Common Vision for the Lebanese Palestinian Relations

Document issued by the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Forum

Executive Summary

This document / vision has been approved in late 2013 by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Forum following two years of in-depth discussions and debate among a group of Lebanese and Palestinian experts and activists over the Lebanese /Palestinian relations, Palestinian refugees' rights and other relevant issues emerging from the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

The Dialogue Forum was formed in 2011 in response to a need for a knowledge-based dialogue process characterized by its objectivity and permanence. The Forum has been working on promoting the process launched since 2005 by LPDC. It aims at developing a clear Lebanese national policy with respect to Palestinian refugees that is based on the full respect of the Lebanese State's sovereignty on the one hand, and the full support of the Palestinian refugees’ basic human rights on the other.

Participants in this Forum work in different domains and represent almost the entire Palestinian and Lebanese political spectrum. They are participating in the Forum in their capacity of experts reflecting various attitudes and positions of Lebanese and Palestinian political parties and factions, as well as concerned civil society organizations. However the dialogue between them is one that is neither institutional nor official.

The cornerstone of this common vision is founded on the following fundamental grounds: overcoming the war and the polarization it entails; addressing the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon on the basis of respecting human rights, Lebanese laws and Lebanese sovereignty; and looking forward by establishing the Lebanese/Palestinian relations on a future outlook.

The document is composed of three chapters:

I- Definitions
II- Positions/Attitudes
III- Practical ideas and suggestions

I-Definitions: The participants have agreed on a unified understanding of the essential relevant definitions and concepts like: Tawteen; right of return; right to self determination; social, economic, cultural and civil rights, etc.
II - Positions/Attitudes

These are classified into 5 categories:

1- National rights and Lebanese/Palestinian constants

- Supporting the Palestinian people’s inalienable rights (rights of return and to self-determination) at the UN and other international forums.
- Holding to the right of return of Palestinian refugees as an individual and collective right that transcends any other agreement.
- Agreement that any final settlement of the Palestinian cause should neither be at the expense of Palestinian inalienable rights nor at the expense of Lebanon and its sovereignty.
- Shared commitment to keep Palestinians in Lebanon away from political, religious and confessional polarization, based on the necessity for the entire Lebanese people to support the Palestinian cause, and given that their presence in Lebanon is temporary until their return to their homeland.

2- Economic, social, cultural and civil rights

- Inviting the Lebanese state to provide the Palestinian refugees with their economic, social, cultural and civil rights in commitment to the Declaration of Human Rights that Lebanon ratified, and to other relevant instruments. By these rights we mean the rights to: work, social security, ownership, health, education, adequate housing, legal identity and association.
- In this context the Lebanese state should activate the National Action Plan for Human Rights (2012-2019), create a legal separate status for Palestinian refugees and formulate a clear official national policy related to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

3- Security and weapons

- Inviting the Lebanese state to end the security approach it adopts in addressing the civil Palestinian presence in Lebanon, and to adopt instead a holistic rights-based approach that provides safety for Palestinian refugees and maintains their human security on the one hand, and guarantees Lebanon’s security and sovereignty on the other.
- Addressing the issue of Palestinian weapons inside and outside the camps on the basis of the National Dialogue Table decisions and refraining from any bargain or trade-off between their rights and the issue of weapons.
4- Palestinian representation

- Stressing the right of Palestinian refugees to elect their constitutional and other Palestinian national bodies (PNC and other bodies) and facilitating this process in Lebanon if it is to take place.
- Recognizing the legal personality of popular committees in the camps and dealing with them as interlocutor on service and civil issues within the framework of the PLO.

5- Responsibilities of different Parties

- The protection and care for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is a shared responsibility that lies on the shoulder of the host country, but initially on the international community represented by UNRWA and other relevant UN agencies. The PLO and all Palestinian factions share as well a political and moral responsibility towards Palestinian refugees in terms of their protection and care in all possible means.

III- Practical ideas and suggestions

Participants have discussed a set of ideas and suggestions related to the different issues addressed in this document. Unlike issues agreed in chapters 1 and 2, ideas and suggestions in this chapter are not necessarily a matter of consensus. These serve as opinions that are open to discussion and enrichment.

Finally, the document emphasizes that reaching a Lebanese/Palestinian common vision on the relations between the two sides in terms of the living conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and in what concerns relevant political and diplomatic issues that are of interest to both Lebanese and Palestinians, has today become possible, rather necessary in light of current international and regional developments related to the Palestinian cause.

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