



Plenary sitting

B9-0470/2021

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))

Christophe Grudler, Petras Auštrevičius, Malik Azmani, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Dita Charanzová, Olivier Chastel, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Karin Karlsbro, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Karen Melchior, Javier Nart, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Samira Rafaela, Frédérique Ries, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Michal Šimečka, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Dragoș Tudorache
on behalf of the Renew Group

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Lebanon,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EU) 2021/1275¹ and Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1277² of 30 July 2021 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Lebanon,
 - having regard to the statement issued by the President of the European Council on 4 August 2021 at the third international conference in support of the people of Lebanon, held at the joint invitation of the UN Secretary-General and the President of the French Republic,
 - having regard to the country update on Lebanon to the 2020 EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy of 21 June 2021,
 - having regard to the report of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) of 23 March 2021 entitled ‘Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity’, which puts Lebanon at risk of famine,
 - having regard to the report on the Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework adopted by the EU, the UN and the World Bank in December 2020,
 - having regard to the statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on behalf of the EU of 28 September 2020 on the resignation of the Prime Minister-designate of Lebanon,
 - having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement of 30 May 2006 establishing an Association between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Lebanon, of the other part³ and Decision No 1/2016 of the EU-Lebanon Association Council of 11 November 2016 agreeing on EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities⁴,
 - having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 of 2 September 2004 and 1701 of 11 August 2006 calling for the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Lebanon’s humanitarian situation has dramatically deteriorated since the explosion at the port of Beirut on 4 August 2020 that killed 218 people and injured

¹ OJ L 277 I, 2.8.2021, p. 1.

² OJ L 277 I, 2.8.2021, p. 16.

³ OJ L 143, 30.5.2006, p. 2.

⁴ OJ L 350, 22.12.2016, p. 114.

7 000, for which no official has been held accountable to this day; whereas the 2 750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate which blew up at the port of Beirut could have been destined for Syria, according to an investigation by *The Guardian* newspaper published in January 2021; whereas the company that provided the ammonium nitrate may have been related to companies owned by three Russian-Syrian businessmen with close ties to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad;

- B. whereas the Beirut port explosion reflected an already dire economic and political situation, as expressed in the mass street protests of October 2019 denouncing rampant official corruption and calling for public services and secular democratic reforms, also known as Lebanon's October Revolution; whereas these demands arose from Lebanese citizens of all religious and social backgrounds;
- C. whereas the World Bank reported that Lebanon's economic contraction may have been one of the most 'brutal' the world has even known in the past 150 years; whereas inflation reached 84 % in 2020 and is expected to top 100 % in 2021;
- D. whereas poverty is skyrocketing, with a UN report from September 2021 revealing that over 74 % of the Lebanese population are living in poverty and 82 % in multidimensional poverty⁵; whereas a third of Lebanon's children have to skip dinner every day; whereas the proportion of Syrian refugees living in extreme poverty increased from 55 % to 89 % within 12 months by the end of 2020; whereas as of September 2021, only 17 % of the population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19;
- E. whereas a record 90 % depreciation of Lebanon's currency since late 2019 has allowed the country's richest individuals to depreciate the value of their financial debt, at the expense of record inflation, which has hurt most of the population; whereas the Financial Committee of the Lebanese Parliament rejected the government's plan for a bail-in that would have allowed the savings of 98 % of the population to be preserved by guaranteeing the assets of bank accounts holding less than USD 500 000 in savings; whereas in the face of criticism about the recovery plan from MPs, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published three statements supporting the government's proposed plan; whereas the MPs who rejected the recovery plan have vested interests in preserving the interests of Lebanon's banks, given their relationships as or with shareholders of those banks;
- F. whereas actions against ill-gotten gains are part of the fight against corruption and impunity, which is particularly necessary to resolve the Lebanese crisis;
- G. whereas the Council Decision of 30 July 2021 established a framework for targeted sanctions against persons and entities responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon; whereas these include an EU travel ban and assets freeze for persistently hampering the formation of a government or seriously undermining the holding of elections, for obstructing or undermining the implementation of plans approved by Lebanese authorities and supported by the EU to improve accountability and good governance, including in the banking and financial sectors, or for serious

⁵ UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon (2019-2021): Painful reality and uncertain prospects*, 3 September 2021.

financial misconduct concerning public funds, for acts covered by the UN Convention against Corruption, and the unauthorised export of capital;

