

Statement addressed to the Lebanese Government, Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), and International Organizations and Donors

The deteriorating economic situation in Lebanon, coupled with the financial collapse and the political instability has taken a heavy toll on the Lebanese education sector, overstressing the public education system in particular. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) developed a 5 Year General Education Plan (5YP) to provide education to all school-aged children in Lebanon, regardless of their nationality. However, unclear implementation strategies as well as insufficient funds have left hundreds of thousands of Lebanese and Syrian students with heightened risks of dropouts and discontinued education.

In light of this, we, the undersigned, express our deep concern regarding the disruptions in the morning shift due to public school teachers' strikes and the recent announcement made by the Director General of MEHE to also suspend the afternoon shift for Syrian refugee students in public schools. This statement followed a previous one issued by MEHE dated September 27, affirming that Syrian refugee students will not be allowed to integrate into the private education sector. This comes despite MEHE receiving the funds for the 5YP, which consolidates an inclusive approach to both host and refugee students and sets to cover running costs per school. While we understand that these decisions were made in light of the ongoing strike by all public schools teachers, we strongly believe that these decisions have the potential to cause significant harm to Lebanese and Syrian refugee students and their families.

The right to education is a fundamental human right of every child, regardless of their nationality, and the decision to end the second shift for Syrian students violates their right to access education. Syrian refugees have already been facing discrimination and marginalization in Lebanon. Suspending the second shift will only exacerbate their already dire situation. Therefore, we strongly urge the Lebanese government to find a solution that resumes education at all levels, for all children in Lebanon, regardless of their nationality or status.

We also call on the MEHE to take immediate action to save the school year and ensure the continuity of learning for all children, both Lebanese and refugees. In addition, we urge international organizations and donors to continue supporting and funding educational needs of all students in Lebanon, including those in secondary and vocational education.

In conclusion, we invite concerned officials to hold an inclusive policy dialogue to discuss and propose tangible solutions, reminding that both Lebanese nationals and Syrian refugees have a right to education, and it is the duty of everyone involved to work together to ensure that this right is protected. We therefore ask the Lebanese government, Ministry of Education and Higher Education and international organizations to prioritize the education and well-being of all students in Lebanon and ensure the school year is resumed for all with immediate effect.

Endorsed by the members of the Lebanon Policy and Research Network on Displacement (LPRND).

The Lebanon Policy & Research Network on Displacement (LPRND) was established in 2016. It is currently based at Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI). The network aims to address the negative narrative associated with refugees & influence policymaking in a way that promotes refugee dignity.