



STATEMENT OF LEBANON

75th session of the UNHCR Executive Committee

During General Debate under item 3

October 16, 2024

As delivered by H.E.Mr. Salim BADDOURA

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the UN in Geneva

Madame Vice-Chair,

Lebanon is confident that under your able guidance, this session will contribute to consolidating the principle of burden and responsibility sharing, and increasing the support to UNHCR, in tackling very pressing refugee' crises.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered on behalf of the groups we belong to.

We thank the Secretariat for providing for this meeting. We pay tribute to UNHCR staff in the headquarters, and on the field, and we convey to them our heartfelt condolences, following the recent killing of Ali, Dina and little Jad, in Lebanon.

As we witness the multiplication of refugee' crises, it becomes of vital importance, for the international community, to ratchet up its efforts, aimed at finding durable solutions to protracted crises and, in the meantime, to keep funding the UNHCR, enough to fulfill its mandate of protecting refugees and their human dignity.

Madame Vice-Chair,

It's a cliché to say that wars usually leave behind death, deprivation and destruction, let alone that they often sow the seeds for more conflicts and enmity to come, but when those very same wars are waged, with blatant disregard for

International Humanitarian Law and its underlying principles of proportionality, discrimination and precaution, mayhem and tragedy reach nightmarish heights.

The disturbing images and footages coming from Lebanon give you, but a glimpse, about the atrocities and war crimes being committed there, with total impunity and the ensuing devastation and suffering. But the sad reality on the ground dwarf the images and the footages, and I refer you in this regard to reports coming from the official Lebanese sources, international organizations and NGOs present and active on the ground.

Madame Vice-Chair,

All wars spark humanitarian crises, but ours is aggravated by a frightening forcible displacement, involving more than 1.2 million people from southern Lebanon, the Bekaa region and Beirut. Southern Lebanon has become uninhabitable, as civilians are killed under heavy bombardments, or forced to run for their lives in panic, leaving behind their livelihoods, their belongings and their cherished memories.

This massive forcible displacement involves Lebanese civilians and Syrian refugees alike, many being repeatedly displaced. Some Lebanese and Syrians are fleeing to Syria by risky routes. The rest are fleeing to Beirut and other Lebanese regions. Many are very destitute, therefore unable to fend for themselves, and end up in packed, poorly equipped shelters; others are forced to huddle in the streets. Others are still being targeted. Yesterday, in northern Lebanon, a building sheltering displaced families was targeted by a strike. More than 20 people were killed, and others injured.

But this is not the end of the story. A ceasefire that could ease the plight seems elusive, hence the already very precarious humanitarian situation could yet significantly worsen, putting the Lebanese State under unbearable pressure.

Madame Vice-Chair,

Humanitarian access and relief efforts are becoming more complicated given the brutality of the attacks and their expansion, let alone the systematic targeting of

humanitarian workers, paramedics, emergency workers, as well as hospitals and medical centers.

Lebanese are bracing for more stress and suffering, because the Israeli army is using against Lebanon the same sinister playbook it used in Gaza. It is unfortunate that the international community remains powerless, as International Humanitarian Law is being hollowed out in Gaza and in Lebanon, with total impunity, the attacks on UNIFIL peacekeepers three days ago being a blatant example in this regard.

Mr. High Commissioner,

You bravely flew to Lebanon, where you have witnessed firsthand the disastrous situation and shown your solidarity as usual in your very dignified manner, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

But you of all people know the looming risks. If a ceasefire isn't reached soon, we could be dragged into an endless cycle of violence, seriously hampering your efforts in the region, and shattering the fundamental values we're all here supposed to stand for.

It is noteworthy, that by rendering vast areas in Lebanon uninhabitable, the occupying power is forestalling the eventual return of the displaced. This leaves us in the dark, regarding the fate of these people, in the years to come and subsequently the future of Lebanon, as a nation. It is vital for the international community to push back against the "weaponization of forcible displacement" occurring in Lebanon in violation of the Geneva Conventions, or else the international community will continue sleepwalking into more conflicts, more intolerance and radicalism in the Middle East.

It is of the utmost importance that the UNHCR continue to play its pivotal role, alongside other important UN agencies, and to mobilize the international community to avoid the complete meltdown. UNHCR's support to refugees and host communities should be scaled up, and it should contribute, as appropriate, to the global chorus for the ceasefire, and for the halting of the bloodshed in Lebanon. I thank you.