LEBANON

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ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

A. General Situation

Lebanon is situated between the Palestinian territories, Israel and Syria, and borders the Mediterranean Sea. Lebanon gained independence in 1943, and since this time has had several periods of political turmoil and civil war. The civil war which occurred from 1975 and 1990, resulted in an estimated 120,000 fatalities, and brought on many years of political and social insecurity. The country's economic situation is coloured by this history, and heavy borrowing subsequent to the civil war created a debt burden that the country continues to suffer from today. This burden limits investment capacity in necessary infrastructure improvements (*i.e.* water, electricity and transport)[1].

Lebanon is a parliamentary republic, with a six-year election cycle, the last occurring in 2016. Lebanon's legal system is a mixture of a civil law tradition, based on the French civil code and religious laws that cover, *inter alia*, a number of family law issues[2]. In July 2018, the country's population was estimated to be just over 6.1 million, with approximately 1.4 million persons aged less than 14 years[3]. At the same time, Lebanon hosts a large refugee population, with an estimated 1 million refugees living in Lebanon as of December 2018 (majority Syrian, but also a large Palestinian population)[4]. It is reported that the influx of Syrian refugees has increased social tensions has made it harder for basic needs to be met, and the rights of children to be fulfilled[5].

Approximately just under half a million children live below the poverty line, with poverty affecting Syrian and Palestinian refugees at a higher rate than the general population. It is reported that more than 50% of school-aged children, are out of school, with the proportions being higher among Syrian refugee populations[6]. Violence, child marriage and child labour are reported to be amongst the worst violations of child's rights in Lebanon. Violent discipline at home is reportedly widespread among Lebanese families (57%) and within the ranks of Syrian refugees (65%). Girls are reported to be at risk of early marriage, often as result of attempts to reduce a family's economic

[1] CIA World Factbook, Country Profile: Lebanon. Available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html.
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid
[4] UNHCR, Lebanon Operational Update (December 2018). Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2019/07/UNHCR-Lebanon-Operational-Update-Jan-Dec-2018.pdf.
[5] Save the Children, Lebanon: Annual Report 2017, at p. 5. Available at: https://lebanon.savethechildren.net/sites/lebanon.savethechildren.net/files/library/STC_Annual%20Report%202017_English_2.pdf.
[6] Save the Children, Lebanon: Annual Report 2017, at p. 14, 29.

burden. Whilst this is reported to be a risk across the board, in Syrian refugee communities it was reported that 27% of girls were married as of 2017[7].

B. Children deprived of their family and alternative care options

Prevention (Support to Families / Families at Risk)

The Lebanese Religious Personal Status Laws for each denomination govern family affairs, and in general parents have responsibility for providing care for their children. The Ministry of Social Affairs ('MOSA') has responsibility for providing support services to families, such as outreach and awareness programs and parental skill education[8]. NGO's may also fulfil this role with, for example, Save the Children providing psychosocial support and parenting programs for parents and caregivers and poverty relief[9]; and the NGO Himaya provides support services, including awareness sessions for caregivers, professionals, and children aimed at preventing violence in the home across all settings as well as psychosocial support services for children and parents[10].

However, as of 2017 the Committee of the Rights of the Child remained concerned that financial and material poverty was contributing to the separation of children from their parents from their care, and that support for families needed to be increased[11]. That same year, it was separately identified that largely the bulk of government expenditure on child protection goes towards 'social welfare' residential care shelters (see further below under 'Residential Care'), with some 70% of MOSA's budget going towards funding shelters (predominantly run by NGO's)[12]. Recently, Standard Operating Procedures for Protecting Juveniles in Lebanon ('the SOPs') have been introduced, which provide a pathway for supporting families that are at risk. However, in reality it is reported that resources for supporting families are continue to be largely funneled into residential care, which is used as a response to issues of poverty or a lack of access to education[13].

There are nonetheless some programs in place to which act to support children at risk, and prevent their removal. This includes the case management work of some NGO's who have decided to stop making referrals to residential care and to devote efforts to case work with families (*i.e* Himaya and Imam Sdar Foundation); and a government program designed at reducing poverty (the National Poverty Targeting Programme – NPTP). This latter initiative however is reported to have narrow criteria and is not explicitly aimed at limiting the numbers of children in residential care[14].

