



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط
The Middle East Council of Churches

Middle East Overview – November 2020

Can Iraq's Children Be Saved?



Helpless children in Iraq have nowhere and no one to go to, April 13, 2017, The Daily Beast

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Contents

1. BACKGROUND	2
2. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION.....	3
Egypt	3
Jordan	4
Iraq	5
Lebanon	6
Palestine	7
Syria	7
Cyprus	8
3. The Corona Situation.....	9
Egypt	9
Jordan	10
Iraq	11
Lebanon	12
Palestine	12
Syria	13
Cyprus	14
3. THE REFUGEE SITUATION (Updated)	14
Egypt	14
Jordan	15
Iraq	15
Lebanon	16
Syria	17
Cyprus	18
4. CHURCH ACTIVITIES.....	18
5. MECC HEADQUARTERS AND HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES (November 2020):	23
6. CONCLUSION	42



1. Introduction

Years of war and brutal armed conflicts weighed heavily on the Middle East and its children. Today for instance, Iraq's children have nowhere or no one to go to as several camps have suddenly closed down. As reported by the humanitarian organization Save the Children, thousands of children and their families are forced to live in ruins where festering corpses and unexploded bombs are present. To make matters worse, the cold grip of winter is approaching as they lack adequate shelter or heating, and the COVID-19 pandemic runs rampant across the country. All of this came as part of a general policy to return around 250,000 people to their areas of origin without taking into consideration the 48,000 people who were affected by camp closures before the end of November.

The MECC, along with Save the Children calls upon the international community to work with the Iraqi government to mobilize resources and to come up with a sustainable plan for the closures of the camps in line with international humanitarian standards to ensure the protection of innocents tainted by war. Let us not allow those of pure hearts be corrupted by the years of hatred that had shaped the Middle East.



2. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Egypt

- According to Minister of Finance Mohamed Maait Egypt's economy exceeded expectations as reported by international institutions and credit rating institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, Golden Man Sachs, Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch.¹
- Minister of Trade and Industry Nevine Gamae convened with South Korean ambassador to discuss cooperation on the SME (small medium enterprise) level.²
- Egypt's Minister of Trade and Industry Nevin Gamea met on the 28th of October with a high-level Ukrainian delegation and agreed to strengthen cooperation in the furniture industry.³
- Minister of International Cooperation Rania Al-Mashat held a virtual meeting with Leslie Reed, Mission Director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Egypt, to discuss expanding the economic cooperation strategy between Egypt and the US during the next five years (2021-2025).⁴
- 15.7611 EG/USD official currency exchange rate.⁵



Mission Director Leslie Reed with Minister of International Cooperation Rania Al-Mashat, Nov. 4, 2020, photo credit: Ahram

¹ Egypt Today, Nov. 11, 2020, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/94112/Performance-of-Egyptian-economy-exceeded-int-l-institutions-expectations-Finance>

² Al Monitor, Nov 3, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/11/egypt-south-korea-cooperation-smes-development-economy.html>

³ Al Monitor, Nov 5, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/11/egypt-ukraine-cooperation-furniture-industry-africa-europe.html>

⁴ Ahram, Nov. 4, 2020, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/390028/Business/Economy/Egypt,-US-discuss-expanding-economic-cooperation--.aspx>

⁵ <http://www.cbe.org.eg/en/EconomicResearch/Statistics/Pages/ExchangeRatesListing.aspx>



Jordan

- An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team is proposing to bring forward into 2021 a part of IMF credit that was expected to be disbursed to Jordan in the outer years of the \$1.3 billion four-year Extended Fund Facility (EFF).⁶
- Jordan held parliamentary elections in an attempt to respond to the state of the economy and corona situation.
- An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team concluded virtual discussions with the Jordanian authorities over the release of an amount of around \$146 million to help the economy.⁷
- His Majesty King Abdullah during his participation in the Bloomberg New Economy Forum, which focused this year on bolstering international cooperation and fortifying various economic sectors, urged global cooperation to enhance access to healthcare and food security.⁸
- 1.428 USD Jordanian official currency value.⁹



His Majesty King Abdullah during his participation in the Bloomberg New Economy Forum, Nov. 17, 2020, photo credit: Bloomberg Economy Forum

⁶ Mena Fn, Nov. 16, 2020, <https://menafn.com/1101135877/IMF-team-proposes-bringing-forward-into-2021-part-of-credit-to-Jordan>

⁷ Zawya, Oct 28, 2020,

https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/economy/story/Jordan_IMF_reach_stafflevel_agreement_on_first_review_under_Extended_Fund_Facility-SNG_188420715/

⁸ Jordanian Times, Nov 17, 2020, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/king-urges-global-cooperation-enhance-access-healthcare-food-security>

⁹ <http://statisticaldb.cbj.gov.jo/index?action=level4>



Iraq

- Iraq and Saudi Arabia during this month announced an agreement to bolster cooperation in the fields of economy and investment.¹⁰
- Despite foreign nation's investment plans for Iraq, local tribes and militias began stalling the process due to political reasons.¹¹
- According to the new issue of the World Bank's Iraq Economic Monitor, Iraq is experiencing high levels of poverty due to the pandemic and low oil prices.¹²
- Following months of struggle between the Iraqi government and the parliament, the latter approved Nov. 12 the deficit law that allows Iraq to borrow 12 trillion dinars (\$10 billion), which would only provide Iraq with three months to pay the salaries of public servants.¹³
- 1,190.72 Dinar /USD Iraqi official currency exchange rate.¹⁴



The World Bank issued a warning about Iraq's high poverty levels, Nov. 16, 2020, photo credit: Modern Policy.

¹⁰ Anadolu Agency, Nov. 8, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iraq-saudi-agree-to-boost-economic-cooperation/2036444>

¹¹ Al Monitor, Oct 31, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/10/iraq-investors-militias-blackmail.html>

¹² Modern Diplomacy, November 16, 2020, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/11/16/covid-19-and-low-oil-prices-push-millions-of-iraqis-into-poverty/>

¹³ Al Monitor, Nov 13, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/11/iraq-economy-finance.html>

¹⁴ Central Bank of Iraq, <http://www.cbiraq.org/DataValues.aspx?dtFrm=10/31/2003&dtTo=02/18/2019&tmId=175&dtformat=MMM,yyyy>



