



Lebanon has a unique identity closely linked to the sea, as it is located on the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea along a 220-kilometer coastal stretch. This identity has been reflected in various cultural, social and economic practices that shaped civilizations and coastal cities throughout the centuries.

But the Lebanese coastline has witnessed several encroachments that changed its features, obstructed its continuity, and limited accessibility. So, inhabitants of Lebanese coastal cities have often lost their connection to the sea.

With the beginning of the civil war and the weakness of the Lebanese state, many influential individuals and groups encroached on large parts of the coast. The encroachments remained even after the ceasefire, and they took several forms, some of them were “regularized occupations” protected through decrees issued by the government. In reality, regularized occupation decrees are issued and implemented without conforming to the legal mandate or the signed international agreements. Some of the encroachments were considered violations awaiting removal.

In 2012, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport published a detailed report on encroachments on maritime public domain. The area of “regularized occupation” was estimated at 2.5 million square meters, while the area of unregularized encroachment was also estimated at least 2.5 million square meters, bringing the total area of the encroachment to more than 5 million square meters as a whole.

These encroachments led to the destruction of several archaeological sites, the deterioration of the beach’s ecological and economic value, and even the loss of a public space for cultural and social practices, which is a fundamental right of citizens.

In the face of Lebanon’s economic and financial crisis, in October 2017, the parliament passed the Law “Settlement of infringements on Maritime Public Domain” (Law No. 64/2017) to raise funds by imposing some low-value fines on the encroachers, without addressing the main topic of removing the encroachments and restoring the right to access the beach as a public property, nor prohibiting occupation decrees that regularize coastal encroachments.

Based on all the above, safeguarding the Lebanese coast is not only a struggle to protect a public space or a right of the Lebanese, but also a struggle to preserve Lebanon’s identity and history.

Under the slogan “The beach for All People”, NAHNOO is launching an advocacy campaign that aims at amending the budget Law 64/2017, by adding a clause that “restricts the right to occupy the Maritime Public Domain of the Lebanese State only to take into account the requirements of national defense and the public interest”. Private individuals and companies must be prevented from occupying the coast and monopolizing its economic value.

ROAD MAP FOR PROTECTING THE LEBANESE BEACH:

The law amendment is one goal in NAHNOO’s Beach Protection Strategy. It aligns with the other goals:

- Develop a comprehensive zoning plan of the beach, as well as local guidelines based on this plan for the Lebanese land arrangement, which respects and implements the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol.
- Remove all violations at the entire coast.
- Update the delineation of the Maritime Public Domain
- Update the decision 144/s on 1925, especially the issue of the formation of the marine public domain commission.



WHAT ARGUMENTS MOTIVATE US TO PROTECT THE COAST?

