



LPDC NEWSLETTER

LEBANESE PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE COMMITTEE

On its 60th anniversary... A Tribute to UNRWA

Ambassador Khalil Makkawi

President of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee

The UN General Assembly this year coincided with UNRWA's 60th anniversary. This agency has stood as a witness to the plight of Palestinian refugees and symbolizes international engagement and responsibility to bring a just solution to the refugee problem. The anniversary is a reminder that this same General Assembly issued resolution 194, deciding that Palestine refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so. The Arab Peace Initiative, declared in Beirut in 2002, identifies the application of this resolution as a basis for a comprehensive Middle East peace. The Government of Lebanon fully supports the Arab Peace Initiative and will continue to push for its implementation.

Yet until a comprehensive Middle East peace is realized, the Lebanese Government will continue to work in full cooperation with UNRWA to facilitate its mission and to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It will also continue to collaborate in mobilizing support from the donor countries to enable UNRWA to fulfill its mission both in Lebanon and the region. We believe that on the occasion of its 60th anniversary, UNRWA should be re-enforced and we support its drive to improve the quality of its services. We also face together the challenge of reconstructing Nahr al-Bared Camp and the development of the surrounding areas. This is regarded as a humanitarian priority. The plight of 30,000 displaced Palestinian refugees and the many Lebanese families living in Nahr al-Bared Camp is our shared responsibility. We pay tribute to the institution and its General Commissioner, Mrs. Karen AbuZayd, as well as to every member of UNRWA's staff for the monumental efforts they exert to provide the refugees with all the elements of a dignified life and to keep their cause alive. We hope that the future bears a just political solution in which Palestinian refugees are able to realize their dream to return to Palestine. Only then will justice be served and the right of self-determination respected. We must all continue to work towards these goals.

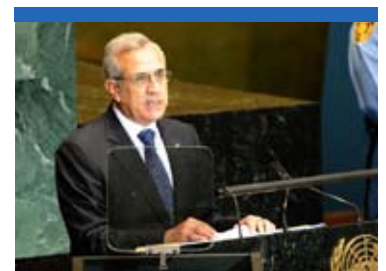
President Suleiman before UN General Assembly: To Protect the Right of Return, we refuse settlement

*In his speech before the UN General Assembly,
 Lebanese President General Michel Suleiman addressed the Palestinian
 refugees' cause, saying in reference to Lebanon's standpoint and UNRWA's role:*

"Mr. President,

Our meeting this year coincides with the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). On this occasion, Lebanon would like to stress that the Palestinian refugees' solution is first and foremost a political solution; until a just and final solution for their tragedy has been reached, we fully support all efforts aiming at reinforcing the UNRWA's programs and capabilities, enabling it to improve the living standards and human conditions of the refugees, in collaboration with the hosting countries.

As a matter of fact, a just and final solution for the Palestinian refugees cannot deny them their natural and legitimate Right of return to their lands and homes, nor could it be achieved excluding the hosting countries' participation or contradicting their sovereignty, special circumstances, and/or national interests. This is where Lebanon's rejection of any form of settlement of the Palestinian refugees on its territories stems from, for such a rejection guarantees the Palestinian refugees' Right of return and goes in accordance with Lebanon's Constitution and national pact. Let it be known that such a position will neither be compromised nor reversed. I seize this opportunity to express our gratitude to the countries that have shown support to the Lebanese position on this issue and willingness to defend it."



UNRWA's Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd in a Field Visit to Lebanon



In the framework of coordination between UNRWA and the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), UNRWA's Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd visited Beirut on September 30 and met with Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and Ambassador Khalil Makkawi. They discussed the reconstruction process at Nahr al-Bared Camp and the follow-up mechanism for the initiative to improve living conditions in the refugee camps.

