

## **National Salvation Charter Toward a state of law and citizenship**

The uprising (intifada) of 17 October signaled the fall of an antiquated and incompetent governance regime, the crisis of a fragile and failing economy, and the failure of a sectarian and mafia-like political class whose systematic corrupt and wasteful practices have ravaged all sectors of society. This ruling class has led the country to bankruptcy, causing widespread impoverishment and a deterioration of living conditions unparalleled in the history of a country that has gone through many crises.

Nevertheless, the rising up of the Lebanese people, women and men, has shown that despite everything, this people still has dynamism, an unwavering will, and a powerful aspiration for a better future.

Collapse is not our destiny; surrender will not be our choice.

Lebanese want to rebuild a homeland based on values of equality and social justice, not on discrimination and marginalization; on competence and merit, not on favoritism and nepotism; on integrity and performance, not on waste and corruption.

They have the ambition to develop a productive and prosperous economy; an economy that exports its products and services, and not its human resources and its youth, who otherwise have no choice but emigration..

The Lebanon we deserve demands that our Republic be revitalized, and that our parliamentary democracy be revived based on citizen participation and the rule of law, because it is the people who are at the source of legitimacy and sovereignty.

Today, faced with the seriousness of the financial, economic and social crises besieging the country and the inability of the political class to respond to the challenges that are before it, it has become clear that political change is, more than ever, both indispensable and possible, thanks to the awareness, will and solidarity shown by the Lebanese mobilized since 17 October.

We are a collective of citizens who appeal to all Lebanese women and men to take their country's future in their own hands, at this historic turning point in the nation's history. We call on them to meet the major challenges of this

crisis by reconstructing state power through the formation of a government independent of the current political parties; the organisation of legislative elections; and the gathering of all energies in a common and unifying framework in order to build:

- A civil and democratic state, based on the principles of inclusive citizenship and balanced development, and which privileges the common good over individual or parochial interests.
- A state of law, respecting universal principles of human rights, international agreements and treaties, and ensuring perfect equality for citizens of all genders; protecting civil and political rights, and individual and collective freedoms, and in particular freedom of opinion, conscience and expression; and guaranteeing the rights of people with special needs; and all this under the protection of the constitution and the guarantee of an independent judiciary.
- A sovereign, free and independent state that exercises its authority over its entire territory, mobilizes all the resources of the nation to defend its borders, and guarantees its people peace and respect for their interests and rights.
- A state where power derives its legitimacy from universal suffrage, where free and fair elections are held, the alternation of power assured, and where those responsible are held accountable.
- A state with an efficient and modern administration, both centrally and regionally, and that is organized on the basis of merit and competence.
- A prosperous state that focuses on sustainable development and strives to balance growth, social justice and environmental protection.

The country is at a crossroads and in the face of this national emergency, we must focus on achieving these interdependent goals. We will work to develop and pursue them through Working Groups on the following issues:

1. Pass all necessary legislation to ensure the independence of the judiciary; a judiciary that guarantees the sovereignty of the law and the defense of the rights and freedoms of citizens. This would restore citizens' confidence in the state, which is the cornerstone of growth.
2. Promulgate laws and issue all implementing decrees that will effectively combat corruption; try those responsible and recover illegally misappropriated funds; combat waste in all its forms; combat smuggling through legal or illegal routes of passage; improve customs controls and customs tax collection; prohibit arbitrary or clientelistic

recruitment in state administrations and institutions; develop means of control and supervision; adopt a policy of transparency through the definition of objective and rigorous criteria in tenders, contracts and state regulations; stop the exploitation of public goods, especially the coastline, and prosecute offenders; quickly and fundamentally resolve the electricity crisis; ensure rational management, transparent and competent, to take charge of the extraction and exploitation of gas and oil resources in the Lebanese seabed.

3. Respond to the financial crisis facing the country in a determined and effective way, by attacking its roots and not its various manifestations, in order to get the country back on track and allow it to recover. The aim is to define a transparent and rational policy and to adopt a set of urgent measures, including debt restructuring, the distribution of losses according to principles of social justice and equity, the recapitalization of banks, the closure of some institutions and the merger among others in order to reduce the number of them, and the establishment of a tax system that is both fairer and more efficient.
4. Strengthen social protection and anti-poverty mechanisms by increasing access to medical care, retirement rights, public education, the quality of which will need to be improved, and the provision of financial aid essential to low income sectors of society; and reform the social security fund.
5. Implement an integrated economic recovery program that stimulates growth and provides employment opportunities for young people as part of a global vision. The aim will be to encourage investment and business creation by lowering the cost of money, reducing red tape and improving infrastructure. The focus should be on quality in education and health, the development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, and the development of an industrial sector that integrates advanced technologies within a context of environmental sustainability and green economics. Lebanon could thus become a regional centre of knowledge economies and Beirut would regain its place as the capital of culture and creativity.
6. Implement those articles of the Taif Agreement that have not been implemented, in particular the adoption of administrative decentralisation, which would encourage citizen participation, stimulate recovery and strengthen local oversight and accountability; the creation of a Senate in which the various communities would be represented, and their rights guaranteed. This would then allow genuine citizen representation in the parliament, outside of denominational or sectarian quotas. Form the National Commission to study and propose ways to ensure the abolition of confessionalism and

to work towards the realization of the universal principles of the declaration of human rights in all areas without exception, and as enshrined in the constitution. This would mean reforming the current system of personal status, ending all discrimination against women and rejecting all racist behaviour towards refugees and foreign workers.

7. Adopt a new electoral law that is fairer and more representative of all components of Lebanese society, especially young people, women and expatriates. This law would correct the current imperfections that prevent fair proportional representation, lower the voting age and strengthen the independence of the commission charged with ensuring the smooth running of the electoral process, punishing fraud and ensuring equal access to the media.
8. Ensure that the Administration is free from confessional or partisan considerations at any level and protect it from corruption, nepotism and favor-swapping practices. This would increase productivity and improve efficiency.
9. Give priority to the protection of heritage and the environment, both of which are now threatened by serious dangers, which has a negative impact on the health of citizens and their livelihoods. The dangers of air, soil, water, coastal and sea pollution, damage to nature and the environment due to the proliferation of quarries and sandpits, the lack of a healthy solution to the problem of waste, all this makes it urgent to adopt alternative policies and adequate legislation based on the right of citizens to a better quality of life and to sustainability--particularly in the area of tourism--and in general on the need to develop a green and renewable economy.
10. Renew Lebanon's commitment to the policy of distancing itself from regional and international alliances and conflicts, which will strengthen its stability and preserve national peace and unity. This while reaffirming its full commitment and solidarity with the Arab world and in particular its unwavering support for the national rights of the Palestinian people and its respect for international agreements and conventions.