online news platforms, rather than the traditional ones (visual, audio, or written), show a greater interest in covering human rights issues and acting as a watchdog for authorities' respect for human rights."

-Amnesty International: "Lebanese media cannot be regarded as consistently adhering to a unified approach in its dealings with the authorities. Evaluating the performance of any media outlet in all human rights-related matters under consideration is not possible. Mainstream media entities in Lebanon are often owned by individuals either in power, close to the ruling authorities, or funded by them, which limits their absolute independence. Such media outlets may act as a regulatory authority over one of the three branches of government (legislative, executive, or presidential) but might adopt a defensive stance regarding another branch, depending on their political agenda and the interests of their political and financial stakeholders."

"Moreover, in various stages, Lebanese media has led campaigns encouraging authorities to violate human rights, also based on sectarian interests or the ethical priorities of its owners. We witnessed this particularly in the coverage of Syrian (and previously Palestinian) refugees in Lebanon and sometimes in the stigmatization of the transgender community, racist treatment of domestic workers, or people with dark skin, etc."

"As for the emerging independent media in the last decade, whose institutions have gained a relatively reasonable audience, especially during the protests that began in Lebanon in October 2019, they tend to perform the watchdog role without distinguishing between the authorities."

- **Can your organization easily access information regarding human rights and security issues?**

In terms of accessing information and sources related to human rights and security issues, organizations have access, except in certain specific and sensitive cases. Additionally, information can sometimes be insufficient. The reliance is more on civil society to obtain information than on security sources.

- Alef: "Not in all cases. It is limited to prevalent topics (...) We cannot get information about the challenges faced by the sector and what the current priorities are."

- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH): "The Lebanese Center works on providing legal and social services in detention centers and prisons. Therefore, we can often access information through the team present on the ground providing these services."

- MENA Rights Group: "Regarding human rights, our organization gathers information from victims, victims' families, or victims' lawyers. The media often might not publish information related to our documentation, or the information might not be sufficient, such as the drowning incident of a boat in northern Lebanon in 2022. The victims' names were not accurate in the media covering this issue, and not all names were published. However, blame in such cases primarily falls on local authorities for organizing the victims' list, not on the media."

- Amnesty International: "We rely on our local civil society partners as well as human rights specialized lawyers to access essential information. After documenting the violation, we write letters to the relevant ministries and state institutions involved in the issue we documented, requesting contextual information, in accordance with the Access to Information Law. We have received adequate responses from the Ministry of Interior (Directorate of Prisons) and the Lebanese General Security, for example. However, other institutions sometimes neglect our letters."

- Human Rights Watch: "Human Rights Watch documents violations through thorough and intensive research, field investigations, interviews with witnesses, open-source monitoring, and collaboration with partner organizations as part of our standard practices. We also provide relevant authorities an opportunity to provide their perspective and any relevant information they wish to offer, fairly and accurately reflected in our public reports."

"In general, since 2016, Human Rights Watch has received responses to less than half of its 196 letters and requests sent to 34 Lebanese agencies and recipients. Among the security institutions, the Lebanese Army was the most responsive with a 69.4% response rate. We have also noted a significant decline in responses from Lebanese authorities since the beginning of the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic."

- **How do you assess the respect of the security forces for the laws in interrogating suspects and dealing with certain groups such as migrant workers, displaced individuals, and the LGBTQ+ community ?**

All participants agree that various violations are committed by law enforcement during arrests or interrogations of suspects, many of which are documented by relevant organizations. These violations often include the torture of suspects, potentially to extract confessions, as well as depriving them of communication with lawyers or their families and interrogating them without translators or lawyers present. While these violations affect everyone, marginalized groups such as refugees, migrant workers, and LGBTQ+ people are particularly susceptible to pressure and oppressive practices.

-Amnesty International: "Amnesty International has documented widespread violations of detainees' rights, with the most severe occurring during interrogation, often involving the detainees' torture and their subsequent denial of the right to communicate with lawyers or family members. According to our research, the primary objective of torture in various security and military facilities is to extract confessions. It is important to note that both international and local law (Law No. 65/2017) deem confessions obtained under torture as invalid. Unfortunately, the law criminalizing torture and Article 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (which specifies the standards protecting detainees' rights) are not widely enforced in detention centers in Lebanon. The more vulnerable the detainees are, such as refugees, workers, and the LGBTQ+ people, the higher the risk of violations. The presence of local and international organizations monitoring the situations of the most vulnerable individuals acts as a fundamental deterrent to these practices, and the media can play a crucial role in reinforcing this."