Camp Improvement Initiative (CII) Infrastructure Component

On June 18 and 25, LPDC, UNRWA and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) held several meetings about the CII Infrastructure Component. The aim was to create an enabling environment, integrating and linking the Palestinian refugee camps' infrastructure to the adjacent municipalities.

● The Judiciary Has Its Say

Over the past two months, the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee has followed-up on the suspension of backfilling over antiquities in Nahr al-Bared camp (NBC). Backfilling involves covering the antiquities to preserve them and is a prerequisite to reconstruction of the camp. This decision was made by the Cabinet on 30/4/2009. The State Shura (Advisory) Council issued a decision to halt the backfilling of the ruins for two months, giving the applicant a period of one month to prove his case and the Lebanese State one month to submit its file explaining the need for backfilling the ruins. The Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, together with the Premiership's Secretariat and the General Directorate of Antiquities at the Ministry of Culture, prepared the file for this matter. The file was then referred to the State Shura Council. It was prepared with the aim of protecting the ruins and still placing the greatest emphasis on the reconstruction process. The judiciary will issue its final decision.

● Easing Security Measures at NBC



Prime Minister Fouad Siniora chaired a coordination meeting on September 18 between the Lebanese Army and the Internal Security Forces (ISF). The meeting was attended by LPDC president, Ambassador Khalil Makkawi, the Secretary-General of the Defense Supreme Council, Major-General Said Eid, ISF Director-General Brigadier-General Ashraf Rifi, Chief of Staff at the Lebanese Army, Major-General Shawqi el-Masri, as well as the LPDC policy advisor, Ziad El Sayegh.

It was agreed to start transferring some of the

responsibilities from the Lebanese Army to the ISF in order to enhance the ISF's presence in the area surrounding the camp. Measures were also adopted to boost the economic activity in the camp by facilitating the movement of merchandise into the camp, which will make the daily life of Palestinian refugees easier and solidify Lebanese-Palestinian relations.

● Muhajareen

Between June and August 2009, the LPDC has coordinated several meetings between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and AWKAF in order to finalize the Muhajareen land acquisition and transfer, then with Lebanese Mine Action Center (LMAC) and UNRWA for the final handing over of the land to NRC. NRC will be implementing the reconstruction of housing units for Palestinian families residing in this area. Muhajareen is located in the NBC "New Camp", the E area, in the Municipality of Mu-hammara. The project is financed by the EU.

● "Housing Stabilization and Emergency Repairs Project"

On July 21, LPDC organized a meeting presenting the "Housing Stabilization and Emergency Repairs Project" in the Prime Areas of the New Camp at the Diwaniyah room at the Grand Sérail. The project benefits from parallel financing from both the Italian Cooperation and ECHO and will address the repair and reconstruction needs of partially damaged housing units in the Prime Areas of NBC "New Camp". While the ECHO-funded part will be implemented directly through NRC, the Italian Cooperation-funded part will be implemented by the CDR, in partnership with the Center Fund for Displaced (CFD). The meeting included a presentation of the project objectives and the scope and institutional arrangements for

project implementation, as well as donors and implementing agencies outlook.

The meeting was attended by representatives from LPDC, PLO, RRC, CDR, CFD, Italian Cooperation (IC), ECHO and the Nahr el Bared Reconstruction Committee (NBRC).

● Cluster Leads Meeting

On August 18, UNRC gathered all cluster leads (Shelter, Water & Sanitation, Protection, Health, Education, and Livelihood) at the UNRWA Compound in Tripoli, to discuss the status of the cluster meetings and the way forward for the recovery period of Nahr el Bared. LPDC participated in its capacity as the chair of the Protection Cluster.

The Protection Cluster meeting took place on September 9 at Nabaa Office Beddawi, where together LPDC and the UNRC developed a new form to facilitate the reporting process by NGO staff members in Nahr el Bared who witness violations of child rights.

