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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0325/2023**

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))

**Mounir Satouri, Tineke Strik, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Erik Marquardt, Francisco Guerreiro, Margrete Auken, Hannah Neumann, Ignazio Corrao, Jakob G. Dalunde**  
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

**B9-0325/2023**

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

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Lebanon,
  - 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 part<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the final report by the European Union Election Observation Mission to Lebanon 2022,
  - having regard to the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) Josep Borrell of 1 November 2022 on the political situation in Lebanon,
  - having regard to the decision of the European Council of 26 July 2022 to extend the EU framework for targeted sanctions for one year,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Lebanon is facing a devastating economic, financial, social and political crisis, at great human cost to its people; whereas GDP has contracted by almost 40 % since 2018, wiping out years of economic growth; whereas the Lebanese pound has lost as much as 98 % of its value since late 2019; whereas the majority of the Lebanese population now live in poverty and the authorities are failing to ensure everyone's right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food;
- B. whereas Lebanon has a vibrant civil society with numerous activists, community leaders, academics, artists and youth groups mobilising for change and reform across the country;
- C. whereas the mandate of President Aoun expired on 31 October 2022; whereas in June 2023 Najib Mikati was reappointed as prime minister of a caretaker government until the formation of a new government; whereas after 12 inconclusive rounds of parliamentary votes, the Presidency of Lebanon remains vacant, preventing the formation of a new government and consolidating the political deadlock; whereas the Hezbollah alliance in the Lebanese Parliament has repeatedly blocked the conclusion of the parliamentary vote by walking out after the first round and breaking the quorum for a second round;
- D. whereas the municipal elections that were due to be held by 31 May 2023 were postponed for the second year in a row;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 143, 30.5.2006, p. 2.

- E. whereas Riad Salameh, the Governor of Lebanon's central bank, has been subject to a series of judicial investigations at home and abroad, including in six European countries, on allegations that include fraud, money laundering and illicit enrichment; whereas in May 2023 France and Germany issued international arrest warrants for Riad Salameh, the Governor of Lebanon's central bank; whereas a judicial delegation with representatives from France, Germany and Luxembourg opened an investigation into the activities of Lebanon's central bank and its Governor in January 2023; whereas on 28 March 2022 Eurojust confirmed that authorities from France, Germany and Luxembourg had seized properties and frozen assets of Mr Salameh worth EUR 120 million; whereas Mr Salameh denies wrongdoing and refuses to resign; whereas Mr Salameh's mandate ends in July 2023;
- F. whereas almost three years after the August 2020 Beirut port explosion, there have been no major arrests of those responsible, no dialogue with, apology to or compensation for the families of the victims, while local investigations by two successive lead investigators have been actively disrupted by political actors and the Lebanese judiciary; whereas the investigating judge Tarek Bitar has summoned numerous high-ranking officials, including generals in the security services, judges, and former ministers, many of whom have blatantly refused to cooperate; whereas on 25 January 2023, Lebanon's general prosecutor ordered the release of all suspects detained in connection with the catastrophic explosion, bypassing the investigation;
- G. whereas the devastating explosion which took place in Beirut port in August 2020 claimed the lives of 200 people, wounded 6 000 others and left around 300 000 people homeless; whereas the 2020 explosion was caused by a combination of corruption and negligence which led to the illegal storage of 2 750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate at the port;
- H. whereas on 7 March 2023, 38 countries at the UN Human Rights Council issued a joint statement condemning the obstruction of the domestic investigation into the Beirut port blast from August 2020, urging Lebanon to take the necessary measures to safeguard the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and ensure a transparent and impartial investigation;
- I. whereas in January 2023 the High Court in London found Savarto Ltd., a chemical trading company, liable for death, personal injury and property damage in a case brought by the Beirut Bar Association on behalf of blast victims, constituting the first verdict related to the explosion;
- J. whereas Lebanon held elections on 15 May 2022 with a turnout of 49.2 %; whereas 13 reform-minded new members entered parliament as a result of the elections;
- K. whereas the report of the European Parliament Election Observation Mission to the Lebanese parliamentary elections on 15 May 2022 concluded that vote buying and clientelism distorted the level playing field, that the campaign was marred by instances of intimidation and unequal media coverage and that many Lebanese institutions were financially ill-equipped to perform their mandate in the elections; whereas the report highlights that only eight of the 118 women on the lists were elected to parliament and that reforms to strengthen gender equality and women's representation in line with

Lebanon's international commitments are needed;