LEGAL ARGUMENTS FOR BEACH PROTECTION

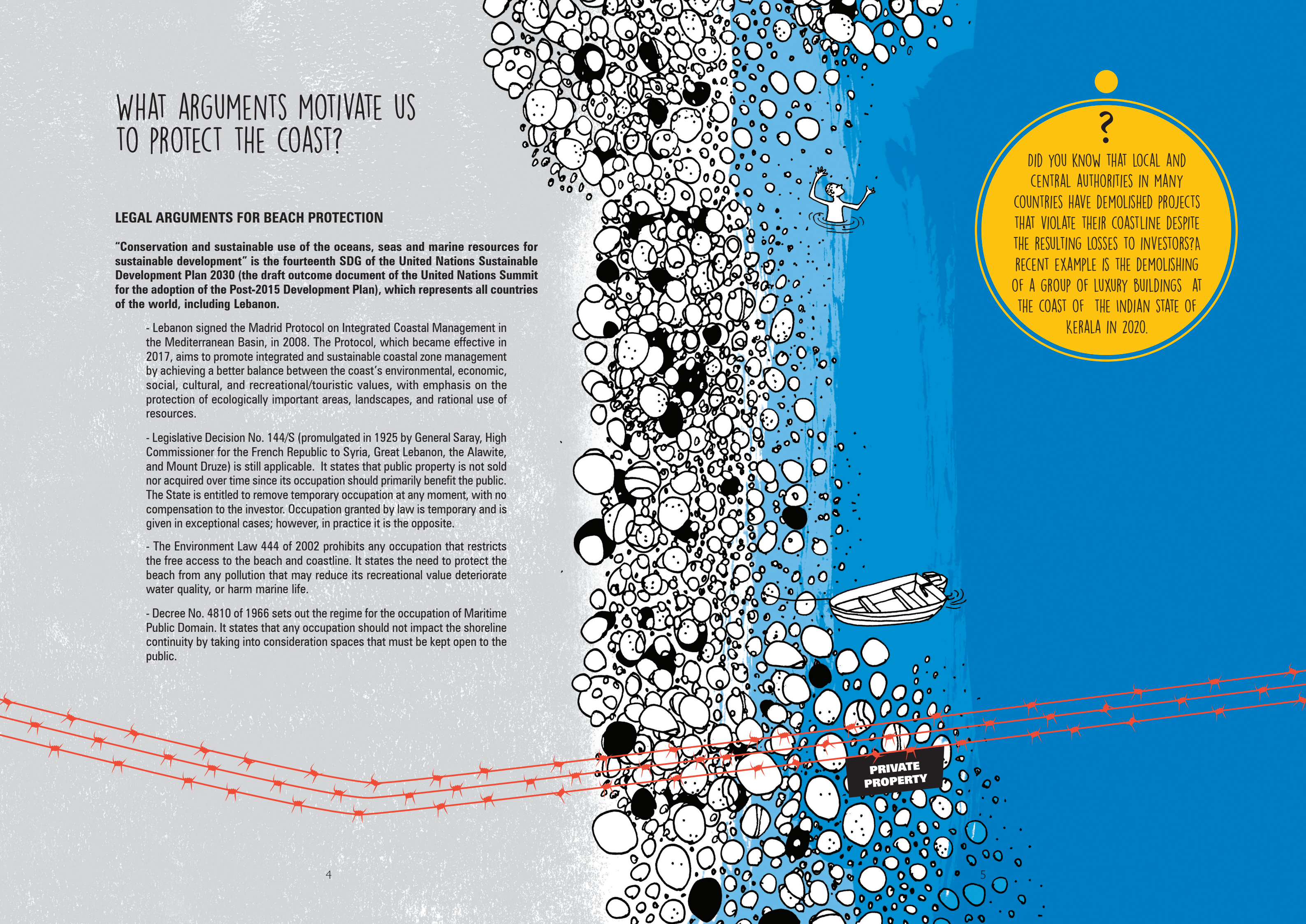
“Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” is the fourteenth SDG of the United Nations Sustainable Development Plan 2030 (the draft outcome document of the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Plan), which represents all countries of the world, including Lebanon.

- Lebanon signed the Madrid Protocol on Integrated Coastal Management in the Mediterranean Basin, in 2008. The Protocol, which became effective in 2017, aims to promote integrated and sustainable coastal zone management by achieving a better balance between the coast’s environmental, economic, social, cultural, and recreational/touristic values, with emphasis on the protection of ecologically important areas, landscapes, and rational use of resources.

- Legislative Decision No. 144/S (promulgated in 1925 by General Saray, High Commissioner for the French Republic to Syria, Great Lebanon, the Alawite, and Mount Druze) is still applicable. It states that public property is not sold nor acquired over time since its occupation should primarily benefit the public. The State is entitled to remove temporary occupation at any moment, with no compensation to the investor. Occupation granted by law is temporary and is given in exceptional cases; however, in practice it is the opposite.

- The Environment Law 444 of 2002 prohibits any occupation that restricts the free access to the beach and coastline. It states the need to protect the beach from any pollution that may reduce its recreational value deteriorate water quality, or harm marine life.

- Decree No. 4810 of 1966 sets out the regime for the occupation of Maritime Public Domain. It states that any occupation should not impact the shoreline continuity by taking into consideration spaces that must be kept open to the public.



ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS

In most Mediterranean countries, the beach plays an important economic role by contributing to the national economy. Because of successive policies that encourage private investment on the beach under the pretext of economic development, this natural habitat and ecotourism hotspot which could attract local and international tourists is threatened by private development projects.

