



**Statement**

**by**

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**at the  
Fourth Committee**

**Item 54: “United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees  
in the Near East”**

**New York, November 9, 2015**

*Check Against Delivery*

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

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to start by thanking the Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl for his sobering presentation. It is timely to commend him and his staff for their dedication and sacrifice.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the statement delivered by Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Arab Group.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2015, the international community witnessed historic events: the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNRWA, the adoption of the agenda for development 2030 and the raising of the flag of the State of Palestine. And in 2015, UNRWA faced the worst financial crisis yet, which reminded us all that the international community should remain focused on the welfare of the refugees and the protection of their rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Lebanon notes the drastic efforts of reform the agency has undertaken since 2006, and considers that UNRWA's leadership and staff should be allowed to focus on delivering services to Palestine refugees and on intensifying the fund raising efforts to strengthen the financial structure of UNRWA and the predictability of its resources. Only a strong and able UNRWA will constitute a crucial factor of stability in the life of refugees in the region, pending a final and just solution to the question of Palestine, including the Palestine refugees, in accordance with the principles of international law and UN resolutions, in particular GA resolution 194.

Mr. Chairman,

Lebanon remains committed to work closely with UNRWA, as a host country, as a member in the Ad com, in the working group on financing of UNRWA, in the United Nations and in so many different foras. Early last summer, when UNRWA faced the financial crisis threatening to delay the start of the 2015-2016 school year for more than 500,000 children, the President of the Council of Ministers addressed a letter to the Secretary-General echoing the concerns of the Commissioner-General, and supporting his efforts to ensure the much needed funds to allow the return of those children to their schools.

Hence, offering them a glimpse of normalcy in a region engulfed by one of the longest protracted conflicts, and sources of instability, and violence.

Lebanon hosts about 400,000 Palestine refugees representing around 10% of its population, living in overcrowded 12 camps, and welcomed an additional 45,000 Palestine refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria. The latest increase in the number of refugees coupled with lack of financial resources, minimal health services, dire conditions in schools and other infrastructures exacerbated an already vulnerable environment.

Last July, the Palestine refugees fleeing Syria have stopped receiving cash assistance "the main source of income for over 95% of those refugees", said UNRWA's Country Director in Lebanon, Matthias Schmale. It is alarming that those refugees are left alone.

Moreover, we would like to reaffirm that we have been closely cooperating with the Palestinian representatives through the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee to address the socio economic and security challenges in the camps. Strides have been made, from the adoption of the law 129 regulating the access of Palestinians to the Lebanese labor market, to the publication of the "Guide to the Palestinian workers, rights and obligations", to the vaccination campaign just to name a few.

But the task remaining ahead of us is enormous:

The reconstruction of Nahr el Bared camp should be completed. While we reiterate our appreciation to the generosity of donors, there is an urgency to remind that only USD 188 million have been received, leaving a shortfall of USD 157 million. The full reconstruction will allow the relocation of 26,000 of the registered Palestine refugees which are still displaced in temporary accommodation. Only the full reconstruction of this camp and the return of the displaced families will be a translation of the principles of shared responsibility and successful partnership.

Furthermore, we urge the donors to fully cover UNRWA's appeal on the basic humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees fleeing the crisis in Syria. It is worrying that only 50 % was funded.

Mr. Chairman,

In the words of one Palestinian refugee: "Losing the UNRWA card would be losing all of Palestine. Beyond humanitarian aid, the existence of UNRWA reminds the world that we are still waiting for the recognition of our right to return and our right to a life of dignity, peace, and justice.

It is time to heed the Palestine refugees' calls.