Separation

In Lebanon, there are two mechanisms for the separation of children from their parent's care – voluntarily or by means of a formal court order. For children voluntarily relinquished into care, MOSA holds responsibility. For those children removed by court order, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ') has responsibility for the child themselves, and MOSA has responsibility for oversight of the care provider[15].

As noted above, poverty is a main driver of separation, and it is reported that MOSA will not fund a child's placement in a residential care shelter, unless the family is poor[16]. A lack of access to quality education is another main driver, with residential care shelters providing education which is perceived to be of better quality than that available in public schools. Children with disabilities ('CWD'), are also likely to be placed into residential care centers in response to a lack of access to necessary services[17]. Whilst these represent the main reasons why children are separated from their families care, additional reasons include divorce and separation (either because single parents have difficulties coping,

[7] Save the Children, Lebanon: Annual Report 2017, at p. 18; Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations: Lebanon (2017) at 13, 18-20 .
[8] Committee on the Rights of the Child, State Party Report: Lebanon (2017) at p. 29.
[9] Save the Children, Lebanon: Annual Report 2017, at pp. 18-21.
[10] See, https://www.himaya.org/content/resilience-program.
[11] Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations: Lebanon (2017) at 26(a).
[12] Child Frontiers (2017), Scoping Study and Recommendations for Next Steps on Alternative Care: Lebanon ('Child Frontiers Report'), at p. 10. Available at: https://childfrontiers.app.box.com/s/3k7dvna06vao6bg04bzp4d7u7xkmcof5.
[13] Child Frontiers Report, at pp. 4, 5; Standard Operating Procedures for the Protection of Juveniles in Lebanon (Operational Toolkit) ('Standard Operating Procedures, at pp. 47-54.
[14] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 21.
[15] Child Frontiers Report at p. 10.
[16] Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations: Lebanon (2017) at 26(a); Child Frontiers Report, at pp. 5, 17, 18.
[17] Child Frontiers Report at p. 18.

or because new spouses may reject a child brought into the marriage); and stigma around unmarried mothers may drive some to leave their babies in hospitals or residential care centers[18]. For voluntary separation, children must be accepted into child welfare shelters with the parents' consent, following either a social workers investigation, an NGO referral, or at the direct request of the parents[19]. The other pathway for separation is when children are removed due a risk of neglect or abuse, as discussed below.

When children are removed via a court order, it will likely first follow a risk of harm report made to the Department of Protection of Juveniles at MOSA, to NGOs that are specialized in child protection, to UPEL (*L'Union pour la Protection de l'Enfance en Liban* - a large national NGO which is mandated to case manage child protection and juvenile justice cases), or directly to the Juvenile Judge, and the case is then investigated[20]. The SOPs provide a pathway for social workers to consider when making a decision, based on assessment, on whether to pursue a judicial pathway or to continue case management with the family. Should the social worker determine that judicial intervention is needed, they make recommendations to the juvenile judge regarding the different measures that could be taken in the best interest of the child, based on the information they have collected in line. These recommendations could be for removal into alternative care, or could include a request for formally ordered support for the parents/carers rather than removal. The SOPs also provide a pathway for the judge to consider when making a decision on removing the child, and also different measures which could be taken – including ordering that support be provided to the parents/carers, rather than removing the child[21]. It is reported that once a decision has been reached to place a child into alternative care for their protection, social workers have difficulty finding places, and often placements are selected based on vacancies, rather than on the needs of the child. At the same time, this lack of placements means that children risk remaining in unsafe home environments[22].