Lebanon

- According to data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Lebanon's nominal GDP is forecast to shrink from \$52.5 billion in 2019 to \$18.7 billion in 2020, similar to the size of the economy in 2002.¹⁵
- The World Bank warned that the already dire economic crisis in Lebanon could become catastrophic as unemployment is rising rapidly and half of the population is falling below the poverty line.¹⁶
- Patrick Durel, an adviser to French President Macron for the Middle East and North Africa affairs, delivered an ultimatum in forming a new Cabinet of specialists to deliver reforms, or the country will lose international aid.¹⁷
- The latest Byblos Bank/AUB Consumer Confidence Index indicated that consumer confidence in Lebanon has fallen to record low levels in the first half of 2020 as the country's economic crisis deepens.¹⁸
- 1507.5 LBP/ USD Lebanon official currency exchange rate.¹⁹



The IMF indicated that it did not provide any projections for Lebanon's economic indicators for the 2021-25 period due to an unusually high degree of uncertainty in the country. Oct 24, 2020, Photo credit Arabian Business,

¹⁵ Arabian Business, Oct 24, 2020, <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/banking-finance/453652-reforms-urged-as-lebanons-economy-set-to-shrink-to-2002-levels>

¹⁶ Arabian Business, Oct 28, 2020, <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/politics-economics/453914-world-bank-delivers-stark-warning-of-lebanon-catastrophe>

¹⁷ The 961, Nov. 17, 2020, <https://www.the961.com/france-lebanon-cabinet-international-aid/>

¹⁸ Arabian Business, Oct 23, 2020, <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/culture-society/453644-consumer-confidence-falls-to-record-low-in-lebanon-as-crisis-deepens>

¹⁹ <http://www.bdl.gov.lb/>



Palestine

- Palestine has set up a team of experts to negotiate with Egypt about the demarcation of the maritime borders.²⁰
- Palestinian rights advocates condemned a visit by Israeli settlers to the United Arab Emirates, which they said confirmed concerns that Abu Dhabi's normalization deal with the Israeli government strengthens the occupation and dispossession of Palestinian land.²¹
- The Ministry of National Economy conducted a study, which indicated that businesses have suffered to various degrees by the Coronavirus pandemic forcing them to take financial and administrative measures, as well as digital solutions, to face the impacts of the pandemic.²²



'Normalisation is betrayal,' reads mural in Palestinian West Bank city of Hebron (AFP/File photo)

Syria

- Russia has allocated over USD 1 billion to restore Syria's power network and carry out reconstruction works in other sectors.²³
- The U.S. administration added several new Syrian individuals and institutions to its sanctions list, confirming a recent acceleration in its drive to blacklist Syrian business and political actors.²⁴
- Dozens of ATMs are once again partially operating in Syria after new payment companies were established, about five months after the sudden withdrawal of the main ATM operator from the market.²⁵

²⁰Al Monitor, Nov 4, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/11/palestine-egypt-negotiations-maritime-border-demarcation.html>

²¹ Middle East Eye, Nov. 12, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestine-advocates-decry-israeli-settlers-visit-uae>

²² Wafa, Nov. 16, 2020, <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/120999>

²³ <https://www.syria-report.com/>

²⁴ <https://www.syria-report.com/>

²⁵ <https://www.syria-report.com/>



- The Syrian government has awarded tens of millions of dollars' worth of contracts to companies to supply equipment and spare parts for its two major oil refineries, including a major contract to a company owned by the Katerji family.²⁶
- The price of medicine witnessed a significant increase during the past two weeks, coinciding with a clear decrease in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound. The purchase of medicine by patients has become very difficult, and the simplest prescription for medicine has become equal to half the salary for employees or workers.²⁷
- Official Current Exchange Rate SP/USD: 1250 SP/USD
Current Exchange Rate in Black Market: 2850 SP/USD
The average of exchange Rate in Black Market in November 2020: 2650 SP/USD.

Cyprus

- Cyprus Finance Minister Konstantinos Petrides claimed that “As of next year, Cyprus will return to pre-pandemic levels of economic normality. Over the next three years, we expect real growth rates to exceed on average 3 per cent,”²⁸
- The European Commission forecasted that the Cyprus’ pandemic-struck economy is expected to contract by 6.2% GDP in 2020, rebound 3.7% in 2021 and 3% the year after.²⁹
- Ignoring soft European Union sanctions, Turkey pressed ahead with renewed drilling for oil and gas in Cyprus'



Cyprus economy on slow recovery path, Nov 3, 2020, photo credit: financial mirror

²⁶ <https://www.syria-report.com/>

²⁷ <https://www.syria-report.com/>

²⁸ Cyprus Mail, Nov. 17, 2020, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2020/11/17/cyprus-economy-recover-next-year/>

²⁹ Financial Mirror, Nov. 5, 2020, <https://www.financialmirror.com/2020/11/05/eu-cyprus-economy-to-shrink-6-2-gdp-in-2020/>



sovereign waters, with Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades reversing his vow not to discuss reunification while that's going on.³⁰

- 1. 18 USD Euro official currency value³¹

3. The Corona Situation

Egypt

Corona cases, deaths and recovered are distributed as follows:

- 117,156 corona confirmed cases
 - 103,082 recovered
 - 6,713 deaths
- The Egyptian government warned on 20 November, the country to brace itself for a second wave of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as the number of new cases continued to rise.³²
 - In preparation for the expected second wave of the virus, the Egyptian government announced new opening hours for shops, restaurants, cafes, workshops and handicrafts shops.³³



Men in protective masks wait for the train at a metro station in Cairo. (Reuters)

³⁰ The National Herald, Nov. 15, 2020, https://www.thenationalherald.com/cyprus_economy/arthro/unchecked_defiant_turkey_resuming_energy_drilling_off_cyprus-1213275/

³¹ https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-usd.en.html

³² Arab News, Nov. 21, 2020, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1766071/middle-east>

³³ Arab News, Nov. 23, 2020, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1766861/middle-east>



- The Ministry of Health announced that the recovery rates from Coronavirus pandemic at isolation hospitals hit 89.7 percent.³⁴

Jordan

Corona cases, deaths and recovered are distributed as follows:

- 231,237 corona confirmed cases
 - 173,369 recovered
 - 2909 deaths
- On 2 November, Jordan detected a daily record 5,877 cases – one of the highest per capita rates in the world, raising alarms within a country, which had succeeded in putting a lid on the virus during the first quarter of the year.
 - According to the UN Refugee Agency, number of Covid-19 infections among Syrian refugees in camps in Jordan has reached 807.³⁵



Mask wearers on the street in Amman. Photograph: Muhammad Hamed/Reuters

³⁴ Egypt Today, Nov. 25, 2020, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/94640/Egypt%E2%80%99s-recovery-rates-of-COVID-19-hit-89-7>

³⁵ Ammon News, Nov. 23, 2020, <https://en.ammonnews.net/article/44694>



Iraq

Corona cases, deaths and recovered are distributed as follows:

