



Statement

by

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam
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to the United Nations**

**at the
Security Council**

**on the
“Humanitarian Situation in Syria”**

New York, February 26, 2015

Check Against Delivery

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Mr. President,

Four years into the conflict in Syria, and the international community remains unable to stop the collapse into bloodshed, and chaos of a country comprising one of the most ancient societies and rich civilizations on our planet. This tragic cycle of violence has left more than 200 thousand people dead and many many more wounded, 6.5 million internally displaced persons and more than 3 million refugees in neighboring countries, let alone the magnitude of physical destruction.

Mr. President,

For four years, this Council, which is the organ entrusted by the United Nations Charter with maintaining international peace and security, has failed to facilitate the realization of a political solution that would put an end to this protracted conflict.

By failing to assume its role, the Security Council has not only failed its mission. It failed Syria indeed; but it has also failed its neighbors and allowed for a dangerous increase in regional instability, a situation well illustrated by the fact that this conflict has produced a massive humanitarian crisis, and one of biggest waves of human displacement since World War II, which has pushed the societies, economies and infrastructures of neighboring counties to the brink, let alone the negative impact on the security environment in the whole region and beyond. As you all know, terrorism, fanaticism and sectarianism are on the rise, threatening the stability of neighboring countries and international peace and security.

Mr. President,

Lebanon today is home to more than 1.1 million registered Syrian refugees and 350,000 Palestinian refugees including 45,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria; and this is about a third of my country's total population. Lebanon, Mr. President, is the smallest country of the region in both geographic and population size, but it hosts the largest number of refugees. And according to UNHCR, Lebanon is the highest refugee hosting country per capita. It ranks 2nd in the total number of refugees, only behind Pakistan, whose geographical size and population are respectively about 80 and 50 times that of my country.

Mr. President,

The economic impact of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon has been detrimental. The World Bank estimated the total loss of Lebanon's economy as a result of this crisis at about 7.5 billion US dollars; and that was only back in the summer of 2013. The total economic loss today has almost doubled this amount.

86% of Syrian refugees live in local communities in regions which are home to 68% of the poorest Lebanese. Poverty in the country has risen by 61%, Lebanese unemployment levels have doubled, economic growth stumbled, and the national education, health, energy and water infrastructures are overstretched beyond their capacities.

In response to the growing challenge of the refugee crisis, my Government, in coordination with the relevant UN agencies and other partners, adopted in December 2014 the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016, at a cost estimated at 2.1 billion US dollars.

Mr. President,

Allow me to reiterate today what we have stressed on several occasions:

Lebanon cannot cope by itself with the humanitarian rights and needs of Syrian refugees on its soil and continues therefore to call for real burden-sharing and greater assistance to host communities through official delivery channels.

The UN agencies under the leadership of Ms. Amos and Mr. Guterres have done an excellent job in seeking to alleviate the suffering of the refugees. One more time, I would like to commend their work and that of all the members of their respective teams. The international community has also shown tremendous generosity in response to this humanitarian crisis. In particular, Kuwait ought to be commended for continuing to host the donors' conferences. However, more - in reality much more - still needs to be done. As a matter of fact, out of the 1.7 billion dollars estimated under the Regional Response Plan for Lebanon in 2014, only 52% of the required funds were met.

Mr. President,

It is of utmost urgency that the international community increases its humanitarian support to the Syrian refugees and to their host communities in neighboring countries. But more important remains the need for this Council to live up to its duties in helping to bring about a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

Mr. President,

The reality is that beyond the responsibilities of the Security Council as enshrined in the UN Charter, what is at stake today in Syria is our HUMANITY.