Lastly, whilst religious courts should not play a role in decision making regarding child protection cases, it is reported that on occasion if abuse or neglect is reported during a custody dispute then these courts can make a decision placing the child with relatives or in residential care– there is however concern that often these decisions are made based on moral concerns rather than objective risk issues. The religious courts may also make referrals to the national courts should the parents raise allegations of abuse during a custody dispute.[23]

Re-integration

The SOPs provide a pathway for reviewing the situation of the child. For both children under a judicial order, and those under an agreement with MOSA, the situation should be reviewed every three months – either by a report to the court by the assigned social worker if the child is within a host family or by a report from the organization where the child is living if the child is in residential care[24]. Nonetheless, a 2017 report found that once children are placed into an alternative care placement, they remain there for unnecessarily long periods of time as there is limited checking of whether or not the situation for either the child or the family has changed; nor is there any significant support services in place to support reintegration. In general, children are reported to remain in the residential care facility, until they are too old to meet the criteria of the facility, or their family collects them (if a voluntary placement). Children under a judicial order, may receive more intense case management aimed at reintegration, but reportedly the level of support varies greatly[25].

There are some services in place aimed at supporting reintegration, but this seemingly will be dependent on the residential care service provider themselves. For example, SOS children's Villages[26] only take children into care for short periods, and work intensively with families to support reintegration; and some other agencies provide reintegration support – however the level of support will depend on the capacity of the social worker and that of the alternative care provider[27]. Additionally, there are also no specific formal services or plans for re-integration from

[18] Child Frontiers Report at pp. 19, 20.
[19] Committee on the Rights of the Child, State Party Report: Lebanon (2017) at p. 135.
[20] Standard Operating Procedures at p. 40; Information provided by an in country source; Child Frontiers Report, at p 3.
[21] Standard Operating Procedures at p. 117; Information provided by an in-country source.
[22] Child Frontiers Report, at pp. 24, 26.
[23] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 27, 28.
[24] Standard Operating Procedures at pp. 125 – 127.
[25] Child Frontiers at pp. 5, 28.
[26] L'Union pour la Protection de l'Enfance en Liban.
[27] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 28.

residential care facilities[28].

Alternative Care Options

Predominantly, only kinship care and residential care are used as alternative care placements in Lebanon, although there have been some moves to implement foster placements.

Whilst in many Islamic countries *kafalah* is used as a means to allow a child to live with another family, this is not the case in Lebanon. Here, *kafalah* refers to the financial sponsorship of children residing in residential care centres[29].

Informal Care / Kinship Care:

Informal or kinship care usually occurs without the involvement of courts or social workers, although Judges may decide to formally place children with kin through a child protection order – which implicitly comes with a regular court review. It is, however, unclear how often this happen, and UNICEF data indicates that kinship care is not widely used. A 2017 study, found varying estimates through discussions with judges – with one judge saying these placements occurred in around 15% of cases, and another saying that these orders were made only two to five times out of every 100 to 150 cases. This latter judge noted that the low use of kinship care by judges reflected a reluctance by families to take in children (because of poverty) and not an unwillingness on the behalf of the court to order such placements[30].

Barriers to the wider use of kinship care include: a lack of time to carry out proper assessments; lack of experience of caseworkers; lack of community awareness; lack of human resources; no mechanisms in place to provide proper support to carers (including financial support); difficulties in allocating legal guardianship to the kinship carer(s) – namely, difficulty in accessing / understanding complicated procedures; and cultural barriers, with some communities reluctant to have girls placed in households with a large number of boys[31].

Foster Care:

There is not formally established foster care system in Lebanon[32], although over 2019 the NGO Himaya – in conjunction with Save the Children and UNICEF, was piloting a program aimed at establishing family based care[33]. It is understood that judges and General Prosecutors may place abandoned babies with a family who intends to adopt them whilst the adoption proceedings are pending – however, this could not be considered foster care *per se.* A number of barriers exist to establishing a foster care system in Lebanon, including: a lack of resources to identify, assess and monitor foster families; cultural barriers, such as a reluctance to take in a stranger child in the face of a strong sense of family bonds, and a need for older girls having to cover up in front of unrelated men; and a lack of detailed policy guidance[34].

Small Group Homes:

There is reportedly no small group homes operating in Lebanon[35].