- 558,767 corona confirmed cases
 - 487,863 recovered
 - 12,361 deaths
-
- The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health in Iraq launched a new phase of the COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign in heavily populated and high-risk areas of Mosul, Ninewa governorate, aiming to raise public awareness of the importance of wearing facemasks, physical distancing and maintaining good hand hygiene.³⁶
 - German Government's KfW Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Government of Iraq signed a EUR 10 million agreement (US\$11.75 million) to support Iraq's response to COVID-19.³⁷



The World Health Organization (WHO) had provided medical supplies and equipment to the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan region of Iraq to support response efforts in fighting COVID-19, April 19, 2020, photo credit: who.int

³⁶ OCHA, Nov. 25, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/who-iraq-conducts-its-community-awareness-raising-campaign-halt-recent-surge-covid-19>

³⁷ OCHA, Nov. 22, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/new-10m-contribution-germany-expands-undp-iraq-s-coronavirus-response-15-governorates>



Lebanon

Corona cases, deaths and recovered are distributed as follows:

- 132,817 corona confirmed cases
 - 84,142 recovered
 - 1,067 deaths
- During this month, Lebanon reinstated a lockdown over a 2-week period, hoping to put a lid on the high corona figures.
 - Hospitals, during this month, reported they are at full capacity and cannot tend to new covid-19 patients.³⁸
 - According to Health Minister Dr. Hamad Hasan, the country will receive a vaccine in Mid-February.³⁹



Lebanon to receive COVID-19 vaccine by mid-February: Hasan, Nov. 23, 2020, photo credit: Daily Star.

Palestine

Corona cases, deaths and recovered are distributed as follows:

- 92,708 corona confirmed cases
 - 68,250 recovered
 - 780 deaths
- Health Officials within Gaza warned that the COVID situation has reached a critical stage within the city, warning of the total collapse of the system.



Medical workers in Gaza face a serious shortage of equipment to battle the quickly spreading COVID-19 outbreak [Walid Mahmoud/Al Jazeera]

³⁸ Arab News, Nov. 11, 2020, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1761406/middle-east>

³⁹ Daily Star, Nov. 23, 2020, <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2020/Nov-23/514613-lebanon-to-receive-covid-19-vaccine-by-mid-february-hasan.ashx>



- According to a senior official from the Palestinian Authority, Palestine will receive three or four million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.⁴⁰

Syria

Corona cases, deaths and recovered are distributed as follows:

- 8,147 corona confirmed cases
 - 3,748 recovered
 - 432 deaths
- WHO started holding daily meetings in Damascus and weekly Health Sector coordination meetings and operational calls to monitor implementation of the COVID-19 preparedness response plan (PRP).⁴¹
 - In northwest Syria the percentage of current cases among healthcare workers increased to some 15 percent, a significant increase of positive cases has also been noted among students and teachers.
 - WHO supported 13 one-day trainings for 235 healthcare workers on case management in Homs, Aleppo, Dar'a, AlHasakeh and Quneitra.⁴²



Men distribute traditional desserts to children at a camp for displaced Syrians in Kafr Dariyan, in the north of Syria's northwestern Idlib province, during the Corona Pandemic. Source. AFP

⁴⁰ Aljazeera, Nov. 23, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/23/gaza-declares-covid-19-disaster-with-health-system-near-collapse>

⁴¹ OCHA, Nov. 9, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-covid-19-response-update-no-12-9-november-2020>

⁴² OCHA, Nov. 9, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-covid-19-response-update-no-12-9-november-2020>



Cyprus

Corona cases, deaths and recovered are distributed as follows:

- 11,523 corona confirmed cases
- 2,057 recovered
- 54 deaths
- Cyprus put its entire southwest under a strict 19-day lockdown, banning any non-essential movement of people and shuttering bars and restaurants after a string of escalating restrictions failed to curb a sharp increase in coronavirus infections.⁴³



Cypriot men sit at a social club and watch the televised address of Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades explaining the need for additional restrictions to beat back a surge in COVID-19 cases in Nicosia suburb of Lakatamia, Cyprus, on Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2020., The Associated Press.

4. THE REFUGEE SITUATION

Egypt

- The UNHCR up until November, have provided 80,000 refugee families with cash assistance.⁴⁴
- Egyptian authorities cracked down on Sudanese refugees who were staging a protest. Many were detained as human rights observers condemned the government's actions.⁴⁵

⁴³ ABC, November 12, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/cyprus-locks-southwest-surge-coronavirus-cases-74157075>

⁴⁴ Relief Web, November 23, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/egypt/covid-19-takes-heavy-toll-refugees-egypt>

⁴⁵ Amnesty, Nov. 4, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/egypt-protests-by-sudanese-migrants-and-refugees-over-brutal-killing-of-a-child-met-with-violence-and-arrests/>



Jordan

The UNHCR states that there are currently 659,673 registered refugees in Jordan up until the beginning of November.

The proportion of Syrian displaced people registered within the UNHCR for September, are distributed as follows:

- 194,865 in Amman Governorate (29.5 %)
 - 164,087 in Mafraq Governorate (24.8%)
 - 136,186 in Irbid Governorate (20.6%)
 - 96,553 in Zarqa Governorate (14.6%)
 - 18,338 in Balqa Governorate (2.8%)
 - 13,093 in Madaba Governorate (2%)
 - 9,371 in Jarash Governorate (1.4%)
 - 8,482 in Karak Governorate (1.3%)
 - 8,378 in Maan Governorate (1.3%)
 - 6,556 in Ajlun Governorate (1.0%)
 - 3,697 in Aqaba Governorate (0.6%)
 - 1,694 in Tafilah Governorate (0.3%)
- Special permits from the Ministry of Interior, were issued to the UNHCR and its partners, to continue delivering critical services to camps during the lockdown.⁴⁶
 - The UNRWA released a statement claiming that to this date, it has only received 5% of the requested funds.⁴⁷

Iraq

The UNHCR states that there are currently 241,738 registered Syrian refugees in Iraq.

The proportion of displaced Syrian people registered within the UNHCR up until the beginning of November, are distributed as follows:

- 123,712 in Erbil (50.8%)
- 84,421 in Dahuk (34.9%)
- 31,212 in Sulaymaniyah (12.9%)

⁴⁶ OCHA, Nov. 22, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/inter-sector-working-group-jordan-refugee-response-coordination-coronavirus-update-2>

⁴⁷ Atlantic Council. Nov 24, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/unrwa-and-the-palestine-refugees-it-serves-remains-an-investment-worth-protecting/>



- 1,159 in Anbar (0.5%)
- 2,234 in other areas (0.8%)⁴⁸
- Save The Children released a report claiming that thousands of children are now living among corpses, unexploded bombs and rubble as several camps have been closed.⁴⁹
- The Emirates Red Crescent, ERC, intensified its overall response to the humanitarian situation in Kurdistan, Iraq, by launching a winter clothes campaign, providing food and humanitarian aid to Syrian and Iraqi refugees in 14 camps, and supporting vulnerable families in Northern Iraq.⁵⁰
- The High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet claimed that her Office has received "deeply troubling reports" that 21 men reportedly convicted of terrorism-related charges were executed in Nasiriyah Central Prison, also known as Al Hoot, in Iraq.⁵¹

Lebanon

[UNHCR Lebanon has not updated the statistics regarding the distribution of refugees.]

