



LPDC NEWSLETTER

LEBANESE PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE COMMITTEE

The Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) is an inter-ministerial government body formed in November 2005 by Lebanese Council of Ministers' decision 89/2005. Its mission is to implement the policies of the Lebanese government towards Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. LPDC plays an important consultative role to the government, bringing expertise from various areas, in coordinating policies across ministries and making recommendations at the policy level. It also coordinates work with UNRWA, the PLO, Lebanese and Palestinian counterparts, and civil society to achieve its mission.

The broad mandate of the Lebanese Palestinian dialogue committee includes:

1. The outstanding socio-economic, legal and security issues related to the Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon, in collaboration with UNRWA
2. Developing a policy to address the issue of Palestinian arms outside the camps
3. Study the creation of a mechanism that regulates the use of arms inside the Palestinian camps
4. Examine the possibility of creating formal relations through re-establishing the PLO representation in Lebanon

LEBANON'S PM MEETS WITH UNRWA'S GENERAL COMMISSIONER



LPDC President Ambassador Khalil Makkawi meets with Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and Commissioner General of UNRWA Karen Abu Zayd

On April 15, 2009, Lebanon's Prime Minister Fouad Siniora met with the Commissioner General of UNRWA, Karen Abu Zayd and the director of UNRWA affairs in Lebanon, Salvatore Lombardo, in the presence of LPDC President Ambassador Khalil Makkawi. Their discussions covered several topics, with the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared Camp (NBC) chief among them.

"It was useful to discuss these important issues and we look forward to continuing our productive relationship with UNRWA in the future," said LPDC President Ambassador Khalil Makkawi.

The process of reconstructing the camp began shortly after the Vienna conference for donor countries in June 2008. Since the conference,

much progress has been made, including the passing of a land expropriation decree and the laying of a foundation stone. Furthermore, over 80 percent of rubble removal is complete and the master plan defining the rebuilding process has been approved. These two developments pave the way for the beginning of construction, scheduled to start in the next few weeks. Funding and other aspects of reconstruction were also discussed. (Please see the following page for more information on developments in NBC.)

The four also discussed the situation in the Gaza Strip and they mentioned the need for stability and humanitarian assistance for Gaza. The meeting occurred in Beirut at the Grand Serail.

Building Confidence

Both Lebanon and the Palestinian refugees residing in it have paid a high price for the mistakes of the past, our mandate as the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) is to put things right after sixty years. It is in the interest of everybody concerned to improve relations and living conditions, despite the challenge involved. Lebanon also remains firmly in support of the political rights of the Palestinian refugees, including their right of return as specified in the Arab Peace Initiative and UN resolutions.

By its nature, the Palestinian refugee issue requires partnership and collaboration between the host countries, UNRWA and the international community. The LPDC, under the auspices of the Lebanese Presidency of the Council of Ministers, is the official interlocutor and also collaborates with the PLO and local representatives of the Palestinians.

Currently, our priority is the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared refugee Camp (NBC), which was destroyed by fighting with the Fath el-Islam terrorist group in 2007. This does not prevent us from dealing with the other legal, political, economic and social issues that are necessary to provide the refugees with a life of dignity and security. The conditions in the camps are unacceptable and this has no doubt contributed to the eruption of the NBC crisis.

Failure to rebuild NBC and the surrounding areas is not an option. The international community recognizes this and has given us its support at the Vienna Donors conference last June. Since then much progress has been hampered by legal and administrative challenges. It is vital that the refugees start seeing concrete results and that they gain more confidence in the process and the policy.

Our strategy rests on two pillars: human rights for the Palestinian refugees and respect for Lebanon's constitution and sovereignty. The NBC crisis highlighted the vital necessity of our work. The complimentary efforts of the international community show that we are all working toward a common goal.

