

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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February 21, 2017

Judge Abdallah Ahmed
Director General
Ministry of Social Affairs
Beirut, Lebanon

Dear Judge Abdallah Ahmed,

I am writing on behalf of Human Rights Watch to request a meeting and to seek information regarding the Ministry of Social Affairs' efforts to promote and protect the rights of children with disabilities in Lebanon.

Human Rights Watch is an independent nongovernmental organization dedicated to defending and protecting human rights, working on more than 90 countries around the world. We are currently conducting research on the situation of children with disabilities in Lebanon, including their ability to access education and services in their communities.

We greatly appreciate Ms. Marie El Hajj and Ms. Majida Jbeili's willingness to have an introductory meeting with us on February 2, 2017.

We would appreciate your assistance in helping us to understand the situation of children with disabilities in Lebanon, and the Ministry's efforts to promote and protect their rights by responding to the questions that follow this letter and by meeting with our staff at a time that is convenient for you. We believe it is important to reflect the Ministry's efforts on this issue in our research.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at fakihl@hrw.org.

Yours sincerely,



Lama Fakhri
Deputy Director
Middle East and North Africa
Human Rights Watch

Annex of Questions

- What types of services, support, and programming does the Ministry of Social Affairs provide children with disabilities and their families? We are particularly interested in any services, support, and programming geared towards education for children with disabilities.
- What is the range of support (including, but not limited to, education and rehabilitation) offered by the Ministry to public schools, private schools, and institutions? What is the range of support the Ministry offers children with disabilities and their families in their local communities?
- How many children (0-18 years of age) currently have a disability card issued by the Ministry? What rights, benefits, and support does this card entitle them to? What is the process for acquiring a disability card?
- How does the Ministry of Social Affairs communicate with the public, and in particular, families with children with disabilities, about the services, support, and programming that is available, including educational programming?
- With regard to programming and support to Ministry contracted institutions:
 - Please provide a list of all Ministry contracted institutions that support children with disabilities. How many children with disabilities does MOSA support at each institution? How many children with disabilities are at each institution?

- How much money does the Ministry of Social Affairs provide institutions for each child with a disability? If this amount varies, what are the factors on which it varies? Do these factors affect the admission process for particular institutions?
- How many and which institutions provide education to children with disabilities? Which of these institutions provide accredited education? How many children receive that standard of education? In the cases in which education is not provided at a residential institution, to your knowledge, are children with disabilities receiving an education outside of the institution? How many children with disabilities receive an education in mainstream public schools? Which schools do these children attend?
- For children with disabilities who attend accredited and non-accredited school within an institution, are there any statistics available on students' passage and graduation rates? Is there a system in place to monitor the quality of education within these institutions?
- Does the Ministry provide transportation to and from institutions or mainstream schools for children with disabilities?
- Which institutions provide residential care? Which of these provide residential support for children with disabilities?
- What monitoring mechanisms exist to ensure the rights of children with disabilities are respected at institutions? Please describe this monitoring role if so.
- Who is part of the monitoring mechanism? How often do they visit institutions? What criteria are used for evaluation?
- Is there a mechanism within the Ministry for families to report concerns about the treatment of their children in institutions supported by the Ministry? If so, how many complaints have there been in the last five years? How are they addressed? Is there a complaint mechanism accessible to children with disabilities within institutions?
- As part of the range of services provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs, does the Ministry oversee, fund, organize, or otherwise support the training of teachers or caregivers working with children with disabilities?

- From your perspective, what are the greatest challenges that families face in accessing education for children with disabilities? Does the Ministry of Social Affairs' range of programming enable them to overcome these obstacles? Do other Ministries or service providers meeting the needs not covered by the Ministry of Social Affairs?
- What challenges does the Ministry of Social Affairs face in delivering support to families of children with disabilities? What would enable to Ministry to overcome these obstacles? Where do you think programming and delivery needs to improve?
- Under what law or guidelines are children with disabilities placed in residential care? Is there a timeframe for how long a child can live in a residential institution? Are there cases in which Ministry of Social Affairs has assessed children with disabilities should be legally separated from their parents? If so how many children? Under what law are they separated? What is the process to do so? In those cases, who becomes the legal guardian of the child?
- Does the Ministry have a policy on ensuring the best interest of the child are always respected? How do you decide what are the child's best interests'?