Since the beginning of October, the number of registered refugees in Lebanon is 879,529.

Refugees in Lebanon are distributed as follows:

- 340,600 in Bekaa (38.7%)
- 236,635 in North Lebanon (26.9%)
- 205,883 in Beirut (23.4%)
- 96,411 in South Lebanon (11.0%)⁵²
- Tensions were exacerbated between local host community in Bcharee and the Syrian refugee committee, dispute between a Lebanese man and a Syrian resulted in the death by gunshot of the former.⁵³

⁴⁸ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/5>

⁴⁹ OCHA, Nov. 27, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-children-forced-live-among-corpse-unexploded-bombs-and-rubble-after-camp-closures>

⁵⁰ OCHA, Nov. 23, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/erc-intensifies-humanitarian-response-kurdistan-iraq>

⁵¹ OCHA, Nov. 17, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/deeply-troubling-reports-21-executions-iraq-yesterday-bachelet>

⁵² <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>

⁵³ TRT World, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/lebanon-riot-shines-light-on-precarious-situation-of-syrian-refugees-41787>



- As living conditions for the 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon have long been deteriorating, a Syrian man in Lebanon set himself on fire over his inability to afford medical treatment for his sick daughter.⁵⁴

Syria

- Syria's declining economic situation and a sharp rise in food insecurity also appear to be exacerbating the country's humanitarian conditions. Syria has recently suffered from the sudden collapse of its currency, the Syrian pound, and, according to OCHA, an unemployment rate of nearly 50 percent.⁵⁵
- Flooding destroyed and damaged tents in at least 10 IDP sites in Northwest Syria, and caused access issues in many others.⁵⁶
- According to human rights organizations, relief groups and government bodies number of Syrians committing suicide significantly increased; both in areas controlled by the government and the non-government armed groups.⁵⁷
- More than 64,000 people are living under harsh conditions in the restive Al Hol camp in northeast Syria, 94 per cent of the camp is made up of women and children. There are around 34,000 children under the age of 12; more than 120 of them are unaccompanied or separated from their families and living in an interim care center in the camp.⁵⁸
- In Northwest Syria, Ongoing hostilities encroach on population areas, leading to higher civilian casualties.
- Some 2.8 million people in need in northwest Syria.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Info Migrants, Nov. 6, 2020, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/28365/syrian-refugee-sets-himself-on-fire-in-front-of-unhcr-office-in-beirut>

⁵⁵ Security Council Report, Oct 30, 2020, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-11/syria-25.php>

⁵⁶ OCHA, Nov. 22, 2020, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nw_syria_sitrep22_20201120.pdf

⁵⁷ Middle East Monitor, Nov. 3, 2020, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20201103-syria-suicide-rate-rises-in-2020/>

⁵⁸ <https://news.un.org/en/tags/syria>

⁵⁹ OCHA, Oct 21, 2020, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nw_syria_sitrep21_20201020.pdf



Cyprus

- According to local police, 24 Syrian refugees arrived on a small boat in Cyprus two days after a group of 18 arrived in the same area of the northern coast of the island.⁶⁰
- A NGO called Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, released a report detailing that refugees in Cyprus suffer from the inability of receiving PCR tests.⁶¹

5. CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Egypt

- His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and patriarch of the See of St. Mark, presided over an event, which celebrated the graduation of a new batch of students from the Institute of Coptic studies.⁶²
- The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria issued a statement to reduce the number of participants in masses and other religious and educational events starting Sunday. The number of participants may only reach a maximum of 25 percent of the church's capacity.⁶³



HH Pope Tawadros II during the event, Nov. 17, 2020, photo credit: Mobtada

⁶⁰ Xinhuanet, Nov. 15, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-11/15/c_139516702.htm

⁶¹ OCHA, Nov. 4, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cyprus/systemic-analysis-impact-covid-19-pandemic-refugees-migrants-and-asylum-seekers-cyprus>

⁶² Mobtada, Nov. 17, 2020, <https://www.mobtada.com/details/989385>

⁶³ Ahram, Nov 1, 2020, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/389721/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-Orthodox-churches-to-limit-attendance-to-.aspx>



Jordan

- The Council of Church Heads in Jordan called on all priests to serve the Divine Liturgy on 15 November and “pray with a humble heart so that the evil of the Corona epidemic is removed from the homeland and the world.”



Christopher Atallah, the head of the council of churches in Jordan, September 30, 2020.

Iraq

- His Beatitude Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans and head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, expressed his hope that religions will remain a source of blessing, love, peace, cooperation and building trust among people, not a source of fundamentalism and the sowing of hatred, violence and exclusion.



His Beatitude Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako



Lebanon

- Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, HB Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East met at the Patriarchal Headquarters in Balamand, Archimandrite Jean Mansour, the Patriarchal Commissioner in Sweden and the Scandinavian countries. His Beatitude was briefed on the status of the Antiochian delegation.⁶⁴
- HB Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rahi, received the Minister of Interior of the caretaker government, Mohamed Fahmy, who assured him that the security and health situation in Lebanon is under control.⁶⁵
- HB Patriarch Youssef el Absi, The Patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church met the head of the Bar Association Melhem Khalaf, where they discussed national affairs and what the general situation has come to after the political crises in the country.⁶⁶



Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, HB Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East, photo credit: El Nashra.



HB Patriarch Youssef el Absi, The Patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, photo credit: El Nashra.

⁶⁴El Nashra, Oct 28, 2020, <https://www.elnashra.com/news/show/1457793>

⁶⁵Almodon, Nov. 17, 2020, <https://www.almodon.com/politics/2020/11/17/>

⁶⁶Asia News, Nov. 13, 2020, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Eastern-patriarchs-appeal-for-'true-peace'-in-Nagorno-Karabakh-51586.html>



Palestine

- HE Atallah Hanna, Archbishop of Sebastia from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, strongly denounced an Israeli attack on the Father Saba al-Hajja, while he was trying to resolve a conflict between two members of the Church.⁶⁷



HE Atallah Hanna, Archbishop of Sebastia from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, October 14, 2020, photo credit: Alwatan voice.

