



Plenary sitting

B9-0326/2023

5.7.2023

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
(2023/2742(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Lebanon
(2023/2742(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Lebanon, in particular its resolution of 16 September 2021 on the situation in Lebanon¹,
 - having regard to previous UN Security Council resolutions, in particular 1559 (2004), 1701(2006), 2539 (2020), 2591 (2021) and 2650 (2022),
 - having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Lebanon, of the other part²,
 - having regard to the Council Decision 2007/860/EC of 10 December 2007 providing Community macro-financial assistance to Lebanon³,
 - having regard to the final report by the European Union Election Observation Mission to Lebanon 2022,
 - having regard to the commitments agreed in the framework of the EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities in November 2016, the CEDRE (Conférence économique pour le développement, par les réformes et avec les entreprises) Conference on 6 April 2018, the Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) in December 2020 and the International Support Group for Lebanon meetings on 11 December 2019, 23 September 2020 and 19 May 2021,
 - having regard to the statement of 1 November 2022 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on the political situation in Lebanon,
 - having regard to the statement of 13 November 2022 by the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon on the current situation in Lebanon,
 - having regard to the statement of 3 April 2023 by the UN Special Coordinator on the municipal elections in Lebanon,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the current situation in Lebanon is extremely alarming and deeply concerning due to the political, economic, social, financial and health crises, and the state of

¹ OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 143.

² OJ L 143, 30.5.2006, p. 2.

³ OJ L 337, 21.12.2007, p. 111.

institutional breakdown; whereas inflation of electricity, gas and water prices peaked at nearly 600 % in June 2022;

- B. whereas Lebanon is a close and important partner of the European Union; whereas this partnership is based on common interests, long-standing historical and cultural ties, regular political and social dialogue and wide-ranging people-to-people contacts; whereas Lebanon has a vibrant civil society and political parties with numerous activists, community leaders, academics, artists and youth groups mobilising and calling for urgent reforms;
- C. whereas on 15 May 2022 parliamentary elections were held in Lebanon, after which Hezbollah and its allies lost their majority in the parliament and Najib Mikati was designated once again by a majority of Hezbollah allies and some independents to form a new government, but he failed to do so due to political blockade; whereas the situation persisted until President Michel Aoun left office leaving Mikati's caretaker government in charge of the country;
- D. whereas Hezbollah, Amal and their allies resorted to unconstitutional tactics such as breaking quorums to block the election of the opposition candidate; whereas the Speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon Nabih Berri refuses to hold an open election session to elect a president, contrary to the provisions of the Lebanese constitution; whereas this has resulted in 10 months of presidential elections being blocked at a time of dire need for a president to implement the necessary reforms, prevent total collapse and restore the state institutions and the democratic system; whereas Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1277 of 30 July 2021 provides for the possibility of imposing sanctions against persons and entities who are responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon;
- E. whereas Lebanon was due to hold municipal elections on 31 May 2023; whereas the vote, scheduled to take place last year, was postponed as it coincided with the country's parliamentary elections; whereas Lebanon's caretaker Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi ensured that the country was ready to hold municipal elections; whereas the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon fully supports these elections and considers them important for adhering to Lebanon's constitutional timelines and democratic practices, at a time when the country is already facing a presidential vacancy and widespread institutional paralysis; whereas the Lebanese Parliament, with the votes of Hezbollah, Amal, the Free Patriotic Movement and allies' political groups, decided to postpone the country's municipal elections for a maximum of one year until 31 May 2024 amid funding shortages; whereas this postponement could further intensify the existing institutional paralysis and the Lebanese people's lack of confidence in democracy;
- F. whereas three years after the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020, the investigation into the causes that led to it has not yet been concluded, largely due to abuse of power exerted by Hezbollah and their allies obstructing the domestic investigation; whereas on 4 August 2021, a mass street protest took place in Beirut with protesters demanding accountability for the port explosion; whereas another massive protest on 14 October 2021 led by Hezbollah and Amal against Chief Investigator Judge Bitar turned into an organised attack by Hezbollah and Amal on the Ain El Remmeneh district and the Lebanese Forces party, which supports the investigation into the Beirut

port explosion;