- H. whereas leaked official documents indicate that Lebanese customs, military and security authorities, as well as the judiciary, had warned successive governments of the dangerous stockpile of explosive chemicals at the port of Beirut on at least 10 occasions over six years, yet no action was taken; whereas Lebanon's key political figures have obstructed the local investigation into the subsequent explosion, with authorities dismissing the first investigative judge after he summoned political figures for questioning, and rejecting the second investigative judge's requests to lift the immunity of suspected members of parliament and question senior members of the security forces;
 - I. whereas Riad Salameh, the Governor of Lebanon's Central Bank since 1993, has been leading a strategy that required paying existing creditors by borrowing more and more, akin to a Ponzi scheme, which also resulted in the monetary crash of late 2019; whereas Mr Salameh has allegedly blocked fraud investigations at the Central Bank as well as an international audit required to unlock IMF aid; whereas French and Swiss anticorruption judges have been investigating him and other relatives and colleagues since July 2021 for allegedly sweeping funds illegally from Lebanon into Swiss banks and Panama, and laundering millions in France, Germany, Switzerland and the UK via real estate;
 - J. whereas the French President Emmanuel Macron put forward a detailed roadmap to reform Lebanon, boost international aid and support its economy following his trips to the country in August and September 2020;
 - K. whereas for 13 months, Lebanon's political class failed to form a government and engage in urgent structural reforms despite the commitment of all political parties to respect the roadmap's proposed timeline; whereas a government was formed on 10 September 2021;
1. Considers Lebanon's present situation to be a man-made disaster caused by a handful of men across the ruling political class; is extremely concerned at the irreversible damage suffered by the population of Lebanon, including its brain drain and depleting human resources, which are essential to the country's recovery and democratic life; believes that enforcing accountability, upholding free and fair elections and providing basic public services must outweigh any personal consideration within Lebanon's political class;
 2. Deeply deplores the refusal by a majority of the Lebanese Parliament and some ministries to cooperate with judicial authorities to fight corruption and effectively investigate the explosion at the port of Beirut; underlines the need, therefore, to strengthen the current investigation into the explosion and ensure it becomes independent, impartial and effective;
 3. Calls on all EU Member States without exception to fully cooperate with and strengthen the EU's new targeted sanctions against corrupted leaders and those responsible for undermining democracy and the rule of law and their affiliates in Lebanon; urges the European External Action Service and the Council to urgently allocate sufficient resources to effectively develop the new mechanism and begin the process of listing corrupt leaders and affiliates; calls on the EU Member States and their partners, such as

the UK and Switzerland, to cooperate in the fight against the alleged misappropriation of public money by a number of Lebanese officials;

4. Calls on the newly formed government to come forward with an economic recovery plan as a matter of urgency in order to save Lebanon's paralysed public services, social protection mechanisms, and support for health and education; urges the government to re-launch negotiations with the IMF; calls for the establishment of an international humanitarian task force within Lebanon's ministries, under UN supervision, in order to boost humanitarian and development aid and oversee the use of the funds; calls for continued EU and international financial support to guarantee the purchase of basic necessities such as fuel, medicine and grain, and to ensure that basic rights to health and education are preserved;
5. Urges the EU to send an observation mission to Lebanon months in advance of the May 2022 legislative elections; stresses that the timeline laid down in Lebanon's Constitution must be respected and not postponed by its political class;
6. Praises Lebanese society for organising itself, demonstrating a high degree of resilience and representing an alternative to a traditional political class worn down by sectarian divisions and corruption; commends, by means of example, the opposition coalition 'The Order Revolves' for bringing together engineers from the popular protests that took place against Lebanon's political system, and which won the elections of the Lebanese engineers' syndicate in June 2021;
7. Calls on the international community to provide the necessary financial support to enable the Lebanese armed forces and internal security forces to fulfil their essential role in preventing a further collapse of state institutions, securing humanitarian aid and ensuring stability;
8. Condemns destabilising foreign interferences and urges the Lebanese authorities to stand firm against practices, including by the Assad regime, to cover up allegations of complicity in the explosion of ammonium nitrate at the port of Beirut; stresses the particular responsibility of Hezbollah and other factions in repressing Lebanon's 2019 popular movement and in Lebanon's political and economic crisis;
9. Is concerned about Lebanon's role as a hub for drugs, notably Captagon amphetamines;
10. Calls for the establishment of a special tribunal of independent judges to investigate and prosecute corruption cases directly related to the Lebanese crisis for individuals residing in Lebanon or abroad, which should be allowed to order their detention and prevent them from engaging further in the country's political life, in accordance with international standards, due process and the right to a fair trial;
11. Stresses that due to the Assad regime's all-out repression against the Syrian popular uprising of 2011, Lebanon has hosted the world's highest proportion of Syrian refugees; points to the particular responsibility of the Syrian regime in the continuation of this dramatic humanitarian situation, and the duty of the international community to fully assist Lebanon on the basis of international solidarity;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the

Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy, the Commission, the Parliaments of the Member States, and the Parliament and
Government of Lebanon.