Syria

- His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church received His Excellency Mr. Melhem Khalaf, President of the Bar of Lawyers in Beirut, at the Patriarchal Residence in Atchaneh, and His Excellency Ambassador of Austria in Syria Mr. Habs-Peter Glanzer, at Mor Aphrem Monastery in Maarat Saydnaya.⁶⁸



His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II with Mr. Habs-Peter Glanzer, Nov.15, 2020. Photo credit: Syriac patriarchate

⁶⁷ IMEMC, Nov. 2, 2020, <https://imemc.org/article/israeli-police-assault-a-palestinian-priest-in-the-galilee/>

⁶⁸ <https://syriacpatriarchate.org/>



Cyprus

- His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus sent a letter to His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, informing him that due to his aggravated health condition, he cannot continue to attend meetings with the other Primates of the Orthodox Churches on the Ukrainian issue.



His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew welcomed personally Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus at his Hotel in Constantinople last year. (Photo provided by FOS FANARIOY)



6. MECC HEADQUARTERS ACTIVITIES

Special episode about the Middle East Council of Churches on the Charity TV channel (November 6, 2020)



Special episode about the Middle East Council of Churches on the morning show “Hawa Al-Mahba” broadcasted on Charity TV

The Charity TV channel dedicated an episode about the Middle East Council of Churches in the morning Show “Hawa Al-Mahba” program, where they shed the light on the Council’s message, its programs and aspirations in several areas. The program’s presenter, Charbel Zougheib, started the episode with an interview with the Secretary General Dr. Michel Abs who discussed his vision and his future projects. This was followed by an intervention by the Associate Secretary General for the Catholic Family and the Director of the Theological and Ecumenical Department Father Gaby Alfred Hashem, who referred to the Council’s theological and Ecumenical message. In addition, the regional director of the Diakonia Department, the engineer Samer Laham, was also a guest. Samer and the coordinator of the Beirut Department Ms. Nina Halak, highlighted the Council’s role from the Humanitarian and Service aspects. Furthermore, an interview was held with Grace Boustany, the social assistant and the responsible of the Council’s Dispensary of the Virgin Mary in the Sabtieh region.



On the National Day of Deacons a salutation from the Protestant Dutch Church, entitled: Beirut a story of hope! (November 2020)



The statue that was built following the Beirut Port Blast, November 2020, photo credit: MECC website

The Dutch Protestant Church celebrated, on Saturday November 7, 2020, the National Day of Deacons, with the virtual participation of a group of deacons from different regions in the Netherlands. The celebration's agenda featured the screening of the documentary "Beirut a story of hope", which is a joint production done by "Kerk In Actie" and the Middle East Council of Churches, as an homage for the wounded Beirut and its suffering citizens due to the 4th of August 2020 Beirut Blast. Afterwards, Rev. Wilbert Van Saane described the circumstances that Beirut is going through today and presented the latest updates and consequences of the disaster; and the attendees expressed their solidarity with the Lebanese people and their willingness to help out.



Beirut a Story of Hope (November 2020)



The statue that was built following the Beirut Port Blast, November 2020, photo credit: MECC website

The MECC Communication and Public Relations Department produced a shorted documentary entitled “Beirut, a story of hope”, in cooperation with the international organization "Kerk In Actie"; as a salutation of peace and love to every Lebanese who was injured in the capital, and as a message of hope to the whole world. This documentary was screened in the Netherlands during the celebration of the National Day of Deacons in the Dutch Protestant Church, in order to show solidarity with the Lebanese and to motivate the believers of this church to support their brothers and sisters in the wounded Beirut.

Production: Wilbert Vanssan and Huguette Salameh

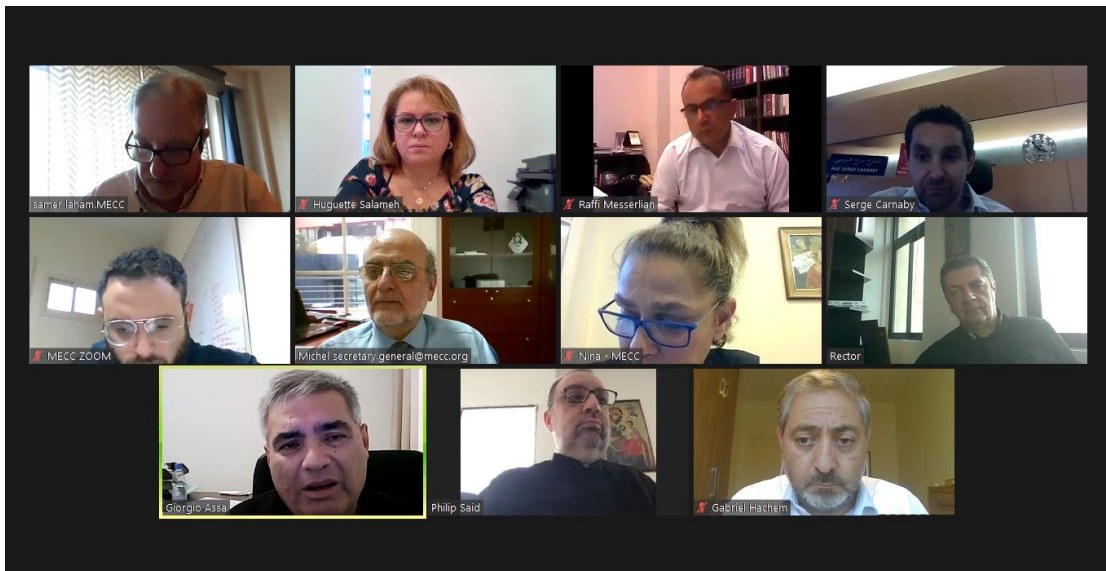
Script: Huguette Salameh

Editing: Fady El Nachmy – Movie Markers Production



The Ecumenical Committee for the relief of Beirut is still coordinating the relief and field work

Dr. Michel Abs: this experience is unique in the region (November 2020)



Meeting of the Ecumenical Committee for the relief of Beirut, November 2020, photo credit: MECC website

The Ecumenical Committee for the relief of Beirut held its virtual regular meeting in order to follow up on the relief process that the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) is leading in cooperation with representatives of the Member Churches, along with a team from the council's various departments. The meeting was chaired for the first time by Dr. Michel Abs, the new MECC Secretary General, who praised this Ecumenical experience, saying in his opening speech: "This experience is unique in the region and should not remain elitist, which means at the level of the highest spiritual leaders, but it should be generalized at the level of local communities and parishes. This committee is a new experience and it is first of its kind. We are looking forward to institutionalize its work so that we can widen its range within our Churches".