Residential Care:

'Social Welfare' residential care centres provide the bulk of alternative care placements in Lebanon, and MOSA is primarily responsible for these placements – which are run by NGO's but partially or fully funded by MOSA stipends. These facilities house children aged 5 – 18 years, from disadvantaged homes and who are placed in residential care due to poverty and a lack of access to quality education. Most children in these centres go home at the weekends and over holidays, and many facilities close over the simmer. These facilities may also provide day care, schooling, meals and after school care for older children, however government policy dictates that all children aged under 14 years

[28] Information provided by in-country source.
[29] Information provided by in-country source.
[30] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 29.
[31] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 31; Information provided by in-country source.
[32] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 31.
[33] In country source.
[34] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 32.
[35] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 34.

must sleep at the facilities. As of 2016, there were 24,106 children funded by MOSA in 201 social welfare facilities[36].

Additionally, there are 15 facilities ('protective placements'), run by NGO's who have contracts with MOSA, that specialise in supporting children placed into care by judicial order – although sometimes these children may be placed in a social welfare facility. It is not clear the numbers of children in residential care under a judicial order, however it is understood that only a fraction of the children in such placements are there for protection reasons. In addition to the centres described above, a number of NGO facilities not funded by MOSA provide residential care. These centres are registered with the government, but are not subject to regulation. Accordingly, the numbers of children in these placements are unclear, and the 24,000 figure is likely an underestimate of the real number of children in residential care in Lebanon[37].

Specific Issues

Children with Disabilities:

Few mainstream schools will accept children with disabilities ('CWD') and as such they are quite likely to be placed in residential care. It is reported that these children are usually cared for in segregated homes, separately from other children. A 2017 report, indicated that there are concerns that MOSA staff do not have the capacity to properly assess the quality of care for CWD, and in 2017 the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted concern regarding the high rate of institutionalisation of CWD and also of instances of abuse and violence (including sexual violence) by residential care service providers[38].

Children on the Move:

As noted above, the country hosts a large refugee population – over half of whom are under the age of 18. It is understood that a large number of refugees are unregistered, and as such there are no reliable estimates of the number of children separated from their parents. Nonetheless, it is understood that the numbers of unaccompanied and separated children are low and that many of these children live with their extended family, or friends of the family.

MOSA does not fund social welfare placements for refugee children, and so these children cannot access these placements. Refugee children may be able to be placed in the 'protective placements' mentioned above, however very few refugee children are in these placements due to: a practice of the community self-managing child protection concerns (in Palestinian refugee camps) – although it is reported that this practice does not always meet the needs of children; resistance by the children themselves to being placed in the centres (Syrian children);– despite their being a number of reports that violence and abuse against children is high in these communities; and a lack of placements that accept refugee children[39].

Comments of the ISS/IRC

The Lebanese child protection system is characterised by an overreliance on residential care, and a lack of early gatekeeping mechanisms aimed to prevent entry into care. The heavy reliance on residential placements as a means of relieving poverty and meeting educational needs has resulted in a significantly overstretched system. The majority of social welfare funding is funneled into these services, leaving a huge gap in capacity to both alleviate poverty, and to provide early intervention support services to families. It also means that large numbers of children are unnecessarily placed in institutional care – in direct opposition to the principles outlined in the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

At the same time, this heavy focus on maintaining placements for children who have voluntarily been placed into care means that services and support for children at risk is limited – likely resulting in those children who do need the

[36] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 11; Information provided by in-country source.
[37] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 11; Information provided by in-country source.
[38] Child Frontiers Report, at pp. 15, 18; Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations: Lebanon (2017) at 28(d).
[39] Child Frontiers Report, at pp. 9, 11, 18; Information provided by in-country source.

support of social welfare services, not receiving such support. Additionally, there is limited oversight of the placements themselves, and some facilities have no oversight at all. It is understood that MOSA has developed some guidelines on child safeguarding in institutions together with a code of conduct[40]. This is promising, however ISS/IRC considers that it is essential that such codes and guidelines be enforced in all institutions and not just those which are MOSA funded.

ISS/IRC considers that steps should be taken to increase poverty support and educational support across the board so that residential care facilities are no longer relied upon to relieve concerns regarding poverty and education. This would allow for the proper channeling of funds into supporting children at risk, and providing essential gatekeeping and prevention services. It is promising that organisations such as Himaya are piloting foster care programs and devote efforts to family support rather than making referrals to residential care. Such initiatives should be commended and supported as a means of changing the current alternative care response in Lebanon.

