



**Statement**

**by**

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam  
Permanent Representative of Lebanon  
to the United Nations**

**at the  
Security Council**

**The Humanitarian Situation in Syria**

**New York, July 16, 2013**

*Check Against Delivery*

*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations  
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY. 10017*

Madam President,

Allow me first to commend Ms. Amos, Mr. Guterres and Mr. Šimonović for their relentless efforts to help alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people and to ensure respect of their basic rights. I would also like to thank them for their briefings which only confirm how appalling the humanitarian situation has become and how urgent remains the need for this Council to act.

It is indeed tragic that since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, over one hundred thousand people died and many more were wounded. Almost four million were displaced in Syria, and another two million fled, seeking refuge in neighboring countries, including my own, Lebanon. But it is even more tragic that the Security Council, the organ entrusted by the United Nations Charter with the maintenance of peace and security has so far failed to put an end to this conflict while every day brings before our eyes more victims and greater destruction.

Madam President,

Time and again, we and others have warned against the potential spillovers of the Syrian conflict into neighboring countries. Failing to put an end to this conflict, potential dangers are, unfortunately, now turning into actual realities. Increasing cross border fire and incursions from Syria into Lebanon are threatening the security and stability of my country. We strongly condemn all such acts whoever their perpetrator and whatever their alleged reason might be, and we appreciate that the Presidential Statement issued by this Council on July 10, “echoes President Sleiman’s protest, in his letter of June 18, 2013 at such repeated shelling from the conflicting parties, including by the Syrian Arab armed Forces and Syrian armed opposition groups, that violate Lebanon’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.” In this context, let me reiterate that my government remains fully committed to its policy of disassociation from the Syrian conflict and to the terms of the Baabda declaration of June 12, 2012.

Madam President,

Another dramatic impact of the Syrian conflict is the massive influx into Lebanon of refugees fleeing violence in Syria. According to UNHCR, the latest figure in this respect is 607,908 refugees, compared to 129,106 at the end of 2012 and to 28,477 in mid July 2012. In other words, the number of refugees has increased by over 460% since the beginning of this year and by over 20 fold in one year’s time. In reality, the numbers are still much bigger.

As a matter of fact, the Lebanese General Security Directorate puts the number of Syrians in Lebanon at 1.2 million. The discrepancy between the two figures is due to the fact that many Syrians did not feel the need to register as “refugees” or were unwilling and/or afraid to do so for political or sectarian reasons, not to mention illegal entrants and the 200 to 300 thousand Syrian workers traditionally present in Lebanon and their family members who joined them as the situation was worsening within Syria. In addition, there are about 40,000 Lebanese returnees and 63,000 Palestinian refugees who fled Syria since the beginning of the crisis.

Madam President,

Syrian refugees are now found in more than 1,400 locations in Lebanon, and their numbers have come to exceed those of local inhabitants in 30% of these locations. It is also noteworthy that around 77% of these refugees are women and children and that 66% of them are in North Lebanon and the Bekaa which are the closest regions to the Syrian border and which also happen to be the poorest regions of my country.

Madam President,

Amid continued violence in Syria, by the end of 2013 the number of refugees and other persons displaced to Lebanon is projected to reach 1,229,000 – this is the equivalent of over one fourth of Lebanon's own population – putting significant pressure on local communities. Madam President, it is as if your country, the United States of America, were going to have an influx of 75,000,000 refugees (Yes, Madam President, 75 million), or over twice the population of Canada. Could you imagine the impacts of an influx of such magnitude on your own country?

In its spring 2013 Lebanon Economic Monitor, the World Bank noted that the Syrian conflict "is severely and negatively impacting the Lebanese economy. The largest impact arises through the insecurity and uncertainty spillovers and touches at the heart of Lebanon's societal fabric." In fact, consumer confidence reached a new low in 2012, plunging by 36.8 percent compared to 2011, and as security incidents have continued to increase in 2013, a further decrease in consumer confidence is expected to take place leading to a slowdown in economic activities. Faced with uncertainty, private investment has also declined. Inflationary pressures are mounting.

Trade activities have been largely affected by the Syrian crisis as traditional land transit routes through Syria have been severely disrupted, if not closed altogether, and insurance and freight cost have significantly risen. For example, from January to April this year, cumulative exports through Syria dropped by 20%. The tourism sector witnessed double-digit declines during 2011 and 2012 and ESCWA estimates an even larger decline in 2013 to around 25%. Since tourism represents 10% to 12% of GDP, the impact of such decline in Lebanon, could lead to a 2.5 % decline in GDP resulting from tourism alone.

The Syrian refugee crisis has indeed broader implications on stability in Lebanon and has put significant pressure on local resources leading to increased security threats, crime rates, social tensions, and labor competition since around 1, 4 million Lebanese citizens are thought to be affected by displacements from Syria. Beyond the fiscal cost, the influx of refugees has also strained public services such as in health and education.

Madam President,

The pressures and threats on Lebanon are obviously mounting and the escalating needs of the Syrian refugees have clearly outstripped my country's capacity.