The meeting started by presenting the latest update on the donations' campaign from the Council's partners and international and Ecclesiastical organizations, headed by the Diakonia regional director engineer Samer Laham. Mr. Laham and Mrs. Nina Hallak the department's coordinator in Beirut shed the light on the relief work they continue to carry out in the field. In addition, the first reading of the questionnaire's results based on the Churches needs was presented. Noting that this questionnaire was



sent from the Council to all the Member Churches in the Ecumenical Committee, and it would indicate all kinds of needs according to the damaged areas and the number of the affected people. This step will be followed by a study of the necessities at the level of each Church which will be updated as the implementation progresses. Moreover, activities in coordination with the Churches need to be carried out subsequently.

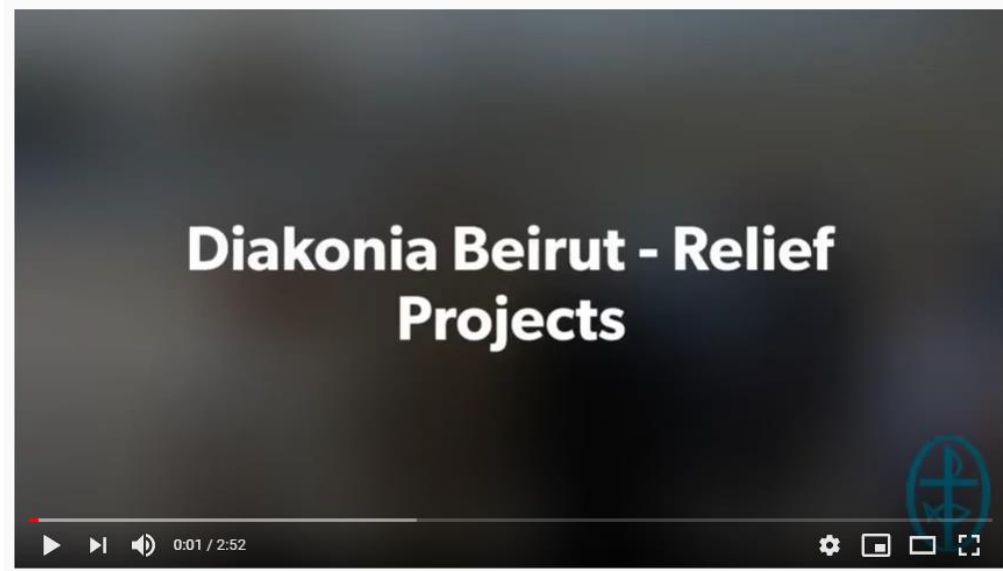
Afterwards, Fr. Gabriel Hachem, the MECC Associate Secretary General and director of the Theological and Ecumenical department, presented a brief report of the activities carried out by the department through the “Trauma Healing and Spiritual Counseling” program. It was organized following the Blast in order to support the affected people psychologically and spiritually, noting that the department is working on implementing this program again to assist children who have been traumatized by this disaster.

The journalist Huguette Salameh, director of the Communication and Public Relations department, presented a summary about the media and social media response to the tragic explosion. She then explained how the department is working to support and cover the two relief appeals launched by the Council, by releasing the “Beirut weekly newsletter” dedicated to the latest updates of the blast and how the Churches are responding to its repercussions. She also highlighted the Beirut documentaries produced by the department, and mentioned the latest one, which was done in partnership with the Dutch organization “Kerk in Actie”.

During the meeting, each Church’s representative presented to the participants the latest developments and services provided by their Churches to the believers in their parishes who were psychologically, morally and financially affected. Noting that the committee continues its virtual meetings to assist and help the largest number of Beiruties.



Video: Diakonia Projects for the Beirut relief throughout the past three months (November 20)



[Watch the video on MECC's YouTube channel](#)



MECC continues its humanitarian mission (Nov 20)



The MECC, with the support of its partners, is able to carry out its humanitarian mission in Beirut, November, 2020, photo credit: MECC website

Three months following the Beirut Blast, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) pursues its disaster relief work on the field. Therefore, the Department of Service and Relief - Diakonia provided a new batch of relief supplies to the member Churches, to be distributed accordingly to the poorest and most in need families.

In addition, the teams of the Diakonia and Communication and Public Relations departments in the Council accompanied the responsables in the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Sepulcher, in the Hazmieh region, in a visit the houses of the parishes's families in order to deliver them these supplies.

During the field tour, the beneficiaries expressed their joy when receiving the rations that included food products, cleaning materials and personal hygiene supplies, which they would not be capable to purchase it by themselves due to the insane increase of prices.

With a hollow laugh, one of the women said: "my brother and my husband passed away after fighting cancer. I also lost my parents due to a tragic accident; so I raised my children by myself, despite the economic and health difficulties I am facing from many years". The woman thanked the Council for its initiative "May God prolong your life!", noting that her house suffered many damages due to the Beirut disaster.



Also, it should be pointed out that, following the Blast, MECC launched two disaster relief appeals to support the Lebanese. To date, the Council is still making efforts in order to help a bigger number of affected people.

*MECC in the EPP - EU Parliament webinar about Beirut after the Blast
Dr. Michel Abs: Bleeding Lebanon is in need of all sort of support (November 20, 2020)*



Dr. Michel Abs attending the EPP meeting, Nov. 20, 2020, photo credit: MECC website.

Dr. Michel Abs, MECC Secretary General, participated in a webinar organized by the EPP Group - Intercultural and Religious Dialogue Unit in the European Parliament, under the topic of “Lebanon after the Beirut seaport explosion”.

During this webinar, Dr. Abs delivered a speech about the political and economic situation in Lebanon, the blast’s repercussions and the MECC disaster relief work. In addition, His Excellency Ralph Tarraf, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Lebanon, has also delivered a speech about the political and economic crisis the Lebanese are facing, the explosion’s causes and how did the United Nations



responded to this emergency. The meeting was attended by a group of participants from various European Union countries.

You can find the full intervention of Dr. Michel Abs below:

Lebanon after the Beirut Blast

Dr. Michel E. Abs

Secretary-General

The Middle East Council of Churches

The Beirut Blast is not an isolated incident nor an independent one from the whole process that Lebanon has been experiencing ever since the end of the civil war in 1990. This process culminated in a revolution that emerged on October 17th, 2019. When, on that Thursday evening, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese filled the streets of Lebanon, there was one unanimous outcry: We've had enough!

This upheaval, called first the "WhatsApp uprising", was apparently a reaction to a proposal from the side of the Government to tax the use of WhatsApp by the Lebanese; but this was only the drop that overflowed the bowl.