C. Adoption

Under Shari'a law adoption is prohibited. However, the Lebanese Constitution provides that, '*any population, irrespective of which rite it follows, is respected in its personal status and their religious interests*'[41]. The issue of adoption falls within 'personal status laws' and accordingly comes under the legal and jurisdictional competence of religious communities.

Therefore adoption is: *a)* available only to members of the relevant religious communities; *b)* is not subject to a single civil law; and *c)* is governed by the various religious laws.

The following laws include provisions relating to adoption:

- The Code of the Catholic communities (to which most adopted children belong to) (Arts 98 -118);
- The Code of the Greek-Orthodox community (Art. 93);
- The Code of the Armenian-Orthodox community (Arts. 137 – 148);
- The Code of the Syriac-Orthodox community (Arts. 72 - 74); and
- The Code of the Evangelical community (Arts. 65 – 70).

It is noted that these are the laws provided to ISS as part of a summary of 'The Rules and Regulations of Adoption Personal Status Laws of Lebanon'. These laws, and the information below represent what is understood to be the position of the main religious bodies, however Lebanon recognises 19 religious confessions, however the above are the five codes which contain adoption provisions[42].

THEMES	INFORMATION
CENTRAL/ COMPETENT AUTHORITY	There is no general central adoption authority. Adoptions are approved by the relevant religious court, and as such these courts have authority for adoption. For the Catholic Religious Community the relevant authorities are those of the rite of the minor child; while for the Orthodox religious communities, the forum is the court of the church of the prospective adoptive parent(s). If a child is a foundling, the child assumes the religious affiliation of the area in which they are found, and will be placed in an institution with the same religious affiliation. This occurs as a matter of custom, and not by virtue of any statute[43].

[40] Child Frontiers Report at p. 16.
[41] Lebanese Constitution, at Art. 9.
[42] US Department of State: Lebanon Intercountry Adoption Information ('US Department of State'). Available at: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/Intercountry-Adoption/Intercountry-Adoption-Country-Information/Lebanon.html; See also information from the French Central Authority (at I.1), at: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/adopter-a-l-etranger/le-processus-de-l-adoption-internationale/le-choix-du-pays-d-origine/article/adopter-au-liban.
[43] US Department of State; Information provided by in-country source.

FULL/ SIMPLE ADOPTION	**Simple adoption**. See *Adoption effects* below[44].
SUBSIDIARITY PRINCIPLE	Whilst there is little information on the principle of subsidiarity, it is noted that adoption is only available when the child has been abandoned and the mother is unable to be found, and that the General Prosecutor should instigate an investigation to ensure the child's parents cannot be found. Further, if the mother's identity is known the child cannot be placed for adoption even if the parents are unable or unwilling to care for the child. In these circumstances, the child will be placed in institutional care[45] It is not clear that there is any requirement to prioritise domestic adoption over intercountry adoption (ICA)
CHILD ADOPTABILITY	There is little information available regarding the eligibility criteria for the child. Although, as noted above (under 'Principle of Subsidiarity'), the child must be abandoned and their family unable to be located.
PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS	Only Christian/Catholic/Orthodox couples may adopt. Residential care service providers (or an NGO, should they be permitted to do so based on their by-laws) identify suitable families[46], who are further assessed by the courts. The conditions on the Prospective Adoptive Parents (PAPs) are as follows[47]: • PAPs should be over the age of 40 (Catholic, Armenian-Orthodox), with an age difference of 18 years (Catholic, Greek-Orthodox, Protestant) or 15 years (Armenian-Orthodox) with the adopted child. • In general, the adopters and adoptee must belong to the same religious community, but not to the same rite of the Catholic Church. • The PAP(s) must not have any legal child and could not hope to have children of their own based on medical reports issued by specialists. • PAP(s) must have a clean criminal record and general good behavior. There are no requirements that PAPs be resident in Lebanon, nor any specific income requirements although PAP(s) must provide information on their financial status as part of a home study[48]. The relevant court will also asses the PAP(s) motive for adopting, and there generally must be a just motive, and a benefit to the child[49].
CONSENTS	The consent of the biological parents (or guardian) is required, however in the Catholic or Armenian Orthodox community if the parents are divorced only the custodial parents consent is necessary[50]. For Married PAP(s) both spouses must consent. For the Catholic Community, if one spouse is unable to express their will, or the couple is legally separated, the bishop can give consent[51]. If the child is old enough to consent, his/her consent is required. There is no specific age of consent but practice indicates that age 10 - 12 or older is customary. The religious authority must consent to the adoption, and consent cannot be obtained by coercion or fraud[52].