Ambassador Khalil Makkawi
 President of LPDC



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NAHR AL-BARED CAMP

RECONSTRUCTING "NAHR AL-BARED CAMP"

The launching of Nahr al-Bared reconstruction process started shortly after the Vienna conference for donor countries, which was held on June 23, 2008. The coordinating stakeholders were the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee-LPDC, Rehabilitation and Recovery Cell-RRC in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Embassy of the State of Palestine, the people of Nahr al-Bared, UNRWA, Khatib and Alami, several United Nations organizations and civil society at large. In this context:

- A. 31/10/2009: An official press conference was held in the old part of NBC camp to launch the rubble removal process at NBC.
- B. 29/01/09: Adoption of the land expropriation decree No. (1285) which sets the official borders of the old section of NBC camp.
- C. 09/03/2009: Stone laying ceremony for the reconstruction of NBC sponsored by the Prime Minister Fouad Siniora
- D. Adoption of the Master Plan for the reconstruction of NBC in the Council of Ministers.
- E. Signing multiple fundraising agreements for the reconstruction of NBC; the latest was \$25 million financed by Saudi Arabia and UNRWA.

- F. Return of 3,052 families to the new section of the camp and the launching of NBC rehabilitation process with the support of the donor countries.
- G. Launching numerous development projects in adjacent areas to Nahr al-Bared Camp.

ARAB AMBASSADORS DISCUSS FUNDING FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF NBC

Ambassadors of Arab nations gathered to discuss the funding of the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared camp with representatives from the LPDC, the PLO and UNRWA. The participants were also briefed on the current status of reconstruction. The Egyptian Ambassador to Lebanon, Ahmad al-Badawi, hosted the event at his residence on April 7.

VISITING LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN FAMILIES

LPDC's field officer conducted multiple visits to Lebanese and Palestinian families in the Adjacent Area of NBC. She assessed their living conditions so that their pressing needs can be reported to the Lebanese government.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW MUNICIPALITY UNIONS IN NBC SURROUNDING AREAS

LPDC has been actively collaborating between the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, UN Habitat and UNDP for the establishment of new Municipality Unions in the surroundings of NBC in order to enhance efficiency in project coordination and comprehensive development of the region.

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACE BUILDING IN NORTH LEBANON

LPDC is a national partner of the Millennium Development Goals Framework-MDGF joint program document, Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in North Lebanon. The main outcomes of this joint program will be conflict resolution and mediation mechanisms to facilitate the resolution of inter-and intra-communal tensions between Palestinians and Lebanese and to reduce the risk of conflict in North Lebanon communities through the design and implementation of inclusive socio-economic initiatives. The launching ceremony that took place on April 23 at the Council for Development and Reconstruction-CDR combined several UN agencies lead by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Council for Development and Reconstruction-CDR, the Spanish Government, LPDC, some Local Lebanese and Palestinian communities of North Lebanon and local and international NGOs.

"MUHAJAREEN" AREA

LPDC facilitated the acquisition, by the Palestine Liberation Organization-PLO, of the remaining lot needed for the 6,000 square meter Muhajareen area to be reconstructed by the Norwegian Refugee Council-NRC with EU funding. Muhajareen, which was hosting more than a 100 Palestinian families before the Nahr al Bared (NBC) conflict, is located in the New Camp area surrounding NBC.

SAUDI ARABIA DONATION TO UNRWA

The Saudi Arabia government donated 25 million USD to UNRWA for the reconstruction of NBC in North Lebanon. On behalf of the Lebanese government, Ambassador Makkawi thanked Saudi Arabia for its generous contribution stressing on the importance of this donation in encouraging other donor countries to ease the Palestinians refugees' suffering and distress.



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LPDC ACTIVITIES

LPDC COMMITTEE MEETS

The LPDC Regular Committee met on April 23 to discuss the following issues:

1. The latest developments in the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp and the surrounding areas
2. Unfreezing the provision of identification papers to non-ID Palestinian refugees in Lebanon
3. A mechanism was agreed for the preparation of the Vienna Conference one-year anniversary. The original conference was held in Austria on June 23, 2008 to raise money for the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp and the surrounding areas.
4. A mechanism was set for the preparation of a report on the Lebanese government's policy towards Palestinian refugees in Lebanon since 2005

ADVOCACY AND DIALOGUE

LPDC has organized several meetings with Lebanese and Palestinian NGOs to prepare a joint platform to better coordinate both advocacy and dialogue initiatives between Lebanese and Palestinians.

LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN NGO WORKSHOP

A workshop on Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue initiatives in civil society was organized by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee on Tuesday, May 12, 2009. Seventy-five Lebanese and Palestinian NGOs met at the Radisson Hotel, in Beirut to discuss a draft plan for coordinating dialogue initiatives over the coming three years. In next few days, a joint work plan will be issued that covers Palestinian refugee rights from one side and advocacy and activities from the other side. This was the second such workshop on dialogue initiatives sponsored by LPDC.

DBAYEH CAMP NETWORK

On April 8, LPDC organized a technical session at the Grand Serail to negotiate a solution to the conflict between the Municipality of Dbayeh and UNRWA with regards to connecting the new sewage network of Dbayeh camp to existing municipal infrastructure. Representatives from UNRWA, the Municipality of Dbayeh, the Council for Development and Reconstruction-CDR and the Ministry of Interior discussed the issue and came to a solution with the help of the LPDC.



"EIN EL HELWEH" PROJECTS

LPDC helped the Première Urgence NGO to secure permission from the Lebanese Army to start implementing their rehabilitation projects in the Ein El-Helweh area. Première Urgence operations are currently organized around two geographical centers:

- The Palestinian gatherings of Ein el-Hilweh and Saida area, in which Première Urgence is rehabilitating shelters and sanitation facilities.
- The Palestinian camp of Nahr el-Bared, in which Première Urgence is rebuilding residences and small businesses affected by the NBC conflict.

"CHILD RIGHTS DIALOGUE"

LPDC initiated the "Child Rights Dialogue" with the collaboration of Save the Children Sweden (SCS), the Ministry of Education (MoE), UNRWA and the Naba'a NGO. The program was launched to address the lack of common child focused activities between Palestinian and Lebanese children. In this context, LPDC organized and facilitated the second of five festivity days on Friday April 3, 2009. One hundred and fifty students between the ages of 8 and 14 years old, 75 Palestinians from UNRWA schools and 75 Lebanese from Lebanese Public schools, participated in the event that took place near Saida in the vicinity of Ein el-Helweh camp at Madrasat Saida Al Lubnaniyah Al Kuwaitiyah Al Rasmiyah public school

WORKSHOP ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF LEBANESE POLITICAL PARTIES

Sponsored by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, the "Cadmos" Center at Sagesse University held a closed workshop on 21 and 22 April at Printania Hotel, Broummana. The workshop was entitled, "Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: Human Rights, Lebanese Sovereignty and the Right of Return." Among the 22 participants were experts and representatives from the Lebanese political parties. A manifesto along with recommendations was issued after the workshop.

PROMOTED YOUTH ATTENDANCE TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION WORKSHOP

The LPDC promoted the attendance of Lebanese youth from the municipalities surrounding NBC to a conflict resolution workshop with Palestinian youth. Three sessions were held at the end of March and in mid-April in Tripoli, Lebanon. Save the Children Sweden organized the workshop.

UNRWA ADCOM MEETING

LPDC President Ambassador Khalil Makkawi represented Lebanon at the UNRWA Advisory Committee (ADCOM) meeting held in Amman, Jordan on June 9 - 11, 2009.



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LEGAL ISSUES

The Lebanese – Palestinian Dialogue Committee is pursuing discussion on issues concerning the legal status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, primarily the human rights issue.

TRIP TO LONDON AND BRUSSELS

LPDC President Ambassador Khalil Makkawi visited London and Brussels from May 25 to 30. The trip was organized around a strategic messaging workshop and included background briefings on the LPDC's work for politicians, journalists and bureaucrats.

AMONG THOSE VISITED BY LPDC PRESIDENT MAKKAWI

29-APR-09

- Mr. Michael Williams, Special Representative to the UN Secretary General.
- H.E. Gregoire III Lahham, Patriarch of the Greek Catholic Church.

AMONG THOSE WHO VISITED THE LPDC

15-APR-09

Mrs. Karen Abu Zayd, Commissioner General of UNRWA, Mr. Salvatore Lombardo, Director of UNRWA in Lebanon.

28-APR-09

Mr. Doug Fraser, Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process-Canada.

29-APR-09

UNRWA Evaluation Mission Team /United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), New York.



Upcoming Events

The International Donor Conference for the Recovery and Reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian Refugee Camp and Conflict-Affected Areas will celebrate its first anniversary on June 23, 2009.