The story began much earlier. Three decades ago, when the supposedly representatives of the nation gathered in the Arabic Peninsula, signed the National Unity Pact – called the Taef Agreement – in order to end the fifteen years of war. This agreement, which left the government without a head – but rather with three heads, was the starting point of the three-decade systematic deterioration –even destruction- of the public management structures which were supposed to safeguard the interests of the Lebanese people who survived the war. The end-product today is a dismantled public sector and a corrupt political life that leave no room for a hope of reform. The toll of neglect that characterizes the management of public affairs is the only explanation of the situation that led to the Beirut Blast, regardless the fact whether the explosion is mere combination of circumstances or an induced one.

The militia leaders who discovered and practiced the magic tool of Political Sectarianism, used it the best possible and the most efficient ways for three decades long, 1990-2020. During this period thousands of cases of corruption were discovered, and hundreds of scandals erupted but none of them was properly dealt with. The different politico-sectarian groups drew a red line in front of their supposed leaders. If you happen to explore the "file" of a corrupt politician, the whole politico-sectarian group will stand up and protect him. During all this period, this was the defense recipe which was used by all politicians even if they were in total animosity with each other. The formula applies to everybody and became a



consensus in the political arena. You practice forgiveness with my leader, and I practice the same with yours. Fanaticism was stronger than interests and paralyzed the whole rational thinking process that leads to accountability. Therefore, no public figure person was hold accountable for what he committed. We are in the state of connivance. This was baptized under the name of Consensual Democracy.

Therefore, during all the period that separates us from the end of the civil war in 1990, very few people were held accountable for what they did and fewer were jailed. When it was the case, it was mainly due to the lift of coverage from the side of the politico-sectarian leader and mainly for personal reasons.

In this respect, we do not lure ourselves by calling these leaders politicians or parliamentarians, but rather princes. Their power doesn't come from the people who has no choice but to elect them, but rather from a divine power who chose them to "protect" the supposed community – the politico-sectarian group-versus the other politico-sectarian ones. For the masses, this duty was sufficient the fact that allowed these princes to abuse in their management of the resources of the country.

Through learning by doing, the formula was developed further: either this ruling class governs the country and pilfers its resources, or they drive it into a civil war. This new blackmail equation emerges every time honest elites require opening "files" and hold the princes accountable for what they did.

The revolt of the Lebanese which started in October 2019 was a real and frightening early alarm for the cast of the princes. It indicated that the people have had enough with being exploited and that the level of awareness became adequately high to destroy the idols and push for accountability and punishment. The central claim was to recuperate the stolen wealth of the Lebanese for thirty years. This event was a turning point in the contemporary history of Lebanon. The happenings were unconventional and announced a paradigm shift in the political scene.

As answers to this uprising, all sort of traps and punishments were used to deter the Lebanese from carrying-on the process. These ruling class maneuvers worked to different degrees but without conclusive results.

The advent of the COVID19, which was accompanied by the dramatic depreciation of the Lebanese currency, changed the scenery. The focus of discontented masses was deviated, and the uprising started to weaken, seemingly at least.

Beirut Blast occurred in the very time when Lebanese were wrestling with their means of livelihood. The deteriorated national currency dropped substantially the standard of living of the large majority of the



population, since Lebanon is a country which economy was geared, for the last thirty years, towards rent and speculation and which depended for more than 80% on importation, even for the most elementary products. The corporations were closing-down by hundred, employees were laid-off by thousands and salary cuts were practiced at high rates.

In all this, the Lebanese were lost between an extremely corrupt government and ruling class, a deteriorating economic situation and the threat of a sectarian civil strife. The frog, happy first in the warm water, can't any more get out of it when it became boiling.

Alike the COVID19 Pandemic, Beirut Blast came as additional burden on the shoulder of an extremely vulnerable society, thus preventing people from holding its leaders-princes responsible for what they perpetrated for decades. People are too busy securing shelter, medicines, food and tuition fees to be able to care for anything else.

The relief and reconstruction aid which was provided to people affected by the blast via some governmental organizations, the Lebanese Army and some Ministries, as well as via NGOs, remains far below what they lost. The figures shown by the different surveys that were conducted in the affected areas show a huge need for funding and a long period of time for reconstruction as all materials are not available due to exchange rates problems.

Beyond the material aspects of the Beirut Blast, the main concern remains in the psychosocial as well as the cultural – values- aspects.

To make a long story short, one would say that the Beirut Blast was the Coup De Grace to any remaining hope in political reform and the establishment of the rule of law and even to the future of Lebanon. The investigations, which were supposed to last for few days as promised, remain without concluding results three months after the catastrophe. Lebanese do not hope nor expect anything positive from the coming days and have the certainty that the whole thing will be wrapped like thousands of similar cases ever since the independence of Lebanon in the 1940s.

Hope, resilience and determination can help reconstruct a country, but the crucial question is: do Lebanese still have these qualities?

The race between despair and hope is hard, but the Lebanese are known to be a tough people, alike the rocks they had broken through history to build their country.



While I was preparing the draft of this intervention, Huguette Abs Abou-Mrad, a professor of Cultural Studies, published a cry in the local French speaking newspaper L'Orient-Le Jour. It summarizes the tragedy of Lebanese. I shall quote her in French in order to preserve the substance of the text.

Talking about the class of the princes governing Lebanon, dividing the loot between them without any consideration to the suffering of the Lebanese she says:

« Et tandis que des avides du pouvoir se battent pour s'arracher un privilège, une population dépense ce qui lui reste de papiers dévalués pour ne pas mourir deux fois.»

Then she underlines the sufferance of the wounded population saying « Comment guérir les blessures de ces oubliés, de ces laissés pour compte, ces morts vivants, dont les pertes morales et matérielles ont dépassé l'imagination la plus fertile? »

For her, as for most Lebanese, the 4th of August 2020 is a marking date in our history, but it is the beginning of a new disappointment: “Dans l'histoire moderne de notre Liban, il y aura deux moments: avant et après le 4 août. Et la prestation pour l'après - 4 août est arrivée plus décevante que celle d'avant.»

Then she concludes stating that in Lebanon the destroyed places became “home « unsweet » home.”

In this gloomy scenery I cannot but underline the role of some still surviving parts of the Lebanese government on which we can still rely and bet. These islands of hope in the public sector institutions should be the cornerstone for the revival of the government.

Moreover, we should also underline and stress the role of the non-governmental as well as the intergovernmental organizations in helping the people during disasters. They were instrumental in providing for needs of people when nobody else could.

Watching the situation of a nation with an acquired helplessness syndrome, where even the basic needs of human beings are not met, one could ask: What about Human Dignity?

Bleeding Lebanon is in need of all sort of support from the side of the international community, from immediate relief, to the restoration of the culture of Human Dignity, including professional rehabilitation, medical care, educational support and housing. At the Middle East Council of Churches, we are either



addressing these needs or planning to do so in the forthcoming plan of action. Awareness raising is a main item on our action agenda.

