



LEBANESE INFORMATION CENTER

LIC Recommendations to the Friends of Lebanon at the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISGL) Conference

September 20, 2013

The Lebanese Information Center (LIC) applauds and fully supports the efforts of several members of the international community to create the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISGL) which comes at this very critical juncture in Lebanon's and the region's history.

Eight years after the historic Cedar Revolution of 2005 and Lebanon continues to struggle with security and stability due to the presence of armed militias on its soil, the spreading of violence in its immediate sphere, and the overall pervasive tension in the Middle East region. With the Syrian crisis well in its third year, the spillover into Lebanon has reached catastrophic proportions due to several factors, chiefly among them:

1. the porous borders with Syria,
2. the direct and open involvement of Hezbollah in the war,
3. the practical non-existence of the Lebanese government, and
4. the massive influx of Syrian refugees.

Accordingly, the LIC forwards the following recommendations to be considered by the participants in the upcoming ISGL conference:

- Controlling the Lebanese-Syrian borders is not only critical to Lebanon's security but it also strengthens the authority of the government of Lebanon. The international community should aid and assist the Lebanese in their efforts to control the borders as stipulated in paragraph 14 of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701.
- The security and safety of Lebanese territory cannot be maintained without an empowered Lebanese official security apparatus. The international community should enhance its support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, requiring from them to expand state authority, confront militias and control borders, and providing them with the necessary military-security assistance to specifically achieve these goals. Such assistance could come in the framework of the \$1.6 billion plan to strengthen the Lebanese Army.

- Lebanon has been without a government for over 6 months. It is imperative that a new Lebanese government be formed to tackle the urgent social, political and economic issues at hand. The international community should fully support President Michel Sleiman in his efforts to form a Lebanese government that will adopt a dissociation policy from the Syrian crisis and address the challenges facing the nation as detailed in the Baabda declaration in July 2012.
- Conservative estimates put the number of Syrian refugees at 750,000 and very rapidly rising. The UN predicts that number would rise to 1.3 million by January and to 1.6 million, or 37 percent of the country's pre-crisis population, by the end of next year. This continuous influx of Syrian refugees is already taking a massive social and economic toll on Lebanon. The international community should commit to supporting Lebanon in addressing this humanitarian catastrophe through any means necessary including (a) making UNHCR funding readily available to Syrian refugees in Lebanon and commensurate with the enormity of the crisis; (b) assisting in establishing temporary shelters along the border, (c) reaching out to NGOs, local authorities and directly to refugees; and (d) ensuring a strong and sufficient UNHCR presence on the ground.

The current efforts by the international community to shield Lebanon from the Syrian crisis are certainly commendable, however the Syrian crisis continues to be the root of the increasingly complex social, economic and security issues in Lebanon, to the point where all efforts to contain these problems will prove to be futile.

Expediting a solution to the Syrian crisis should remain the focus of the international community especially the Friends of Lebanon.
