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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0464/2021**

14.9.2021

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Lebanon  
(2021/2878(RSP))

**Marisa Matias**  
on behalf of The Left Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Lebanon  
(2021/2878(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Charter of the United Nations,
  - having regard to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the additional protocols thereto,
  - having regard to the statements of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and her spokesperson on the situation in Lebanon,
  - having regard to the UNRWA and UNHCR reports on the situation in Lebanon,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Lebanese people took to the streets on 17 October 2019 and started a cycle of protests and mobilisation against the country's rulers, which is still continuing today; whereas what were originally characterised as protests against the increase of taxes on specific products became a mass movement against the country's confessional system, corruption and neoliberal economic policies;
- B. whereas the Lebanese economic situation has been continuously deteriorating in recent years; whereas in 2020 there was a fall of 40 % in per capita GDP; whereas the Lebanese pound has lost 90 % of its value since 2019, resulting in a massive loss of purchasing power for the majority of the population, parallel to an increase in prices which has made the price of basic foodstuffs go up by 400 %; whereas according to the UN 74 % of the Lebanese population now lives in poverty, up from 42 % in 2019; whereas unemployment has hit a record of 46 %;
- C. whereas the deteriorating economic situation and the rise in poverty have led to difficulties in accessing basic rights such as healthcare and housing; whereas, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, more than a third of the Lebanese population cannot access any form of healthcare or medicine; whereas the economic crisis has led to medicine shortages in the country; whereas in recent decades Lebanon has experienced waves of privatisations and market deregulation, which have paved the way for this situation;
- D. whereas there are currently serious electricity and gas shortages in the country, which are causing the Lebanese people's livelihoods to further deteriorate; whereas the closure of major power plants during the summer has caused widespread blackouts and affected key infrastructure such as hospitals; whereas fuel shortage has created social tensions resulting in outbreaks of violence;
- E. whereas Lebanon is one of the most unequal countries in the world, with one of the highest rates of billionaires per capita despite the high rates of poverty; whereas the richest 10 % possess over 70 % of the country's wealth;

- F. whereas Lebanon has suffered from widespread corruption, exacerbated by the confessional political system, which deters any form of social and political organisation on a national level and promotes a sectarian approach; whereas certain political parties have repeatedly agreed to end the confessional system in line with popular demands, but have so far failed to do so;
- G. whereas in this context of social protests, on 4 August 2020 an explosion in the port of Beirut, caused by 2 750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate being stored without appropriate security measures, caused 218 deaths, over 7 000 injuries and left an estimated 300 000 people homeless; whereas those politically responsible for this explosion are yet to be held accountable;
- H. whereas the ammonium nitrate had entered Beirut aboard the Moldovan-flagged Rhosus ship in November 2013 and had been stored in the port's hangars; whereas high-ranking political and military representatives were made aware of the danger of the situation and yet did not take the appropriate action; whereas a judicial investigation into this issue is ongoing in Lebanon; whereas on 2 July 2021 the judge in charge of this investigation asked the Lebanese Parliament to lift the impunity of three former ministers who are currently parliamentarians in relation to this case; whereas the Lebanese Parliament has yet to take action;
- I. whereas the port of Beirut received over 70 % of the country's imported goods; whereas the explosion has had a dramatic impact on the availability of basic products, including food;
- J. whereas on 10 August 2020 the government led by Prime Minister Hassan Diab fell as a result of popular pressure; whereas Mustafa Adib and Saad Hariri were nominated to form a government after the fall of Hassan Diab, with the involvement of France and Saudi Arabia in the process, but failed to do so; whereas multimillionaire businessman Najib Mikati was designated by President Michel Aoun in July 2021 to form a government, and announced a new cabinet on 10 September 2021, comprising 24 members, only one of whom is a woman; whereas the state prosecutor of the Mount Lebanon region has accused Mikati of unlawful enrichment in a case which is still open;
- K. whereas according to Lebanese law, general elections must be held in May 2022; whereas the Lebanese electoral system is based on sectarianism and does not ensure adequate representation of the country's political reality; whereas protesters have repeatedly called for a new and proportional electoral system;
- L. whereas in July 2021 the Council adopted a framework for targeted sanctions against Lebanese officials or organisations responsible for obstructing or undermining the democratic political process or the implementation of plans and reforms approved by the Lebanese authorities and supported by international actions, or against those involved in serious financial misconduct; whereas this framework has still not been applied against any individual or organisation;
- M. whereas the protests have been met with violence from the authorities and it is estimated that 11 people have been killed and more than 1 500 wounded by security forces since the beginning of the protests; whereas human rights organisations have denounced the arbitrary detention of protesters and torture by security forces; whereas

on 13 July and 11 August 2021 security forces used force to disperse dozens of protesters, including victims of the Beirut port explosion and their relatives who were protesting the impunity of those responsible for it;