-MENA Rights Group: "Regarding migrant workers and refugees, as we have worked with victims from these two groups, we have noticed that they are more susceptible to violations than Lebanese citizens. Particularly, Syrian refugees are more likely to face, firstly, security-related accusations, and secondly, they are more vulnerable to violations during detention, such as torture or arbitrary arrest, especially in security-related cases."

-Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH): "The security forces frequently engage in torture, and some cases have even resulted in death during the interrogation of suspects. These practices are largely shielded due to the lack of accountability. It's not limited to just the most vulnerable groups, such as migrant workers, refugees, and the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, the security forces are increasingly involved in curtailing freedom of expression and media. Many journalists are summoned to the Cybercrime Bureau for questioning on charges of defamation, even though it is illegal. The media should only be accountable to the Publications Court, not the Cybercrime Bureau."

-Alef: "Refugees, Migrant Workers, the LGBTQ+ community, drug addicts, and terrorism suspects are highly exposed to trial delays, arbitrary detention, and forms of torture. While we cannot definitively determine if these practices are systematic, these groups are more vulnerable to human rights violations committed during investigations, and most importantly, they have been undermined by public opinion with little solidarity. The media plays a negative role in blaming them, in violation of the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'."

- Human Rights Watch: "Human Rights Watch's annual World Report provides a comprehensive overview of human rights conditions and developments globally, including in Lebanon.²⁶ Torture continues at the hands of security forces in Lebanon, and accountability remains elusive. The police frequently intervene in human rights events related to gender and impose an unlawful ban on peaceful assemblies of the LGBTQ+ community."

"A report by Human Rights Watch in 2010 studied judicial decisions related to 114 cases involving migrant domestic workers as complainants or defendants. It found that the judicial system was inaccessible and unresponsive to migrant domestic workers, with reports of police abuses during interrogations, questioning without interpreters or lawyers, and allegations of violence dismissed by prosecutors. At the heart of these systemic failures is the kafala (sponsorship) system, which remains in effect until 2023."

26- <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023>

- **Do you consider that the security forces' data about security events is sufficient to know the facts, or is there a need for the media to investigate the facts?**

The participating organizations in the study unanimously agree that the media should fact-check and verify the information and data issued by the security forces and not simply rely on them. They should discuss and consult with experts since this data can be misleading or may not present matters comprehensively and impartially. Blindly accepting data from security forces in one way or another can contribute to the multiplication of violations against the rights of oppressed individuals. Security and military forces are the reality of authorities on the ground, and, therefore, their performance must be subject to continuous monitoring and improvement.

-Alef: "Some data from the security forces is available, but it is published in ways that make it difficult to analyze, such as random press releases that do not ensure the non-duplication of numbers. When it comes to crime rates, it is essential not to rely solely on the internal security forces, especially if these figures have not been confirmed by the public prosecutor and could be misleading. The same problem arises when it comes to the 'number of Syrians in prisons,' and the methodology of these media reports is misleading unless they are sent to court."

- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH): "Often, the data provided by the security forces about security incidents are brief and do not present events comprehensively and neutrally. Even if the data issued by the security forces are more comprehensive regarding events, they should not be considered a reliable source of information but a single perspective of one stakeholder. The statements of the security forces should not be understood as information but as communication responding to a specific strategy. Therefore, there is a need for civil society actors, including the media, to investigate the claims of the security forces. However, the statements of the security forces are often taken for granted by the media that publish them as information without undergoing necessary critical analysis."

- MENA Rights Group: "We see the necessity for the media to investigate the facts about security events since the data from the security forces might not be sufficient to know more information and backgrounds about these events. The duty of the media is not only to convey the information as stated but also to listen to the other side, analyze, and consult experts in some fields that the media might not necessarily be familiar with. Additionally, there should be a repeated attempt by the media to implement the Access to Information Law, which was passed in 2017."