- G. whereas Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Legal Action Worldwide, Legal Agenda and the International Commission of Jurists have documented a range of procedural and systemic flaws in the domestic investigation that render it incapable of credibly delivering justice, including flagrant political interference, immunity for high-level political officials and lack of respect for fair trial and due process standards; whereas in these circumstances the establishment of an international fact-finding mission authorised by the UN Human Rights Council is all the more imperative; whereas the Human Rights Council should enact a resolution establishing and dispatching an independent and impartial fact-finding mission in order to determine the facts and circumstances of the Beirut explosion, including the root causes, to establish state and individual culpability and to promote justice and restitution for the victims; whereas more than 162 Lebanese and international rights organisations, survivors and victims' families have urged the UN Human Rights Council members to table such a resolution;
- H. whereas since 22 September 2021, 21 legal cases have been filed against the chief investigator of the explosion, Judge Tarek Bitar, and other judges looking into the cases, mainly involving politicians from Hezbollah and their allies; whereas the domestic investigation into the explosion was suspended from 23 December 2021 until January 2023 after two of the politicians charged in the case filed another complaint against Judge Bitar, as well as Lebanon's highest court, the High Judicial Council, which had previously examined and refused their earlier request to remove Judge Bitar from his post; whereas the Lebanese Court of Cassation's General Assembly, which now has jurisdiction, is unable to rule on these cases as it currently does not have a quorum because one of its members retired in late 2021 and the case cannot resume until new judicial appointments are made; whereas caretaker Finance Minister Youssef Khalil refused to sign the decree on the judicial appointments, which forced Judge Bitar to halt the investigation again;
- I. whereas the presence of more than one and a half million Syrians has drained the Lebanese economy and largely contributed to its multi-dimensional crisis; whereas the presence of these Syrian people constitutes a real danger to Lebanon's demography and a threat to its fragile population equilibrium;
- J. whereas on 11 October 2022, Israel and Lebanon made a historic breakthrough, reaching an agreement to establish a permanent maritime border between them, which will contribute to the stability and prosperity of the two neighbours, as well as to that of the wider region;
1. Considers Lebanon's present situation to be caused by a handful of politicians across the ruling class; calls on Lebanon's political elite to take their share of the responsibility for the current situation in the country and to commit to elect a president as quickly as possible in order to begin addressing the political, economic, social, financial and health crises, and the state of institutional breakdown;
 2. Regrets that the municipal elections scheduled for May 2022 were postponed for the second time in two years, leading to a further political stalemate and increasing the

dysfunction of the state institutions; calls on the Lebanese authorities to request that the VP/HR deploy an election observation mission, or alternatively, an election expert mission, months ahead of the municipal elections; urges the Commission and the Member States to provide all the technical and financial assistance to enable the elections to be held in the best conditions possible and to strive to guarantee the fairness and transparency of the whole process; calls for an international humanitarian task force under the auspices of the UN to support the implementation of humanitarian assistance and oversee the use of the funds;

3. Calls for the EU to offer Lebanon the deployment of a comprehensive EU administrative advisory mission in order to address the urgent need to counter the accelerating breakdown of public administration and basic services;
4. Calls on the new Lebanese Government to swiftly implement key governance and economic reforms that will ensure political and economic recovery, including the credible regulation of key economic sectors, such as the electricity sector; welcomes the adoption of amendments to the Lebanese banking secrecy law as a key step towards unlocking international macro-financial assistance, namely from the International Monetary Fund; invites the country to continue implementing reforms, including in the judiciary, to ensure independence and prevent political interference and institutionalised impunity in the justice system;
5. Calls on the Council to apply targeted sanctions against all of those who are infringing the democratic and electoral process in the Lebanese institutions, or obstructing the domestic investigation into the Beirut port explosion or an upcoming international fact-finding mission, and seize their assets in the EU;
6. Recalls that a transparent, independent, neutral and effective investigation into the Beirut port explosion is a priority and must be ensured; urges the Lebanese authorities to respect the judicial procedures and the independence of the judiciary and assist every effort that would allow those responsible for the decisions that led to the blast in the port of Beirut to be properly investigated and held to account; calls for an independent international fact-finding mission to Lebanon to investigate the Beirut explosion within the framework of the UN; insists that those found directly or indirectly responsible must be held accountable for the lives lost and the damage done to the Lebanese people;
7. Stresses that conditions are not met for the voluntary, dignified return of refugees in conflict-prone areas in Syria; recalls the vulnerability of the refugee population in Lebanon and stresses the need to provide adequate, predictable and multi-layered funding to agencies working with refugees in order to ensure the full provision of essential services to refugee communities in the country; calls on the Commission to work on improving the humanitarian situation in Syria in order to address the root causes of the refugee crisis; stresses the need to help Lebanon work towards the gradual return of refugees where their return can be considered safe;
8. Welcomes the signing of the agreement on the delineation of the maritime border between Lebanon and Israel and encourages the two countries to continue their constructive engagement;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, 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 UN Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the President of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, and the Government and Parliament of Lebanon.