- L. whereas on 26 July 2022 the European Council extended the framework for targeted sanctions to address the situation in Lebanon until 31 July 2023; whereas this framework provides for the possibility of imposing sanctions against persons and entities who are responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon; whereas the European Council has not yet imposed any sanctions against persons or entities under this framework;
- M. whereas on government estimates, Lebanon hosts approximately 1.5 million refugees; whereas the real size of the refugee population is unclear, as the Government of Lebanon unilaterally suspended all new registrations in 2015; where in October 2021, 882 532 refugees were registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), of whom 851 717 were Syrian;
- N. whereas since 5 April 2023, the Lebanese Armed Forces have been conducting discriminatory raids on Syrian refugees across the country; whereas most refugees were detained and deported to the Syrian-Lebanese border and handed over to the Syrian authorities without a judicial warrant issued by a court, without being given the opportunity to speak with a lawyer or UNHCR, and without the right to challenge their deportation; whereas many of those deported were registered or known to UNHCR;
- O. whereas, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), the Syrian regime has arbitrarily arrested 2 504 refugees who returned to Syria since 2014, of which '987 individuals remain in detention, including 764 people who are now classified as forcibly disappeared'; whereas the Syrian regime is notorious for human rights violations such as systematic torture, sexual violence and enforced disappearance; whereas Syria remains unsafe for returns as underlined by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic; whereas it remains the united EU position that refugee returns to Syria can only be encouraged or facilitated once they are 'safe, voluntary, dignified';
  - 1. Expresses its gravest concern at the protraction of the political, economic, financial and social crisis in Lebanon, which continues to cause suffering to the population; expresses its full support for all the people affected by the ongoing crisis, including to all the victims of the August 2020 blast and their families;
  - 2. Denounces the grave responsibility of past and current leaders in the protraction and deepening of the crisis and condemns in the strongest possible terms the criminal negligence that led to the disaster the people of Lebanon are experiencing; calls on the Lebanese Parliament, political parties and actors to prioritise ending the political paralysis in the country, conclude the election of a president and cease disrupting the election process; calls on political actors in the country to engage in meaningful dialogue with a view to taking immediate steps towards vital reforms ensuring anti-corruption measures, macroeconomic policy, an independent judiciary and more inclusive healthcare and education systems;
  - 3. Denounces in the strongest possible terms the fact that almost three years after the Beirut port explosion political actors in Lebanon continue to avoid accountability and are actively impeding the work of the investigating judge Tarek Bitar with lawsuits and

physical threats against him as well as various stalling techniques; urges Lebanese politicians and senior members of the judiciary, notably General Public Prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat, to immediately cease obstructing the investigating judge's work, stop the smear campaign against him and cooperate constructively with his investigation;

4. Regrets the postponement of the municipal elections that were due to be held by 31 May 2023; urges the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities to commit to holding the municipal elections within the next six months and proceed with the preparations accordingly; while insisting that it is the government's responsibility to set aside the necessary budget for holding municipal elections, calls on the Commission and the Member States to offer dedicated election funding;
5. Expresses its grave concern over the escalation of anti-refugee rhetoric by Lebanese political parties and ministers, exploiting refugees as scapegoats for the worsening self-inflicted economic crisis;
6. Urges Lebanon to immediately halt summary deportations to Syria, which are in breach of the principle of non-refoulement, refrain from imposing discriminatory measures and inciting hatred against Syrian refugees;
7. Calls on the European Council and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to immediately issue sanctions against individual members of Lebanon's political elite who are actively hindering the formation of a government, hampering critical reforms or are involved in illegal enrichment, as well as against persons and entities responsible for gross violations of international human rights law resulting from the Beirut blast, including the active obstruction of justice;
8. Reiterates its urgent call for the EU and its Member States, especially those with close ties to Lebanon, to urgently take the lead at the UN Human Rights Council to secure the adoption of a resolution establishing an international, independent fact-finding mission into the Beirut blast, mandated to carry out a thorough investigation into human rights violations and abuses related to the explosion and the domestic judicial investigation, and to formulate recommendations on measures needed 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. Encourages the EU Member States to assist families of the victims of the Beirut port blast to explore the possibilities for presenting lawsuits in foreign national courts as well as explore the possibilities for prosecuting politicians accused of atrocities under universal jurisdiction;
10. Welcomes the investigations by the European judicial delegation into the activities of the Governor of the Lebanese central bank and encourages EU Member States to step up investigations into the fortunes of Lebanese officials amassed on their territory;
11. Reiterates its call on the VP/HR, the EEAS and the Member States to continue to firmly pressure Lebanon's political representatives towards accountability and reform, such as by making large-scale structural support conditional upon the implementation of real change, including anti-corruption measures, transparent and rule-based public

procurement, macroeconomic policy, an independent judiciary and more inclusive healthcare and education systems;

12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up humanitarian assistance to Lebanon with a focus on core public services, such as health, education and support for impoverished communities, including refugees;
13. Calls on the EU and its Member States to support grassroots activists and civil society actors in Lebanon that support bottom-up humanitarian and stabilisation efforts and can deliver on reforms; praises the initiatives of local communities and civil society aimed at establishing local mechanisms to deliver aid, improve services and redefine the rights and responsibilities of citizens and the government;
14. Holds the view that while the EU's continued financial support to refugees and host communities is vital, much stronger commitment to responsibility-sharing by EU Member States, such as resettlement, humanitarian admission schemes, simplified family reunification and more flexible visa regulations, is needed to enable refugees to seek protection beyond the immediate neighbouring region;
15. Expresses its concern about numerous cases of mismanagement and fraud related to EU-funded projects due to the lack of transparency, oversight, poor selection and bidding criteria and record keeping, such as in the case of EU support for solid waste management in Lebanon; reiterates its call on the Commission to increase accountability and monitoring of EU-funded projects in Lebanon, including through public access to project monitoring and evaluation, and transparent communication about responsibilities for project delays or failures; calls on the European Court of Auditors and the European Anti-Fraud Office to scrutinise and investigate any such cases of mismanagement; calls for an investigation into and scrutiny over the possible complicity of EU-based intermediaries in illicit financial flows from Lebanon into the EU;
16. Highlights the dire conditions, poverty and marginalisation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who depend primarily on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for their basic needs and services; expresses concerns regarding the UNRWA's potential inability to sustain support for the most vulnerable given the significant funding shortfall in its emergency appeal for 2023;
17. Calls on the European Commission to increase its investment in renewable energy in Lebanon, notably solar power, as it can contribute to overcoming the government-induced electricity crisis while reducing the high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and air pollution caused by diesel generators;
18. 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.