- Amnesty International: "One of the most dangerous problems in the prevalent media performance is the complete and sometimes exclusive reliance on the data of the military and security forces, without any skepticism, and no thorough investigation to confirm these data. Consequently, this led to multiple violations of the rights of oppressed individuals, such as the case of the fabricated accusation against the artist Ziad Itani, where the media rushed to publish the charge as if it were a conviction following a confession however the truth was elsewhere."

"The security forces and the military are the actual authority on the ground; thus, their performance must be under constant monitoring and revision, transforming from a force capable of violating rights into a force ensuring their respect. The media is one of the most important means capable of performing this role. However, in Lebanon, as in many areas worldwide, the prevalent media tends to coordinate its discourse with the security authorities, making it the spearhead of their battle in public opinion. This perpetuates the state of violation and sometimes reinforces and defends it."

- **Do you consider the criticism from the media of the role of security forces (such as the case of the death boat or the death of a suspect under torture) necessary for monitoring the work of the security forces, or does this criticism harm their security role and weaken it?**

The participating associations consider it important for the media to play its role in criticizing or improving the performance of security forces, especially when the issue is sensitive and related to human rights and the fate of individuals. This criticism is not meant to undermine the security institution or defame it as long as it is constructive criticism based on facts. The media, when focusing and correcting these issues, has played a positive role in holding wrongdoers accountable and revealing the truths, thereby transforming the case into a matter of public concern.

- Alef: "Very important, the media must play this role and delve deeper into investigative reports to be able to reform the sector."

- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH): "Criticism from the media of the role of security forces is extremely important to ensure general scrutiny and accountability, and it should be encouraged and enhanced. The media should participate more in reporting human rights violations committed by security forces. Such media reports do not harm or weaken the role of security agencies but ensure their operations stay within the boundaries drawn by human rights standards that the Lebanese state committed to respecting."

- MENA Rights Group: "This criticism is, of course, necessary to steer the compass toward the work of the security forces. For example, in the case of Bashar Abdul-Saud, if the media had not published images of his body tortured, suspects would not have been arrested in his torture case and then referred to the military court, although they should have been referred to a civilian court, not a military one, in accordance with the Anti-Torture Law passed in 2017."

- Amnesty International: "The professional work in journalism is based on multiple sources, information intersection, and reevaluating closed narratives. This applies to the coverage of any type of news. When security institutions provide the media with data related to human rights violations, it is the primary duty of journalists to hear the story from the perspective of the victim. In this case, the statement's author is the one in power, and therefore, their story is likely to be biased in their favor, which can further violate the rights of the victim or victims. In many cases, crimes that lead to death may go unpunished, as in the two examples mentioned in the question. Criticism does not harm institutions that seek justice; it strengthens them. The role of the media is to convey the news, and news is not complete from one side."

- **Do you believe that the image of the security sector in the Lebanese media is neutral? In your opinion, does it reflect the real problems faced by the sector, or is it superficial and closer to sensationalism?**

Those who responded to this question believe that the media is not entirely neutral in portraying the image of the security sector. Each media institution has its editorial policies and affiliations that guide its coverage, either to portray the security institutions in a positive light or to criticize and attack them.

While the media plays a role in portraying the reality of these institutions, which are facing economic difficulties due to the ongoing collapse, it often refrains from tarnishing the reputation of security institutions regarding misconduct and transgressions.

- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH): "The way security incidents are reported often varies between different media outlets, depending on the political affiliation or agenda they serve. Additionally, there is often a lack of in-depth analysis of the incident or event before it is reported, whether it involves the security forces or others. Hence, the reporting on events is often linked to an interpretation that serves the agenda of the media outlet's affiliation."

- Amnesty International: "(...) Security institutions also hold power and serve as the strong arm of political authorities facing numerous crimes in the country, from the armed conflict that extended between 1975 and 1990 to decades of administrative and financial corruption that led to people losing the fruits of their labor and the means to achieve a decent life. Moreover, security and military agencies have absorbed generations of armed groups that were active during that conflict. Many of them have lacked proper training and were exempted from accountability for their actions over the years, with promotions based on factors other than merit, much like many positions in the public sector. Therefore, the Lebanese media's role is often dedicated to amplifying the voice of security and military institutions above any other voice, exonerating them from any wrongdoing, violations, or suspicions. This serves to reinforce the role of these institutions as tools to protect authorities rather than fulfilling their role in safeguarding the people and society."

