



PRESS STATEMENTS

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The statement of the Minister of Social Affairs, Hector Hajjar, regarding the ministry's lack of intention to receive Syrian refugees displaced from southern Lebanon due to the Israeli escalation, represents a clear discrimination on the basis of nationality, we are not talking about misleading Hajjar and blaming refugees for what Lebanon has reached, but rather we talked about expectations of a war on the border between Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories.

We hold Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati fully responsible for Minister Hajjar's statements and call on the concerned authorities to stop him from making any statements that contain hate and discriminatory speech against Syrian and Palestinian refugees.

Minister Hajjar's statements reflect the Lebanese government's abandonment of protecting refugees from the expected dangers of war, and we hold the Lebanese government responsible for any damage resulting from forcing Syrian refugees to remain within the southern regions. We fear that this discrimination may be repeated with Palestinian refugees, fabricating discrimination in wartime conditions. We also hold UNHCR partly responsible for failing to refute Minister Hajjar's claims about providing the assistance he is talking about or to coordinate with officials in the Lebanese government.

The Lebanese government has a responsibility to protect all persons residing on its territory, regardless of their nationality, and all municipalities must receive all civilians at risk. We strongly condemn discrimination on the basis of nationality in some municipalities.

We strongly reject Minister Hajjar's statements indicating the intention of the Ministry of Social Affairs to receive refugees and condemn his use of the refugee file to request assistance continuously from the European Union. We remind him that the refugee file is a humanitarian issue, not a commercial one to negotiate with donor countries. International assistance is still available to support refugees, and the Lebanese authorities impose direct and indirect restrictions on the activities of NGOs, which negatively affect the coverage of refugees' needs. This is unjustified and incomprehensible.

The statements of the foreign minister to the Syrian government do not reflect the aspirations of the Syrian refugees who fled the Syrian regime in the first place. The return of refugees is not possible without a comprehensive political solution in Syria. Their return must also be guaranteed in accordance with UN standards, which require it to be safe, dignified, and voluntary. Such terms cannot be interpreted separately from international human rights law.

We strongly reject the use of the Syrian refugee file as a pressure card in situations of peace and war. The EU has generously supported Lebanon and continues to do so, while UNHCR seeks to support the resettlement of refugees in another country. UNHCR should intensify its efforts in this regard to ensure the resettlement of Syrian refugees in a safe and stable country.

The Lebanese government deals with each new event by requesting financial support using the refugee file, ignoring its duties and responsibilities towards the protection of Syrian refugees and Palestinians displaced from southern Lebanon in cooperation with UNHCR and UNRWA.