



Statement

by

**H.E. Ambassador Charbel Wehbi
Director of Political and Consular Affairs
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at the

Fourth Committee

**Item 51: United Nations Relief and Works Agency
for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

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Check Against Delivery

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

Mr. President,

Lebanon extends its appreciation to Commissioner-General Mr. Filipe Grandi for his report to the General Assembly, his briefing on UNRWA's work, and his commitment to the plight of refugees from Palestine.

Mr. Chairman,

What have we learned from history in the last century?

Ethnic cleansing should not be repeated. International law and International Humanitarian law should be fully respected. The United Nations should be able to uphold the principles enshrined in its charter.

Hence, it is necessary to continue working towards a just and comprehensive solution for the Middle East problems, at the heart of which lies the question of Palestine, pursuant to the United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In this context, Lebanon considers the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations as a positive step forward, and calls for the adoption of a comprehensive approach to tackle all the aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Mr. Chairman,

In the midst of all these efforts, it is of paramount importance to reiterate that since its inception, UNRWA plays a crucial role in alleviating the social and economical burdens of the refugees of Palestine. However UNRWA today is facing a structural financial crisis which may, if not adequately addressed, undermine the agency's commitments to the human development of these refugees. Lebanon welcomes the High Level meeting held on the margins of the General Assembly and commends the adoption of the final joint communiqué, in which the participants highlighted that the issue of refugees of Palestine is a shared responsibility.

Mr. Chairman,

It has been UNRWA's priority to provide refugees from Palestine with basic services that may help them "regain a sense of normalcy" in host countries. Therefore, Lebanon has been working in close coordination with UNRWA to enable it to effectively fulfill its mandate within the 12 camps on the Lebanese territories. While we express our gratitude for donors who contributed in the partial reconstruction of Nahr El Bared camp under the leadership of UNRWA, we reiterate our call for the full disbursement of pledges made in order to turn this joint effort into a success story.

Moreover, my government has undertaken important steps such as amendments to its labor legislations, and establishment of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation as a framework for the improvement of the livelihoods of Palestine refugees during their temporary stay in Lebanon. Let me also stress the importance of implementing the right of return of these refugees to their homeland as stipulated by resolution 194 (III) of the GA. Need I remind you that settlement of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, contradicts the provisions of executive article 4 of the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as the preamble of its Constitution.

Mr. Chairman,

The current regional events are having a direct impact on the refugees from Palestine in their host countries. The crisis in Syria has uprooted the already displaced Palestine refugees from their temporary homes and has forced them to flee to Lebanon and other neighboring countries, thus aggravating their already volatile situation.

While Lebanon's stance on the crisis in Syria has consistently been a policy of disassociation, Lebanon did not disassociate itself from its humanitarian obligations, particularly by keeping its borders open to the increasing influx of refugees. Subsequently, the number of Palestine refugees fleeing from Syria into Lebanon has recently surpassed 75,000. This signifies that UNRWA now has to manage an exponential increase of almost 20% in refugees to its populace. To adequately respond to these new challenges, a response plan for humanitarian assistance has been launched. Lebanon expresses its appreciation for the generosity showed by many countries, and urges donors to immediately provide UNRWA with the sound and sustainable much needed funding.

Mr. Chairman,

It is high time to put an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to self determination. Need I remind you that there shall be no stability, democracy and moderation in the Middle East without justice in Palestine?