3- Security Institutions

The study aimed to conduct interviews with the security institutions to understand their perspective on the role of the media in monitoring their work and missions. The questions were directed to three security institutions: the Lebanese Army, the Internal Security Forces, and General Security. Their responses were in writing.

A- Lebanese Army

The Lebanese Army (Directorate of Orientation) answered 4 out of 7 questions.

Questions not answered:

- Do you consider the role of the media in monitoring the work of security institutions necessary to respect the principles of human rights?
- What is your opinion on leaking information to journalists about violations and corruption cases within the security agencies?
- Which do you consider more important: respecting the law or maintaining security, even if it requires violating the law?

Below are the key answers from the Lebanese Army to the other questions, emphasizing a fundamental point: cooperation between the military institution and the media.

- **How do the security forces balance between enforcing the Right to Access Information law, automatic publication, and the requirements of maintaining security?**

"The army enforces Law No. 28/2017, the Access to Information Law, and has responded to various correspondences based on this law, except for matters falling under Article 5 exceptions. Additionally, the law mandates the publication of certain information through official decrees (for example, public procurement law), provided that it does not conflict with safeguarding the security of operations and confidential matters related to defense."

- **What kind of cooperation can take place between the security forces and the media?**

"The media and the army share a relationship based on transparency and cooperation while respecting the privacy of each party. The exchange of information between journalists and the army, along with their constant follow-up on developments, allows them to carry out their respective duties. This includes informing the public of relevant information that contributes to overseeing the actions of these institutions."

- **Do you often communicate with journalists, and through what means of communication?**

"We often speak with journalists through direct phone calls or via email. We also conduct interviews with officers and military personnel, in addition to press conferences that allow journalists to communicate directly with the army and raise questions and inquiries they wish to clarify(...)".

- **Do you have clear channels within your security apparatus on how to communicate with the media and within what frameworks?**

"Direct communication with journalists is managed through a specialized institutional framework dedicated to this field, where the Directorate of Guidance, one of the leadership units of the army, communicates with journalists flexibly and continuously under normal circumstances(...)".

2-Internal Security Forces

Colonel Joseph Moussallem, head of the Public Relations Division at the General Directorate of the Internal Security Forces, answered the questions. He sought to highlight the positive aspects of the Internal Security Forces and their role in protecting human rights and public freedoms, as well as their constant commitment to combating corruption within their institutions. He also emphasized the Internal Security Forces' commitment to cooperation with the media. The responses provided by Colonel Moussallem included:

- **Do you consider the role of the media in monitoring the work of security institutions necessary to respect the principles of human rights?**

"Regarding media coverage, each party plays its role, and there is no connection between the two sides. This means that we are not concerned with human rights issues just because the media monitors or talks about them. We have an internal conviction and belief in human rights. If the media reveals a specific action that violates these rights, it is our responsibility to investigate it. Thus, there can be synergy between the two parties, benefiting the security institution in achieving the desired results.

The Internal Security Forces have internal mechanisms to monitor human rights issues, especially in the Human Rights Department under the General Inspection of the Internal Security Forces. Any action that might violate human rights, such as the use of force or torture in prisons and detention centers, is monitored (...)."

- **How do the security forces balance between implementing the Access to Information law, automatic publication, and the requirements of maintaining security?**

"There must be cooperation between the security apparatus and the media concerning information, except in matters imposed by the law, such as respecting the confidentiality of an investigation. In these cases, we are not allowed to provide any information. However, in general, there is a trend within the Internal Security Forces towards the necessity of cooperation and coordination with the media to access and disseminate information to form a positive public opinion and reassure the public. We publish crime-related information and statistics monthly, and there is a role for the media in disseminating and distributing this information (...)."

- **What is your opinion on leaking information to journalists about violations and corruption cases within security institutions?**

"This topic is very sensitive. We were the first institution to combat corruption, and at that time, the media was not fully aware of the anti-corruption process. However, many media outlets talked about scandals within the security forces without considering the positive aspects of our anti-corruption efforts. I believe it is necessary to shed light on the true picture and not tarnish individuals' reputations, as full names have been put forward for individuals and officers who might later prove to be innocent. This negatively affects the individual and their family, which contradicts the most basic human rights."

