



## R05 European solidarity for Lebanon

The Lebanese Republic is currently suffering one of the worst economic crises for decades, with the World Bank naming it one of the worst crises since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The financial crisis, further accelerated by COVID-19 and the Beirut port explosion in 2020, has resulted in the highest inflation rates in the world, overtaking Venezuela, putting 82% of the population in multidimensional poverty. Because of liquidity issues, the country is no longer able to buy fuel which powers its energy stations, resulting in total energy blackouts lasting days. Meanwhile, in the past, humanitarian aid has often disappeared into the pockets of a corrupt political class, frequently named in the Pandora Papers, who are unwilling to make the necessary reforms to take the country out of this downward spiral. Hezbollah, and other political actors further fuel corruption, entrench sectarian politics, endanger democratic development and have alienated some of Lebanon's important supporters. This bodes especially badly for the 1.7 million refugees in the country, as Lebanon is currently hosting the largest number of refugees per capita in the world (6.8 million inhabitants, including refugees). It is also particularly bad news for the disappearing civil society which is facing especially harsh measures whenever it demands the necessary political change. One year ago, the EU installed the 3R Framework, in collaboration with the World Bank and United Nations, in response to the Beirut port explosion. On 30 July 2021, the EU adopted a framework for targeted sanctions, which provides for the possibility of imposing sanctions against persons and entities who are responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon, but has not acted upon this framework so far. Yet, it is crucial that the European Union Europe continues to provide development and humanitarian aid in to Lebanon, in the hour of its greatest need.

- As Greens, we urge the European Union and its Member States to only sanction those directly responsible for the current crisis and to continue supporting civil society in the Lebanese Republic. While humanitarian aid to those most affected within the Lebanese society has to remain, further support and development aid to the Lebanese government must include conditionality mechanisms, especially when it concerns law-enforcement equipment. Direct subsidies should also be considered vetted NGOs, such as independent healthcare and educational organisations.
- In 2019, protestors across the country took their calls for a non-sectarian, better governed and more democratic Lebanon to the streets, against sectarian nepotism and corruption. Being under immense pressure from established political camps, these cross-sectarian civil society voices are still very much present in the country and have our full solidarity. Hence, particularly in view of upcoming elections, we call for a fair election campaign, and well-prepared and transparent elections that will allow new political forces to compete with the established sectarian elites. The country should be given support to organise future elections, with the EU pushing for



easy access to voting centres and supporting the Lebanese diaspora in the EU in order to exercise their democratic rights.

- As 95% of the refugees in the country face extreme poverty, efforts must be increased to guarantee their human rights. The EU and its Member States must increase their efforts to relocate a fairer share of the 1.7 million refugees in Lebanon to Europe, and refrain from creating new Turkey-style refugee deals. Meanwhile, they must provide a substantial increase in humanitarian aid to refugees and Lebanese host communities. While supporting the Lebanese government in coping with the spill-over effects from the Syrian war, we call upon it to refrain from forced returns of refugees to Syria. This procedure violates international humanitarian law, as refugees in Syria continue to be subject to considerable human rights violations. At the same time, we demand that the EU and its Member States maintain the protection status of Syrian refugees in Europe.
- In order to support the country in its transition towards modern energy production production and reduce its dependency on fossil fuels, the EU should assist Lebanon with increasing solar power and wind power production across the region. These alternative energy sources have the additional advantage that they can be employed decentrally at the benefit of local populations, thereby resisting centralized power and corruption. Projects to set up new infrastructure based on fossil fuels, or those threatening the existing ecological system, like the Bisri Dam, should be discouraged.
- Finally, we criticise the obstruction of the investigation, into the Beirut port blast and demand that Lebanese authorities and political elites stop shielding politicians and officials from questioning and prosecution. The murder of filmmaker and publicist Lokman Slim, who conducted research into the port explosion, must also be solved urgently and the murderers and those behind it, must be brought to justice.