NAHNOO studied the economic value of the Lebanese beach and took the city of Tyre and Kfarabida as a model, which shows:

- Profit in private resorts is limited to one person or a small group of individuals. In contrast, public beaches have economic value that benefit the city and its population
- Private resorts employ a small number of people while public beach of Tyre employs over 600 people
- In the summer, the municipality of Tyre earns more than 4 billion liras Lebanese from Beach Services
- The average revenue for businesses in Tyre during the summer season increases between 10% and 70%
- Private resorts and the construction and sewerage that pours into the sea destroy the fishing profession, while public beaches attract fishermen, tourists, and preserve the environment and cultural heritage
- Activities vary on public beaches, while they are limited in private resorts.

Thus, investment in the public spaces and providing clean, convenient, protected, and properly managed public beaches, distributes wealth and benefits, thereby developing the city better and more sustainably.

The maritime public domain's value exceeds that of its price because it is a fixed and sustainable resource and source of income. In the face of the many private ambitions, there is a need to be aware of the importance of this national wealth and to try to defend it to preserve Lebanon's finances, wealth and even sovereignty.

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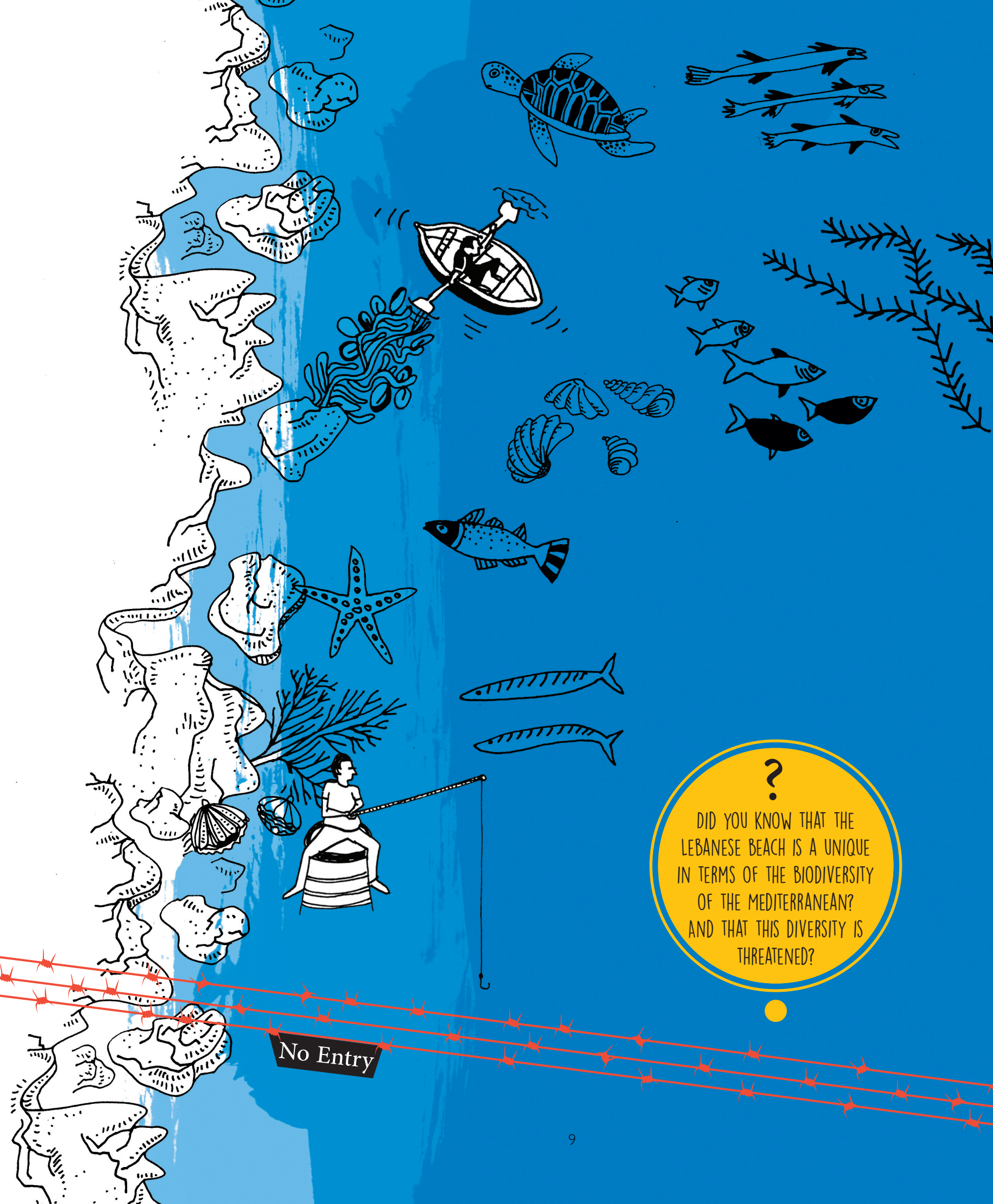
DID YOU KNOW THAT FRANCE
ALLOCATES BILLIONS OF
DOLLARS ANNUALLY TO BUY
LAND NEAR THE BEACH TO
PROTECT IT?