[44] French Central Authority, at II.1.
[45] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 33.
[46] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 33; Information provided by in-country source.
[47] US Department of State; The Rules and Regulations of Adoption Personal Status Laws of Lebanon.
[48] US Department of State.
[49] The Rules and Regulations of Adoption Personal Status Laws of Lebanon.
[50] French Central Authority, at I.3; The Rules and Regulations of Adoption Personal Status Laws of Lebanon.
[51] The Rules and Regulations of Adoption Personal Status Laws of Lebanon.
[52] US Department of State.

PROCEDURE[53]	It is reported that adoption procedures can take between 12 and 18 months, during which time babies are often in residential care for long periods[54]. *Application:* Local adoption procedures must be initiated independently, and the applicants must directly contact the child care institutions (orphanages/nurseries). No local authority is responsible for the assessment of applications, and the churches and church officials who care for abandoned children may not always have the legal expertise to process an adoption. The adoption request must be submitted to the presiding judge of the religious court of the community to which the child belongs. *Documentation required:* PAP(s) must provide: a photocopy of theirs and the child's identification; a certificate of good behavior, issued by the priest (or bishop) of the PAP(s) church; a medical report stating their reasons for not having children; and a home study report completed by the reliable authority or agency (depending on the nationality of the parents) regarding the PAP(s) social situation and financial status. *Assessment of applicants:* The religious court assesses the good moral reputation of the PAP(s) and their capacity to financially support the child. If the court does not find any grounds to object to the adoption, the court will issue a decree confirming the adoption. *Civil Registration:* The adoption decree needs to be accepted and submitted to the Lebanese bureau of Civil Status so that the civil status of the adopted child can be amended. For **ICA,** adoptive parents will need to apply for a new birth certificate and identity card before they can apply for a passport, and the adoption decree must accompany the application. The director of the Registry office can either accept the request and register the child directly, or he can refer the request to the committee of cases in the Ministry of Justice for an opinion on the legitimacy of the adoption decision. The Ministry of Justice can validate or reject the request. *Issuance of passport:* When issuing passports to adopted children, the adopters are questioned by the General Directorate for General Lebanese Security regarding their adoption process. An investigation may be requested amongst the bodies involved in the process, and the timeline for the issuance of the passport may therefore be lengthy.
MATCHING	It is not clear that any matching is carried out. As noted above, applicants directly contact the residential care center to identify potentially adoptable children.
PROBATIONARY PERIOD	There is seemingly no probationary period.
ADOPTION DECISION	The relevant religious court approves the adoption – and the courts decision itself must be affirmed by the relevant bishop. The decision is registered through the Ministry of the Interior[55].
ADOPTION EFFECTS[56]	With the exception of Syrian-Orthodox community, adoption decisions are simple and able to be revoked when there has been a violation of the regulatory procedures (although this is only expressly provided for in the Catholic law). A parentage link is created with the child and the adoptive parents, however the link with the biological parents and family is maintained. The child will take the family name of the adoptive parents and their name will be added to the new birth certificate. The modification of the surname is subject to the civil court's jurisdiction. If the child is less than five years old, the change of the surname is easily awarded, although approval of the institution or organisation where the child was identified may be sometimes required. If the

[53] Information from US Department of State; French Central Authority; and In country source.
[54] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 34.
[55] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 33; US Department of State.
[56] US Department of State; French Central Authority at II.2.