From June to August, LPDC contributed to:

- 1 UNRWA monthly donor meetings, which occurred on June 26, July 28 and August 28. These meetings are meant to update the donor community about NBC reconstruction and the Camp Improvement Initiative (CII)
- 2 Discussion sessions with NGOs organized by UNRWA to involve civil society in the CII reforms and projects
- 3 NBC Rubble Recycling Project Board meeting organized on a quarterly basis by UNDP to present updates on rubble removal, de-mining and recycling works

MDG-F Joint Programme

LPDC participated in Work Planning and Coordination sessions with UNDP and the other UN agencies (UNESCO, ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNRWA) involved in the MDG-F Joint Programme, "Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in Northern Lebanon". This project is funded by Spain (\$5 million) and will be implemented from April 2009 to April 2011. The project has two planned outcomes. The first is conflict resolution and mediation mechanisms developed and sustained to facilitate the resolution of inter and intra-communal tensions between Palestinians and Lebanese. The second outcome is reduced conflict risk in North Lebanon communities through the design and implementation of inclusive socio-economic initiatives.

Getting Together Lebanese and Palestinian Youth: Toward a Culture of Peace, Part 2.

The LPDC and UNDP, in collaboration with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS), organized a summer school program entitled, "Getting Together Lebanese and Palestinian Youth: Toward a Culture of Peace, Part 2."

From July 10 to July 14, around 22 Lebanese and Palestinian youth activists, between the ages of 18 and 30 years old from Saida, Lebanon, spent one week together during which they were trained on the basic skills of conflict resolution by sharing concerns and perceptions. This summer school aimed to provide trainings for young Lebanese and Palestinian activists on conflict transformation skills. A documentary on the summer school was produced and uploaded to the LPDC website.

Building Dialogue and Communications Skills for Youth

Between July and August, UNESCO Beirut, in partnership with the LPDC and Save the Children - Sweden, trained young Lebanese and Palestinian people on dialogue and communication skills and the facilitation of extra-curricular activities with children. The trained young people facilitated summer camps with children in their local areas during the summer period. The "Building Dialogue and Communications Skills for Youth" project gathered 60 youth (18 to 30) from Beirut, Saida, Tyre, Beddawi (North) and Bekaa.

"Palestinian Children Refugees' Rights" workshop

The LPDC attended several meetings with the Higher Council for Childhood at the Ministry of Social Affairs to follow-up on the "Palestinian Children Refugees' Rights" workshop that will take place in November 2009. The workshop will tackle issues like law, health, education, protection and extra-curricular activities for Palestinian refugee children in Lebanon.

Those involved in the project include: The Higher Council for Childhood (HCC), UNHCR, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Children and Youth Centre (CYC), Takafol NGO, Naba' NGO, Internal Security Forces (ISF) and UNRWA.



H.E. Minister of Information Tarek Mitri surrounded by Ambassador Khalil Makkawi and the LPDC team

Palestiniadi 2: Athletic Investment in Dialogue

On September 25, the UNRWA vocational center in Sibliin organized, for the second consecutive year, the Palestinian Olympic Games, "Palestiniadi 2". The event was funded and supported by the Cooperation and Development Office at the Italian Embassy, the Italian Development Agency, in coordination with the LPDC, as well as some Italian universities and the municipality of Rome. Five hundred and thirty students from all of Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps participated in the opening ceremony in which Italian Ambassador Gabriel Checchia, UNRWA Director-General Salvatore Lombardo and Ambassador Khalil Makkawi, represented by his advisor Ziad El Sayegh, underlined the importance of sportsmanship and dialogue for a more prosperous and stable future for the young generation of Palestinian refugees.

Iftar Banquet to Honor the Media

On September 17, LPDC President, Ambassador Khalil Makkawi, held an Iftar banquet at the Mov-enpick Hotel to honor Lebanese, Arab and international media. Information Minister Dr. Tarek Mitri, the Head of the Order of Press, Mr. Mohammad Baalbaki, as well as representatives of Lebanese, Arab and international media were in attendance.