

The Feminist Platform's Position on the Laws Abolishing the Death Penalty, Granting a General Amnesty, and Regulating the Media

September 2026

The Feminist Platform in Lebanon has followed the laws adopted by Parliament during its legislative session on 11 and 12 August 2026, in particular the law abolishing the death penalty, the law granting a general amnesty and exceptionally reducing certain sentences, and the media law.

While these laws differ fundamentally in their content and impact, the Feminist Platform, as a coordinating framework bringing together feminist, human rights, media organizations, institutions and initiatives, believes that their assessment cannot be separated from a fundamental question: what kind of justice do we want in Lebanon? Who do laws actually protect, and who bears the cost when those laws are inadequately or unfairly applied?

For us, a feminist approach to justice does not mean calling for harsher punishments simply for the sake of punishment, nor does it mean tolerating crimes under humanitarian or political pretexts. Feminist justice is a system that protects the right to life and dignity, guarantees fair trials, safeguards the rights of victims and survivors, and holds perpetrators accountable without discrimination or political, class-based or sectarian protection.

From this standpoint, the Platform declares the following:

First: Abolishing the death penalty is a historic human rights step that must be followed by reform of the justice system

The Feminist Platform welcomes the abolition of the death penalty in Lebanon and considers it an important human rights advance, consistent with the right to life and with the global movement towards abolishing this cruel and irreversible punishment.

The Platform sees no contradiction between rejecting the death penalty and demanding serious and rigorous accountability for perpetrators of femicide and violence against women. Abolishing the death penalty does not mean abolishing accountability. The danger facing women in Lebanon does not result from the absence of the death penalty, but from a system that continues to suffer from lengthy trials, inadequate protection, unequal access to justice, and the possibility of political, social and financial influence interfering with judicial processes. This is compounded by a long-standing legal and social tendency to treat certain forms of gender-based violence with undue leniency.

The abolition of the death penalty should therefore mark the beginning of a broader reform process that ensures fair trials within reasonable timeframes, an independent judiciary, effective protection for survivors, complainants and witnesses, respect for the rights of victims' families, and no leniency

towards femicide or discriminatory use of mitigating circumstances and excuses that, in practice, diminish the seriousness of such crimes.

The Platform also calls for clarification of the legal nature of the alternative sentence introduced under the new law, namely “aggravated life imprisonment with hard labour,” whose definition remains broad and unclear. This sentence must be reviewed to ensure that one inhumane punishment is not replaced by another that is vague or inconsistent with standards of human dignity.

This is necessarily linked to the need to reform Lebanon’s prison and detention system, accelerate trials, reduce excessive pretrial detention, and adopt rehabilitation and reintegration policies that respect the rights and dignity of women and men in detention.

A state that respects life does not execute people, but neither does it leave victims without justice.

Second: The General Amnesty Law in its current form entrenches the crisis of impunity instead of addressing it

The Feminist Platform is not opposed to the principle of amnesty in absolute terms. Under certain circumstances, amnesty may be a means of addressing clear injustices, particularly in cases of prolonged detention, minor offences, or when a sentence becomes disproportionate to the act committed. Amnesty, however, cannot replace the justice system, serve as a means of addressing the collapse of the prison system, or become a political settlement between political and sectarian forces.

For this reason, the Platform opposes the General Amnesty Law in the form adopted by Parliament because of its broad criteria and exceptions, and because it reproduces one of the most dangerous features of the Lebanese system: turning accountability into the exception while making impunity the norm.

Thirty-five years after the 1991 general amnesty that followed the civil war, which entrenched an approach of closing the chapter on violations without accountability and helped consolidate a culture of impunity instead of establishing a transitional justice process capable of uncovering the truth and providing justice to victims, Lebanon does not need a new amnesty based on balances of power and sectarian interests. It needs a state governed by the rule of law, capable of conducting fair trials within reasonable timeframes, an independent judiciary, and meaningful prison reform.

From a feminist perspective in particular, our question is not only: who will leave prison? It is also: who will pay the price for the absence of accountability?