	child is more than six years old, reference to the former surname will always appear on official documents along with the new surname of the child.
POST-ADOPTION FOLLOW-UP	There are no post-adoption requirements[57].
SEARCH OF ORIGINS	There is no information available regarding the keeping of records, and the consequent capacity for adoptees to later seek information about their origins. It is understood, that due to stigma associated with adoption many children are not told they are adopted[58].
ADOPTION ACCREDITED BODIES (AAB)	There are no adoption agencies in Lebanon, and the US Department of State advises PAP(s) to contact a local family lawyer for assistance. The French Central Authority notes that the two French Accredited bodies who previously operated in Lebanon ceased their activities there due to concerns around child trafficking and other fraudulent practices[59].
SANCTIONS IN CASE OF IRREGULARITIES	Whilst anti-trafficking laws exist in Lebanon (introduced in 2011), the law does not specifically include trafficking in adoption. This is unfortunate, given that the country has a significant history of reported bad practices in adoption, with an estimated 10, 000 persons being victims of illegal inter-country adoption as of the 1960's[60].
ADOPTION COSTS	It is understood that fees vary amongst the different religious. It is not clear what any of these costs are, and it is understood that they are subject to change[61].
STATISTICS	According to statistics provided to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2017, there were 33 domestic adoptions over the years 2014 to 2016[62]. However, it was noted in a 2017 report by interviewees for that report that there is corruption in the adoption system and in fact more adoptions take place than those recorded in official statistics[63]. With regards to ICA, the US reports one adoption in 2018, four in 2017, three in 2016, zero in 2015, and two in 2014[64].

Comments of the ISS/IRC

Lebabon is not a party to the 1993 Hague Convention, and in ISS/IRC's view there are a number of concerns and particular care should be exercised when considering an adoption in Lebanon. There have historically been concerns regarding irregular and fraudulent adoption procedures in Lebanon[65] and it is clear that there is not yet proper safeguards in place to prevent future risks – evidenced by some degree by the fact that two French AAB's have refused to continue to work in the country due to concerns about child trafficking and other fraudulent activities. ISS/IRC joins the Committee on the Rights of the Child in recommending that Lebanon should create a central authority to manage adoptions, and should ratify the convention[66].

In particular, ISS/IRC notes that there is: no clear guidance on respecting the principle of subsidiarity; the potential for children to remain institutionalized and be unable to benefit from adoption should their parent be known but unwilling to care for them; no clear criteria for the eligibility of the child; no proper matching procedures; no pre or post adoption

[57] US Department of State.
[58] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 34.
[59] US Department of State; French Central Authority.
[60] Badael-Alternatives, Submission to the Tenth Session of the Universal Periodic Review, Lebanon, 2015, Victims of Forced Separation from the Biological Families Through Illegal Adoption or Placement into Institutional Care "The Right to a Family" at para 7.
[61] US Department of State.
[62] Committee on the Rights of the Child, List of Issues: State Party Reply, at 18(d).
[63] Child Frontiers Report, at p. 33.
[64] US Department of State.
[65] See for example, Baglietto, C, Cantwell, N, Dambach, M (2016). Responding to illegal adoptions: A professional handbook. Geneva, Switzerland: International Social Service; available at: https://issuu.com/issirc/docs/iss_illegal_adoption_handbook.
[66] Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations: Lebanon (2017) at 27.

support or follow up; and no parameters ensuring the child's right to search for origins.

LEGISLATION

A. International Instruments

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS	Signature (S) / Ratification (R) / Accession (A)) / In Force (F)	Website
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	26 January 1990 (S) / 14 May 1991 (R)	http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000)	10 October 2001 (S) / 8 November 2004 (R)	http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-c&chapter=4&lang=en
Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption (1993)	-	http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=69
Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children (1996)	-	http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=70

B. Country Legislation

LAW/REGULATION	Web Site
Law on the Protection of Juveniles in Conflict with the Law or at Risk (Law No. 422 of 2002)	
Standard Operating Procedures for the Protection of Juveniles in Lebanon (Operational Toolkit)	http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/SOP%20for%20Juvenile%20Protection%20in%20Lebanon.pdf

Documents in the framework of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Convention on the Rights of the Child

- Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Lebanon (CRC/C/LBN/CO/4-5), 22 June 2017
- Periodic Report on the country: Lebanon (CRC/C/4-5), 18 July 2016
- Replies to the list of issues: Lebanon (CRC/C/LBN/Q/4-5), 3 November 2016

Source: Committee on the Rights of the Child – including documents related to former sessions of the Committee: x https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=LBN&Lang=EN

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