

Open dialogue on the national report of Lebanon

The 23rd UPR session

Palais des Nations

Room XXII

Geneva, Switzerland

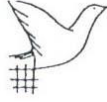
Speech by Mr. Mohammed Safa, the Secretary General of Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

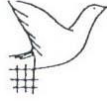
From the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all here today and to thank you for taking the time out from your busy schedule to attend this timely side event.

We welcome Lebanon's continued engagement in the UPR process. However, we remain deeply concerned about the slow pace of implementation of accepted recommendations from the first cycle. In particular after careful analysis of the National Report of the Lebanese Republic submitted to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review for its 23rd session we present the following comments and recommendations with the view of bridging the gap between the reality and rhetoric.

1. The Lebanese authorities failed to organize a modern dialogue with stakeholders and failed to pursue a mechanism that ensures the implementation of the UPR recommendations mentioned in the report (p3).
2. Plans of action previously mentioned in (p4) of the report continue to be empty declarations, which have not been effectively implemented despite the passage of 4 years on the adoption of the recommendations. Hence, we do not recognize Lebanon's progress towards the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Lebanon during the first cycle of the UPR (2010) p.5.



3. The Report, mentions the war on terrorism, the displacement of Syrians and other internal instabilities to be the reason behind the delay of the preparation and submission of periodic reports (p.6). We do not deny the effects of these influencing factors but refuse to take them as reasons to cause reviews to be delayed for 15-19 years. Hence, we emphasize the importance of Lebanon's Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil's suggestion to form a national committee including members of the various ministries and bodies concerned with the preparation of periodic reports of the Lebanon (p. 7), and wish that it does not remain as a suggestion.
4. The report highlights in (p.7) that the Lebanese government has welcomed visitors from a number of international delegations working on human rights issues, inter alia, the Committee against Torture, Special Rapporteurs in 2011, 2013 and 2015, but intentionally omits the recommendations from CAT regarding the poor prison conditions in the country. Following the visit CAT has issued a report emphasizing the prevalence of systemic torture in Lebanon's prisons and put forward 36 recommendations. However, the Lebanese authorities called the report biased and unfair despite the existence of evidences to the contrary like the leaked video dated June 22, 2015 from Roumieh prison.
5. Page 15 of the report outlines that Lebanon has witnessed, in the past years, a significant development in the field of human rights as such page 10 gives some examples of participation in conferences and training sessions and various activities. Although we commend these positive steps, the reality is of a totally opposite nature from the rethoric. Lebanon has witnessed in the past years a serious deterioration in the fields of human rights, security and socio-economic stability. Case in point, the suppression of peaceful demonstration-arbitrary arrests and obsessive use of power were exercised by the authorities- calling for disbanding waste and other social injustice in Riad Solh Square in front of the Serail government during the period of



22/8/2015 until 8/11 2015, which is a clear violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments that promote and protect human rights ratified by Lebanon.

6. Pages 15 and 16 of the report outline the basic rights of people with disabilities and how responsible ministries can promote these rights. However we see that legislation 220 of the 29th of May 2000 is still not implemented and we find continuous protests via unions.
7. The report speaks about the Protection against Enforced Disappearance (Recommendation 12-80) p.15, the government has proposed a decree to establish an Independent National Commission and to create a complete database to track all relevant cases. However this decree still remains within the Council of Ministers. Successive governments disregarded the call by families of those missing and failed to develop a plan to address this issue. Further the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances has not been ratified despite the fact that it was signed in 2007.
8. Regardless of what the report says about; CAT, amending the legislation on the criminalization of torture, the formation of a committee to combat torture in Lebanese prisons (p.14), the relevant recommendations from the first cycle have not been implemented, and torture, lack of speedy and public trial, prison overcrowding remain to be of a great concern.

The remaining issues will be discussed by the other panelists.



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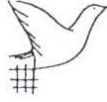
Current and previous Lebanese governments have failed on both the human rights and humanitarian frontiers. Lebanon is unable to meet its commitments that were agreed upon during the first Periodic Review. To illustrate, lack of multi stake holder dialogue, long delayed ratification of relevant international instruments and judicial reform, failure to form a constitutional and legislative framework that ensures the amendment of national laws and the establishment of national mechanisms

Of substance, the report fails to mention the continuous Israeli aggression, the pending cases of dozens of missing persons, the status of Lebanese detainees in Syrian prisons or the status of Lebanese detainee George Abdullah who has already served 32 years in French prisons.

This failure is a part of the massive incompetency on the frontiers of public policy, economics and social welfare. The parliament has successfully extended their legislative mandate twice already denying the Lebanese people their right to choose. Presidency of the country remains vacant and the council of ministers remains to be inoperative. Unemployment levels are sky rocketing, immigration is expanding and social welfare is worsening by the second as demonstrated by the latest garbage crisis movement that was combatted by further arrests and repression.

Based on all the above, we at Khiam Rehabilitation Center do not accept the National report of the Lebanese Republic to the 23rd UPR Session and consider it as just another attempt to justify the lack of political will and the failure to abide with previous commitments.

Regardless of all the external factors, and despite their scale, the primary political responsibility falls on the Lebanese government which continues to implement a sectarian political system where the ruling class place their goals over that of the general public. This lag of implementation puts Lebanon in further danger and carries the threat of further division and



disrespect to all forms of rights. Hence, we emphasize on the urgent need to implement all previous recommendations and to place a timeframe by which the recommendations are put into action. Else we call upon the international community to offer help to Lebanon in regards to the Syrian migrant influx. We strongly believe socio-economic and political reform is mandatory in order to fulfill the recommendations taken upon on both periodic reviews and repair the country's broken system.

Most importantly we urge the Lebanese government:

- 1- To establish a democratic electoral law based on relativity and outside the confessional registry;
- 2- To Form the National Commission to abolish sectarianism as the Taif Agreement stipulated and transition to a nonsectarian democracy;
- 3- To Adopt a uniform civil code of personal status as a first step to a democratic and civil state and other persistent demands for the Palestinian and Lebanese civil community;
- 4- Adoption of an escalated series of ranks and wages for the employees and security forces.