

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **IDLO HOLDS TALKS ON POTENTIAL JUSTICE REFORM IN LEBANON**

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) held talks on February 28-29 with leading representatives from the Lebanese judicial system on the potential for implementing a long-awaited reform of the country's judicial legislature and infrastructure.

The TAEF agreement, which marked the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1989, gave equal representation, both in parliament and in the government, to Muslims and Christians and their respective communities. However, the agreement also committed to the gradual abolishment of the practice of political and judicial confessionalism.

However nearly ten years on, political confessionalism in Lebanon still remains and Lebanese legislature continues to work around on less than 18 different religious jurisdictions. This system contains numerous legislative contradictions regarding the status of individuals and the equality of citizens. Political confessionalism has had a profound influence on all working elements of the justice system; from law schools to the legislative process, from the judicial institutional framework to the impartiality and independence of judges.

The purpose of this week's IDLO meeting was to bring together experts - judicial leaders, academics, government ministries and diplomats - to identify the necessary improvements within the justice sector and to agree upon how to tackle the political and practical challenges involved.

IDLO Director-General, William T. Loris said:

*"The need for judicial reform in Lebanon has not been in question this week. Instead, the discussion has moved on to how and when this reform can feasibly take place."*

At the meeting, financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, key research needs were defined for the development of an assistance program to support Lebanese judicial reform.

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All parties agreed that any future initiative should:

- Define the nature of the current institutional framework and legislative function, in order to identify the institutional reforms needed to reinforce the judicial sector, beginning with TAEF agreement.
- Promote the transparency of the legislative process and mobilize civil society.
- Adapt the national law in order to meet international standards on access to justice.
- Modernize the judicial system and lower its costs.
- Reinforce the institutional support and protection of judges and to improve the legal framework, in order to secure the independence and impartiality of judges.
- Strengthen the academic and technical legal framework by implementing a multi-year capacity reinforcement project at the Institute of Judicial Studies.

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For more information on the IDLO talks regarding judicial reform in Lebanon, please contact:

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#### **NOTES:**

*IDLO (International Development Law Organization) is an international, inter-governmental organization with a mandate to promote the Rule of Law and good governance in developing countries, countries in economic transition and countries emerging from post-conflict situations. Since its establishment in 1983, IDLO has contributed to the training of more than 17,000 lawyers, magistrates and officials from approximately 176 countries.*

*IDLO has its Headquarters in Rome, Italy and two Regional Offices; in Cairo, Egypt, covering Arabic-speaking countries and in Sydney, Australia, covering the Asia Pacific area. IDLO currently operates Project Offices in Afghanistan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan.*

*IDLO is funded by contributions from its 18 Member States and other donors.*

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