PRIVATE

ENVIRONMENTAL ARGUMENTS

- Rapid demographic changes, coupled with unregulated urban sprawl, resorts, and wastewater discharge have adversely affected the cleanliness of the beach, its unique biodiversity, and the fishing sector (Ministry of Environment / United Nations Development Program). The construction limited the fishermen's access to the beach for their activity and some 1,685 species of marine animals in the Lebanese sea were threatened.
- The pressure on marine resources has led to the collapse of many fishing areas in Lebanon and has reduced the sector's productivity, thereby jeopardizing the livelihoods of coastal communities and the food security of the country (FAO, 2020).
- Based on a scientific article published in 2019 (Badreddine et al.), one important environmental feature of the coast of Lebanon and the Mediterranean is the Vermetid Reefs, a unique and highly diverse ecosystem, threatened by urban sprawl and human malfunctioning, not to mention climate change.
- Based on a 2019 study (Kazour et al.), Lebanese water and marine life are highly contaminated by microplastic particles as a result of people throwing waste in diverse and random places ending in the sea, as well as the construction of a seaside garbage dumpster. These projects are conducted without regard to an accurate environmental assessment or without proper environmental management that respects the environmental characteristic of each site.
- 40 locations were highlighted on the Lebanese coast in terms of high environmental importance and the need to manage and protect them from all natural or human threats according to a 2012 UNEP study, conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Lebanon under the Environmental Resources Control Project

Thus, the current state of the public beach calls for legislative measures and practices to protect this natural resource rich in environmental resources and preserve its ecosystem.



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DID YOU KNOW THAT THE
LEBANESE BEACH IS A UNIQUE
IN TERMS OF THE BIODIVERSITY
OF THE MEDITERRANEAN?
AND THAT THIS DIVERSITY IS
THREATENED?

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DID YOU KNOW THAT
SEVERAL STATES ARE SEEKING
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
OF THEIR COASTAL CITIES
THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF
INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE
MANAGEMENT



STOP
Do Not
Enter

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ARGUMENTS:

- Cultural activities and practices thrive on Lebanon's public beaches such as the Baher al-Eid in Sidon and the Nouras in the Dalia of Beirut and the Orbai't Ayoub in Ramlet el-Bayda, as well as fishing areas, aquaculture, salt flats and other sea-related occupations. However, these practices began to recede due to poor urban planning, construction projects and encroachment on the beach, leading to many coastal landmarks being exposed, damaged, or destroyed.
- The study conducted by NAHNOO, entitled "The economy and the beach: Articulating the value of public beaches to the cities of Tyre and Kfarabida", shows that:
 - Private resorts limit people's activity while public beaches open the way to meet, cultural, social, and even creative practices.
 - Building on the beach leads to losing its historical and social role as a space for reflection, relaxation, social gatherings and diverse cultural and sports practices.
 - The beach is known to have many archaeological sites, but construction has distorted or even eliminated many of them, obliterating history, and disorienting Lebanon's cultural identity.

WHAT TO DO:

Your role as an elected representative to amend the 2017 budget Law with a single article:

PROPOSED DRAFT LAW: ARTICLE 1:

"As of its date, it is forbidden for any official body to authorize to an individual or legal entity to occupy the maritime public domain or to occupy the bottom of the territorial waters, its cores, or its surface. The right to occupy the maritime public domain in the Lebanese Republic shall be restricted to the requirements of national defense and the public interest.

YOUR ROLE AS A CITIZENS OR AS A SOCIETY:

Join the campaign to contribute to the work being done to approve the law amendment, if not, follow and support the campaign on our web pages



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