While providing support, be it in the form of know-how or material aid, the international community is called to scrutinize the organizations through which the support is channeled so that no wastage shall be incurred and that the efficiency of help reaches its peak.

Huge losses were done in the name of a population which benefited for only a reduced degree from what was provided for its well-being. This must come to an end. Wounded Lebanon, in the image of Christ, will win over the devil and the course of history will be to its interest in the days to come.

We just hope that the process will not necessitate as much sacrifices as Lebanon has given so far.

Beirut, November 20th, 2020

MECC stands by Artsakh (November 23, 2020)



Father Hovhannes Photo source: Middle East Eye/ Reuters



MECC released the following statement regarding Artsakh:

The six weeks of bloody armed conflict that occurred a few weeks ago in Artsakh- Armenian name of Nagorno -Karabakh- ended with a ceasefire, in effect as of midnight November 9-10, as well as with a deal that leaves the region short of a clear and sustainable and long-lasting peace. It was an arrangement loose enough to maintain a tense coexistence with no reliable foundation for more durable peace.

The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), being a faith-based organization with a reconciliatory mission to bring warring peoples and groups through dialogue, to living together in harmony and peace, maintaining a shared peaceful coexistence, calls the parties and international stakeholders to guarantee that the ceasefire holds .Thus a regional state of affairs that would benefit all parties involved in the conflict would be ensured as it would clarify the status of Artsakh and would prevent the risk currently endangering thousands of people as the lives of thousands remain at risk.

We, as MECC, Armenian Churches being among its founding members, are deeply concerned with the religious freedom and practice of faith and with the fate of people who may be subject to all sort of retaliations. We are also concerned with the fate of the Christian heritage, of churches monasteries, monuments and museums that are currently, and may be, encountering destruction and even total removal from the map.

In this respect, we call upon all international organizations to become involved in protecting the soul and the stone in Artsakh which has the right to self-determination like any other nation and people in the world. We further reiterate the importance of establishing a sincere dialogue between all the concerned parties for the sake of people living in this region. Such a move would pave the way for ensuring the necessary steps for the establishment of a new regional order that would benefit all parties involved in the present conflict.



Congratulations to His Excellency Dr. Aude Kawas (November 27, 2020)



Dr. Aude Kawas, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Department of the Service for Palestinian Refugees in MECC. Photo source: MECC website

The Middle East Council of Churches, its General Secretary Dr. Michel Abs, and the entire family of the Council's General Secretariat, congratulates His Excellency Dr. Aude Kawas, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Department of the Service for Palestinian Refugees in MECC, for being nominated as a member of the Jordanian Senate on November 26, 2020.

The Council also wishes Dr. Kawas success in his new mission in serving Jordan and the region that needs fighters like him who devoted their lives to human dignity and social services.



Dr. Michel Abs, MECC Secretary General, demands justice for Artsakh on Voice of Van (November 27, 2020)



Dr. Michel Abs, MECC Secretary General, November 2020, photo source: MECC Communication and Public Relations Department

The Middle East Council of Churches, its General Secretary Dr. Michel Abs, and the entire family of the Council's General Secretariat, congratulates His Excellency Dr. Aude Kawas, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Department of the Service for Palestinian Refugees in MECC, for being nominated as a member of the Jordanian Senate on November 26, 2020.

The Council also wishes Dr. Kawas success in his new mission in serving Jordan and the region that needs fighters like him who devoted their lives to human dignity and social services.



7. MECC Humanitarian activities November 2020

Lebanon

- Distributed 170 food and hygiene voucher in South Lebanon.
- Continued distribution of medication particularly to elderly with chronic illnesses who rely on the latter at the end of every month.
- Continued partial cure to cancer patients through purchasing of medication and cycle treatments.
- Completed Psychosocial support and GBV awareness sessions for 59 women.
- Completed 6 sessions for 2 children in psychosocial support and trauma care.
- Initiated women empowerment sessions for 15 women. The project is to end after 10 sessions.
- Completed 120 hours of training for the empowered of 20 Lebanese and refugee women and girls from different social and religious backgrounds and countries built their capacity, to become qualified healthcare givers.
- Distributed 160 dignity kits, 90 bedding sets, 40,000 diapers for the elderly, 675 Food and NFI vouchers, and 570 electric heaters to distributed in various areas of Lebanon through MECC member churches to beneficiaries in need and affected by the Beirut explosion.



Distribution of vouchers and NFI's, Nov, 2020, photo credit: Diakonia



Home care and soap making session, Nov, 2020, photo credit: Diakonia

Syria

- Completed the waste management activities in Izraa and Sheikh Maskin.
- Provide tuition fees support for additional 45 students in Aleppo, Qamishly and Hasakeh.
- Provide PSS support to 82 students in Damascus rural.
- Completed the vocational training for 120 youth in Daraa governorate including the distribution of startup kits.
- Completed the induction training for 200 HH in Ghabagheb and As-Sanamayn in Daraa governorate before start distributing laying hens, fodder, coops, vaccines, vitamins, and provide vet services.
- Completed health awareness session training for 20 women in Aleppo including the distribution of blood pressure devices.
- Complete HP activities combined the distribution of school and hygiene kits for 2588 students in Damascus rural, Homs and Aleppo.
- Complete recreational activities for 475 students in Damascus rural and Aleppo.
- Complete the tender process to purchase 270 food baskets to be distributed for families affected by the wildfires in Christian valley.
- Start providing grants to 120 skilled workers in Daraa governorate.
- Continuation of health project to provide medication for cancer patients.
- Continuation of remedial classes courses for 175 students in Aleppo, 382 in Damascus rural.



- Continuation of new cash for work activities in cooperation with two implementing churches in Damascus rural and Homs including the rehabilitation of medical center, bakery, gardens, water networks and sidewalks.
- Launching tender process to select vocational institutes to provide training for 120 vocational secondary students in cooperation with local church.
- Complete business startup course for 50 beneficiaries in Aleppo in cooperation with local implementing church, and preparation to purchase 50 startup kits.



Recreational activities for students in Damascus rural and Aleppo, Nov. 2020, photo credit: Diakonia



Vocational training for 120 youth in Dara, Nov. 2020, photo credit: Diakonia



Remedial courses in Aleppo and Damascus rural, Nov. 2020, photo credit: Diakonia

8. CONCLUSION

Children are our future and tending to their needs is of paramount importance in shaping the Middle East. Isis and other terrorist organizations had benefitted from poverty and desperation of vulnerable communities by transforming them into breeding grounds to feed their army with new recruits. Tackling such an issue is not just doing by right by God, but doing the Middle East a favor and sparing future generations from the calamity of war. Maybe this is the actual key to solving all Middle East conflicts.