- N. whereas right-wing militias related to political parties such as the Lebanese Forces have also attacked demonstrators and progressive forces calling for an end to impunity; whereas on 4 August 2021 during the protests on the anniversary of the Beirut port explosion, Lebanese Forces carried out a premeditated attack on Communist Party activists who were organising and participating in the demonstrations;
- O. whereas the Lebanese judiciary system has a series of structural problems resulting from direct political interference, and whereas the right to a fair trial is not guaranteed in the country; whereas there have repeatedly been political campaigns against prosecutors and judges handling corruption cases; whereas there is an ongoing campaign against judge Tarek Bitar, who was appointed to the case of the Beirut port explosion, which includes refusal to cooperate with the investigation;
- P. whereas there have been serious attacks on press freedom in the context of the protests, including unjustified arrests of journalists and censorship of Lebanese media;
- Q. whereas Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code is still used to prosecute and arrest LGBTI people; whereas in some areas of the country, men suspected of same-sex relations are routinely arrested and subjected to degrading treatment in police stations;
- R. whereas more than 850 000 Syrian refugees are registered with the UNHCR in Lebanon; whereas it is estimated that the actual number is double that, as the Lebanese authorities stopped allowing the UNHCR to register Syrian refugees in 2015; whereas the Syrian population in Lebanon has been hit very hard by the ongoing economic crisis and over 90 % of them live in extreme poverty, up from 55 % in 2019;
- S. whereas there are 479 000 Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, around half of them living in one of the country's 12 refugee camps and dependent on UNRWA assistance for their livelihood; whereas the conditions in these camps have deteriorated and are characterised by overcrowding and poor housing conditions; whereas, as they are not formally citizens of a state, Palestinian refugees are discriminated against in Lebanon and cannot own property or access 39 professions;
- T. whereas the Israeli military routinely attempts to intimidate the Lebanese authorities and population by conducting military flights and other exercises in Lebanese airspace; whereas since the end of the 2006 war Israel has continued to launch airstrikes on southern Lebanon, the latest one on 5 August 2021; whereas the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has been present in southern Lebanon since 1978, established with the mandate of confirming Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon after its invasion; whereas since the mission was established, Israel has launched military invasions of the country on two more occasions; whereas Israel has continuously occupied a portion of Lebanese land known as the Shebaa Farms since 1967;
- 1. Expresses its full solidarity with the Lebanese people in the current context of overlapping health, political, economic and social crises; expresses its support to those calling for social and economic justice, as well as the end of corruption and

sectarianism, in the streets of Lebanon;

2. Insists that the Lebanese people must decide their own future without external interference and recalls that the ongoing crises are connected to foreign meddling in Lebanon's internal affairs;
3. Recalls that elections must be held in May 2022 and any attempt to postpone them with the excuse of the ongoing crises would be a way to perpetuate the current elites who have created this situation and once again ignore the true will of the Lebanese people;
4. Highlights that demonstrators in Lebanon are expressing the unity of the Lebanese population despite its religious diversity and condemns those attempting to instrumentalise the protests in order to promote their own interests;
5. Condemns the violent attacks on protesters, both by the security forces and by other armed groups, and expects all these cases to be properly investigated and anyone found guilty to be prosecuted; expresses concern at the reports of increasing police violence, also within police stations, and of targeted attacks against journalists and activists;
6. Insists on the need to include local civil society organisations in the design, planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation of all international cooperation interventions with both Lebanese and non-Lebanese populations; stresses the need to protect and promote an independent civil space for activists, human rights defenders and local civil society organisations in the ongoing context;
7. Calls for an immediate end to the culture of impunity that prevails in Lebanese institutions and urges the authorities to remove all obstacles to ongoing judicial investigations, particularly in cases of corruption;
8. Urges the EU and its Member States to take the lead at the UN Human Rights Council to secure a resolution establishing an international, independent investigation into the Beirut port explosion mandated with conducting a thorough investigation into violations and abuses related to the explosion and the domestic judicial investigation, and formulating recommendations on measures necessary to guarantee that those responsible for these violations and abuses are held accountable and to address the underlying systemic failures that led to the explosion and to the failure of the domestic investigation;
9. Recalls that the current situation in Lebanon, including the massive increase in prices of basic products, growing poverty, and lack of access to rights such as healthcare, is directly linked to neoliberal and austerity policies; warns against the adoption of new packages stemming from international financial institutions that are conditional upon a series of reforms that would further entrench this failed model;
10. Calls for the repeal of Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code and for end to all forms of legal and institutional violence and persecution of LGBTI people; calls for the abolition of other discriminatory laws such as those barring Palestinians from the same rights as other foreign residents;
11. Calls for the EU and its Member States to create and increase existing resettlement

schemes for Syrian refugees from Lebanon; recalls that collective deportations are in violation of international law; deplores the cases of forced deportations of Syrian refugees by the Lebanese authorities and calls for these deportations to be stopped immediately;

12. Calls for additional EU support for the UN's Lebanon Humanitarian Fund in order to guarantee high-quality reception conditions and protection for Syrian refugees in Lebanon; stresses the need to also make more resources available for locally led and locally owned organisations and initiatives supporting the livelihood of refugees, including research initiatives documenting human rights abuses in Lebanon and in the context of forced returns;
13. Expresses deep concern regarding a possible rupture of UNRWA's emergency programming for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in 2022 due to the decrease in contributions to the agency, and warns of the potential consequences this could have; reiterates therefore its call for increased support to UNRWA and its emergency appeal given the key role it has for Palestinian communities in Lebanon;
14. Calls for the immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the Shebaa Farms and all other territories Israel occupies;
15. Insists on the need to ensure equal access to PCR tests and COVID-19 vaccines to all Lebanese and non-Lebanese people on an equal basis, including in rural and semi-rural areas, and to remove the need for a residency number in order to access the vaccines, as many people living in Lebanon do not have one;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Parliament of Lebanon, the UN Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and the League of Arab States.