In societies already marked by severe power imbalances, women and the most marginalized groups pay a disproportionate price when the rule of law is weak. Women subjected to violence need institutions that protect them, investigate violations and hold perpetrators accountable. When a culture of settlements, amnesties and sentence reductions becomes entrenched, confidence in

the possibility of obtaining justice diminishes, sending a clear message to victims and survivors that their rights may become part of a broader political bargain.

The Platform stresses that the exclusion of femicide from the amnesty provided for under the law is necessary, but it is not sufficient if other provisions in the law allow perpetrators of such crimes to benefit from reduced sentences or other measures that effectively lead to the same result. What is required is a guarantee that vague formulations or sentence-reduction mechanisms do not become a back door to impunity.

At the same time, the circumstances of women prisoners reveal another form of injustice that must not be ignored. The fact that some women have completed their prison sentences but are unable to leave prison because they cannot afford to pay fines or financial obligations amounts to punishment for poverty and cannot be justified. This is an injustice that the Amnesty Law has failed to address. Such cases must be addressed through fair and lasting reforms to sentencing and enforcement systems, rather than through a broad amnesty law subject to political and sectarian bargaining.

Groups with political or sectarian backing are often best positioned to turn an amnesty into an advantage, while those with the least influence remain trapped within the same system that produced injustice in the first place.

Similarly, the crisis of prison overcrowding and prolonged detention cannot be periodically addressed simply by emptying prisons. The causes of overcrowding must instead be tackled: slow judicial processes, excessive pretrial detention, disproportionate sentences, the absence of alternatives to imprisonment, and poor conditions of detention.

Accordingly, the Feminist Platform calls on the President of the Republic to exercise his constitutional powers and request reconsideration of the General Amnesty Law, with a view to redrafting it according to clear, transparent and rights-based standards that safeguard the rights of victims, prevent impunity and, at the same time, address the genuine injustices faced by detainees and convicted persons.

Third: There can be no free feminist space without free media

The Feminist Platform views the Media Law from a perspective that goes beyond the media sector itself. Freedom of the press and freedom of expression are not merely professional matters concerning journalists. They are essential conditions for the work of civil society and feminist and human rights movements, and for the ability to expose violence, discrimination, corruption and violations, and to bring the voices of women and marginalized groups into the public sphere.

The Platform positively acknowledges a number of reforms introduced by the new law, including strengthening civil rather than criminal liability in publication-related cases, protecting journalistic sources, expanding the scope of the right to freedom of expression, facilitating the establishment of media institutions, and enshrining freedom of trade union activity.

These gains, however, do not eliminate serious concerns regarding Article 104, which leaves open the possibility of criminalization and imprisonment for what is described as “false” or “misleading” information, without sufficiently precise definitions or safeguards to prevent arbitrary use.

For a feminist and human rights movement, this issue has particular significance.

Women journalists, activists and human rights defenders already face increasing forms of intimidation, defamation, digital violence and organized campaigns. Attacks against them often take on a sexualized or highly personal character, targeting their reputation, families and private lives with the aim of silencing them.

In such an environment, combating disinformation must not become an additional tool that can be used against those who expose violations or criticize people in positions of authority and influence.

Confronting false information is a democratic necessity, but truth is not protected through imprisonment, nor by granting authorities vague legal provisions that allow them to determine what is true and what is false.

The Platform therefore calls for Article 104 to be amended so that it is fully aligned with international standards on freedom of expression, and for the implementation of the Media Law to be governed by the principle of protecting freedom of the press and freedom of expression, rather than expanding the scope for prosecuting journalists and activists or protecting powerful interests and influential actors.

The Justice We Want

Despite their differences, the three laws raise one overarching question that goes beyond the legislative texts themselves: is Lebanon building a coherent system of rights and justice, or does it continue to address its crises through fragmented laws and political settlements?

For the Feminist Platform, women’s rights cannot be separated from the structure of the state and its institutions.

There can be no protection for women without an independent and effective judiciary.

There can be no justice for victims where a culture of impunity prevails.

There can be no prison reform through recurring amnesties.

And there can be no free feminist movement in a space where freedom of the media and freedom of expression are under threat.