

Situation in Lebanon

Resolution adopted by the EPP Political Assembly 3-4 February 2020



For the past few years, the deterioration of the economic situation in Lebanon forecast the current crisis. Starting 17 October 2019, the Lebanese people took to the streets in peaceful protest against the ruling class; they protested not only against economic deterioration and the government's failure to create growth, but also against the increase in corruption and the absence of the rule of law.

During these past several years, hundreds of companies and factories have closed, unemployment has increased, and taxes were raised in both the 2018 and the 2019 budgets — and yet both the fiscal and monetary situations have only worsened. In quantitative terms, Lebanon's debt-to-GDP ratio reached 152% in 2018; in 2019, inflation rate reached 6.96 percent in December of 2019 from 3.17 percent in the previous month, unemployment increased drastically. The year 2019 also saw negative economic growth, and the country ranked 137 in the Corruption Perception index. Adding to these economic factors, Lebanon is also hosting around 1.5 million Syrian and Palestinians refugees (for a population of 4.8 million citizens), who constitute an additional burden on the country's infrastructure, economy and social structure.

To complicate matters still further, Lebanon — which has always served as a bridge between the West and the Middle East — has been caught up in rising regional tensions due to the influence of Iranian-backed militias, especially Hezbollah. Hezbollah has openly pledged (in different circumstances) that any attack on Iran would trigger a war in the region: a war in which the West and its allies would become targets for Iranian-backed militias.

Therefore, the EPP:

- Calls on the new Lebanese government to implement sustainable economic and social reforms and to try to stop the total economic collapse of the country, thus responding to the Lebanese people's aspirations, needs and expectations, including early elections as requested by the Lebanese people;
- Calls on the new Lebanese government to reinforce good governance, rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, and the fight against corruption;
- Reaffirms its support for Lebanon's stability, neutrality, sovereignty and political independence in order to avoid dragging the country into wider regional conflicts;
- -calls, in particular, on the European Commission and the EEAS to pressure the Iranian regime not to interfere in Lebanon's internal affairs and to respect the Lebanese people's free will and determination to preserve the safety and security of their country amid regional turmoil.

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