

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

NIZAR SAGHIEH

نزار صاغية

At liberty **Lebanon**

A founding member of the Legal Agenda, Nizar Saghieh was summoned, questioned and threatened with disbarment by the Beirut Bar Council in 2023 for criticising amendments that require Bar approval before lawyers speak to the media. No sanction against him has been reported.

HuMENA.

Prepared by HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · 8 November 2026

Case reference HM-LB-2026-001

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

A founding member of the Legal Agenda, Nizar Saghieh was summoned, questioned and threatened with disbarment by the Beirut Bar Council in 2023 for criticising amendments that require Bar approval before lawyers speak to the media. No sanction against him has been reported.

STATUS	**At liberty**
COUNTRY	**Lebanon**
CHARGES	**Violation of the Lawyers' Code of Ethics for publicly criticising amendments to the Code and allegedly undermining the Bar Association's national role**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Confirm publicly that no charge, restriction or proceeding remains against Nizar Saghieh in connection with this case.

02 Guarantee that Nizar Saghieh can continue peaceful human rights work without surveillance, summons or further reprisal.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/nizar-saghieh/

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Denial of legal counsel	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14(3)
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
Press freedom violation	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Unfair trial	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

2023

ONLINE HARASSMENT

Targeted by a social media harassment campaign

Since the summons, Saghieh has also become the target of a harassment campaign on social media

3 March 2023

CONTEXT

Bar adopts restrictive amendments

The Council of the Beirut Bar Association approved amendments to the Lawyers' Code of Ethics requiring prior approval from the Bar president before any lawyer speaks to the media or participates in public legal debates.

28 March 2023

ADMINISTRATIVE OR DISCIPLINARY HEARING

First summons without explanation

The Council of the Beirut Bar Association summoned Nizar Saghieh without clarifying the reasons for the summons.

11 April 2023

ADMINISTRATIVE OR DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Second summons

The Council summoned Saghieh a second time, again without specifying the reasons.

13 April 2023

ADMINISTRATIVE OR DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Appeal hearing held

The Beirut Court of Appeal held a hearing on the appeal filed by Saghieh and twelve other lawyers challenging the Code of Ethics amendments.

20 April 2023

ADMINISTRATIVE OR DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Interrogation before Bar Council

Saghieh appeared before the Council of the Beirut Bar Association for a four-hour interrogation about his public criticism of the amendments. His request to have his lawyers present was denied.

12 May 2023

CONTEXT

Beirut Court of Appeal dismisses the lawyers' petition against the Bar's gag rules

The Beirut Court of Appeal upheld the Bar's amendments restricting lawyers' media statements and rejected the appeals of thirteen lawyers, including Saghieh. He said he would challenge the ruling before the General Assembly of the Court of Cassation. No disciplinary decision against him was reported.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Nizar Saghieh is a leading human rights lawyer and legal researcher in Lebanon. He co-founded the Legal Agenda, an independent platform that monitors legislation and public policy in Lebanon and across the Middle East and North Africa. The organisation has become a key resource for understanding how law shapes, and often undermines, social justice in the region.

Saghieh's work spans judicial independence, environmental protection, public property rights, and the legal status of marginalised groups including refugees, LGBTQI+ individuals, and workers. He has been instrumental in efforts to hold state institutions accountable, particularly since the August 2020 Beirut port explosion and the onset of Lebanon's economic and financial collapse in 2019. His legal analysis and advocacy have made him a prominent figure in civil society's demands for transparency and justice.

The Amendments to the Code of Ethics

On 3 March 2023, the Council of the Beirut Bar Association approved amendments to Articles 39, 40, 41, and 42 of the Lawyers' Code of Ethics. The revised provisions prohibit lawyers from participating in public legal debates, discussing pending cases, or engaging with any media, including television, radio, and social media, without prior written approval from the Bar president. The amendments also forbid criticism of Bar Council members, particularly during election periods.

The restrictions apply to all lawyers registered with the Beirut Bar Association. In Lebanon, membership in either the Beirut or Tripoli Bar Association is mandatory for practising law. Violations of the Code of Ethics can result in referral to the Disciplinary Board and sanctions ranging from reprimand to suspension or disbarment.

The amendments were adopted during a period of intensifying scrutiny of state officials implicated in the banking scandal and financial crisis. Human rights lawyers viewed the timing as an effort to silence legal advocates at a moment when public accountability was most urgent.

Summons and Interrogation

Saghieh publicly criticised the amendments, arguing that they violated lawyers' freedom of expression and their professional duty to inform the public. In response, the Council of the Beirut Bar Association summoned him on 28 March 2023 and again on 11 April 2023, without specifying the reasons for the summons.

On 20 April 2023, Saghieh appeared before the Council for a hearing that lasted four hours. Twelve Council members questioned him about his public statements, which they described as a campaign to cast doubt on the Bar's national role. Saghieh requested that his lawyers accompany him; the Council

denied the request. He was interrogated alone.

No decision by the Council has been reported since. He was threatened with sanctions including disbarment. The case was not referred to the Disciplinary Board, raising concerns about due process and the Council's direct exercise of punitive authority.

Legal Challenge

Saghieh and twelve other lawyers filed an appeal before the Beirut Court of Appeals, the body with jurisdiction over union-related disputes, challenging the Council's decision to impose the amendments. The appeal argues that the restrictions violate lawyers' freedom of expression and their ability to practise their profession.

The court held a hearing on 13 April 2023. On 12 May 2023 the court upheld the amendments and rejected the lawyers' appeals. Saghieh said he would challenge the ruling before the General Assembly of the Court of Cassation.

Broader Context

The Beirut Bar Association's actions against Saghieh are part of a wider pattern of retaliation against human rights lawyers in Lebanon. The Tripoli Bar Association has taken similar measures. In December 2022, its Disciplinary Council suspended lawyer Khalid Merheb for four months after he published social media posts criticising the Minister of Interior's anti-LGBTQI+ directive. More recently, lawyer Mohammed Sablouh, who represents torture victims and Syrian refugees, was informed that authorities were pressuring the Tripoli Bar to silence him over his documentation of human rights violations.

The escalation of disciplinary actions against lawyers coincides with ongoing investigations into senior officials implicated in Lebanon's financial collapse, including the Governor of the Central Bank and executives involved in the banking scandal. Human rights defenders view the Bar Associations' restrictions as part of a broader effort to limit legal accountability and public scrutiny during a period of systemic crisis.

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SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing about the case of Nizar Saghieh, human rights lawyer, legal researcher, and co-founder of the Legal Agenda; specialising in judicial independence, public property, the environment, and marginalised groups in Lebanon, whose prosecution has ended. I am writing to ask that the case be closed properly and that no further reprisal follows.

In brief: A founding member of the Legal Agenda, Nizar Saghieh was summoned, questioned and threatened with disbarment by the Beirut Bar Council in 2023 for criticising amendments that require Bar approval before lawyers speak to the media. No sanction against him has been reported.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Confirm publicly that no charge, restriction or proceeding remains against Nizar Saghieh in connection with this case;
2. Guarantee that Nizar Saghieh can continue peaceful human rights work without surveillance, summons or further reprisal.

I will continue to follow this case until no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026