

Conference

Rebuilding Water Justice in Lebanon: Governance, Accountability, and the Future of Water

Hybrid event
22 July 2026
09:00 am - 02:30 pm Beirut time
Gefinor Rotana hotel, Lebanon

مؤتمر

إعادة بناء العدالة المائية في لبنان: الحوكمة والمساءلة ومستقبل المياه

حضور شخصي وافتراضي
22 تموز/يوليو 2026
9:00 صباحاً - 02:30 مساءً بتوقيت بيروت
فندق جيفينور روتانا الحمراء، لبنان



ISSAM FARES INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
مؤسسة عيسى فارس للسياسات العامة والشؤون الدولية
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT



LEbanese Water Actors Platform
LEWAP



مبادرة الإصلاح العربي
ARI
Arab Reform Initiative



NATURE CONSERVATION CENTER
مركز الحفاظ على الطبيعة
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT



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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة منظمات المجتمع المدني العربية

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

22 July 2026 - Beirut, Lebanon

The Arab Reform Initiative (ARI), the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at AUB, the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), the Nature Conservation Center at the American University of Beirut (NCC), and the Lebanese Water Actors Platform (LEWAP), convened a full-day conference titled "Rebuilding Water Justice in Lebanon: Governance, Accountability, and the Future of Water" at the Rotana Gefinor hotel in Beirut.

The conference brought together researchers, practitioners, municipal actors, farmers, journalists, and development partners to confront a water sector under compounding strain. Lebanon's water crisis can no longer be understood as a question of scarcity alone: climate change, decades of governance failure, the financial collapse, and the destruction and weaponization of water infrastructure since 2023 have converged into a polycrisis that threatens livelihoods, public health, and the right of communities to remain on their land. Moving beyond narrowly technical framings, the discussions advanced a water justice perspective, one that treats water not as a commodity but as a public good and a fundamental human right, and asked who has access to safe and affordable water, who is excluded, and who bears the burden of governance failures, conflict, and environmental degradation.

The day was organized around three sessions.

The first session, “Water Governance in Lebanon: Understanding the Crisis Beyond Scarcity,” built on the evidence and analysis of ANND’s Arab Watch Report 2025 on the Right to Water and ARI’s research by Jules Hatem on water injustice under Lebanon’s flat-tariff regime. The session examined the organizational, institutional, and legal factors behind persistent governance failures, unreliable public provision, and unequal access to safe and affordable water. Jules Hatem presented how the current billing system requires households to pay formal fees regardless of the service received, forcing them to rely on costly and deeply unequal coping pathways. Habib Maalouf (ANND) critically assessed whether Lebanon’s National Water Strategy 2024–2035 adequately addresses governance, affordability, environmental sustainability, and accountability, or continues to prioritize infrastructure and cost recovery. Georges Gharios (UNESCO) provided the session’s legal and institutional foundations, examining fragmented responsibilities and the gap between legislation and implementation. Elias Kinab (Oxfam) shared lessons from working with Water Establishments and local communities to strengthen equitable and accountable public water provision. The session was moderated by Dr. Maya Nehme, Director of the Lebanese Reforestation Initiative.

The second session, “Water Under Fire: The Israeli Aggression and the Weaponization of Water,” documented a systematic pattern of strikes on pumping stations, wells, and wastewater plants, the destruction of irrigation infrastructure across the South and the Bekaa, and the contamination of soil and water. Centering the Litani River basin, it asked what these attacks mean for farmers, displaced families, and the possibility of return. Speakers were Yehya Daher, former Head of the Union of Municipalities; Saada Allaw, Head of the Journalism Department at the Legal Agenda and author of a work on the Litani; and Ahmad Jammal, Engineer at Green Southerners, with Dr. Rouba Ziadeh (CNRS) moderating.

The third session, “Governing Water for a Fairer Future: New Imaginaries for Building Back Better,” explored nature-based solutions, sustainable water management for agriculture and food systems, and accountable institutions built on community participation. Speakers were Dr. Yaser Abunnasr, Director of the AUB Nature Conservation Center; Serge Harfouche, agroecology expert and co-founder of Buzuruna Juzuruna; Roula Majdalani, expert in sustainable development policy and natural resource governance; Faraj Al Awar, Founder and Executive Director of Awar Water; and Nadim Farajalla, Chief Sustainability Officer at the Lebanese American University, with Roua Al Fares (IFI) moderating.

Across the three sessions, one message recurred: achieving water justice in Lebanon requires more than infrastructure and donor-driven reform. It requires governance reform, stronger public institutions, and a civil society able to work together across research, advocacy, and community organizing. Strengthening cooperation among civil society organizations, research institutions, and affected communities is not a supplement to water justice but a precondition for it.

Quotes from the organizers:

Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at AUB: "We see this conference as an opportunity to shift the conversation beyond emergency response and infrastructure rehabilitation toward a broader vision of water governance that is equitable, accountable, and climate resilient. More importantly, it provides a platform for policymakers, researchers, practitioners, civil society, and development partners to come together and collectively rethink how water is governed in Lebanon."

Arab Reform Initiative (ARI): "Behind every governance failure is a household paying more and getting less. A just water future means rebuilding systems that are reliable, affordable, and publicly accountable, so that being connected finally means being served."

Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND): "Lebanon's water crisis is not simply a question of physical scarcity or infrastructure; it is rooted in governance failures, fragmented institutions, unequal access, and policies that have too often prioritized large-scale projects and cost recovery over people's rights. The National Water Strategy must therefore be assessed by whether it can guarantee safe, affordable, and reliable water for all, protect groundwater and ecosystems, and strengthen transparent and accountable public institutions. Advancing the right to water requires moving beyond technical fixes toward a participatory and justice-centered model that treats water as a public good rather than a commodity."

AUB Nature Conservation Center (NCC): "At the Nature Conservation Center (NCC), water is one of our main focus areas. Through Nature-based Solutions, we work to restore ecosystems, strengthen water security, and ensure that both people and nature can thrive. This conference is more than a conversation, it is a call for collaboration, innovation, and collective action to shape a more equitable and sustainable water future for Lebanon."

Lebanese Water Actors Platform (LEWAP): "Water justice has always been a discussed topic in the sector with the aim of reaching a safe and equitable distribution of water services in Lebanon; saying this, it is important to consider the inequalities in the society where vulnerable groups especially in marginalized areas face water shortages and affordability challenges. In this conference, the three panels will open a space of dialogue among different stakeholders to discuss water governance and security and the actions for building a better future with the hopes of moving towards better water justice in Lebanon."

The organizers affirmed their shared commitment to building on the conference's conclusions and to advancing a national water strategy that places water justice, climate resilience, environmental protection, and cross-sectoral coordination at its center.

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