- **Which do you consider more important: respecting the law or maintaining security even if it means breaking the law?**

"The law is very clear, and it is integrated with security. It is not possible to violate the law to preserve security because that would lead to using security necessities as a pretext to violate the laws. The law and the constitution protect freedoms, and we, especially as the Internal Security Forces, adhere to this (...)."

- **What cooperation can be established between security agencies and the media?**

"The role of the media is fundamental in shaping public opinion and in security education. It plays a role in spreading reassurance in society, and through coordination between us and the media, the truth and security achievements can be highlighted. (...) In democratic systems, the police protect the media, ensuring security for journalists as well, and the law protects them from any attacks they might face."

- **Do you often communicate with journalists? And through what means? Are there clear channels within your security apparatus on how to communicate with the media and within any frameworks?**

"Communication usually occurs through the Public Relations Department and via social media platforms, where we post tweets daily. We also communicate through messages sent to the media outlets, in addition to constant communication through the Head of the Public Relations Department. There is mutual cooperation and trust between us and the media outlets."

3-General Security Institution

The General Security reaffirms its respect for the principles of human rights and respect for the law of access to information, with the necessity to protect information directly related to the supreme national interest. It emphasizes compliance with the laws, as respecting "the law ensures security, and preserving security prevents the violation of the law."

Here are the answers of the General Security Institution to the study's questions:

- **Do you consider the role of the media in monitoring the work of security institutions necessary for respecting human rights principles?**

It is advisable not to use the term "monitoring" for what the media does because there are official bodies responsible for monitoring the work and administrative and security tasks of security institutions and the extent of their proper implementation. Therefore, it is preferable to use the term "following" the work of security institutions by the media.

Respecting the principles of human rights is at the core of the laws applied and respected by the General Security (...). It is also incumbent upon the media to respect the perspective of security institutions and to document information related to every file concerning the actions of security personnel.

- **How do you balance security forces' application of the right to access information and automatic publication against the requirements of maintaining security?**

The General Directorate of General Security complies with relevant laws, especially Law No. 28 dated 10-02-2017 concerning the right to access information, along with its amendments in Law No. 233 dated 16-07-2021. It is noted that there is sensitive security information protected by the aforementioned laws, specifically Articles 5 and 19 of Law No. 233.

Regarding balancing the General Security's application of the right to access information and public disclosure with the requirements of maintaining security, it involves protecting information directly related firstly to the state's supreme national interest and its security and the interests of its citizens, and secondly, protecting the institution from any breach that might endanger it and its military personnel.

- **What is your opinion on leaking information to journalists about violations and corruption cases within security institutions?**

The word "leak" has multiple meanings. Any investigative information carried out by the media within the bounds of ethics is welcomed, as it helps correct, rectify, or judicially pursue any anomalies. It is advisable to communicate with the responsible officials within the General Security to convey their perspective. If the General Security declines clarification, the media outlet can publish the news at its own risk, stating "General Security declined to comment." Legal recourse can then be pursued.

- **Which do you consider more important: respecting the law or preserving security even if it means breaking the law?**

Security only operates if there is a breach or an attempted breach of the law. It is absolutely not allowed to breach the law for the sake of security unless there is a decision at the highest authority level and with the knowledge of the relevant judicial authority. In case of an unintended breach of the law during the execution of a security or military mission, the case is referred for investigation based on the regulations applicable in each military or security agency.

- **What cooperation can be established between security agencies and the media?**

Principles of cooperation between General Security and the media include respecting General Security's directives during security or military field missions. Media outlets should not publish information related to the tasks of security forces during their specific missions.

- **Do you often communicate with journalists? And through what means?**

Both parties are obliged to communicate, and they have a mutual interest in doing so. The best method is direct communication built on trust, mutual respect, and credibility.

- **Are there clear channels within your security apparatus on how to communicate with the media and within any frameworks?**

Within General Security, there is a Public Relations Office responsible for distributing official statements regarding General Security and its activities related to the Director-General or the Directorate.

In the three interviews with military institutions, there were no criticisms of the media or journalists. Instead, they discussed cooperation between them and the media, emphasizing their commitment to respecting freedoms and laws.

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