

**Tuesday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**Grand Serail**

**Presidency of the Council of Ministers**

**Press Office**

Caretaker Prime Minister, Hassan Diab, in the morning met at the Grand Serail, a number of ambassadors and representatives of diplomatic missions and international organizations in Lebanon, including Kuwaiti Ambassador Abdel-Al Al-Qena'i, Omani Ambassador Badri bin Muhammad bin Bandar Al-Mandhari, Qatari Ambassador Mohammed Hassan Al-Jaber, Egyptian Ambassador Yasser Mohammed Alawi accompanied by Advisor Sherine El-Shahawi, Chargé d'Affairs at the Iraqi Embassy Ahmed Jamal Kanhash, Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ambassador Abdel Rahman El Solh, Ambassador of the European Union Ralph Tarraf, Japanese Ambassador Takeshi Okubo and Embassy's First Secretary Maki Yamaguchi, Italian Ambassador Nicoletta Bombardiere and First Secretary Emanuele D'Andrassi, US Ambassador Dorothy Shea, Canadian Ambassador Chantal Chastenay, French Ambassador Anne Grillo, Russian Ambassador Alexander Rudakov, Norwegian Ambassador Martin Yttervik, Turkish Ambassador Ali Baris Ulusoy, Chinese Ambassador Wang Kejian, British Ambassador Martin Longden, Chargé d'Affairs of the German Embassy Michael Ross, Deputy Head of the Swiss Mission, Maga Mokhtar, First Secretary at the Embassy of Denmark Thomas Eilertzen, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka, World Bank Representative in Lebanon Mona Couzy and expert Wissam Harakeh. The meeting was attended by Ministers Zeina Akar, Ghazi Wazni, Raoul Nehme, and Ramzi Mousharrafieh, as well as PM Advisors, Khodor Taleb and Ambassador Gebran Soufane.

**PM Address**

At the outset, Premier Diab delivered the following speech:

*“At the outset, I would like to thank you for taking part in this meeting. Your participation reflects your individual interest and that of the entities you represent, in Lebanon and its painful and bleak reality.*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*As we gather here, vehicles are queuing for fuel at gas stations in the streets of Lebanon, and people are scouring pharmacies for medications and baby formula. At home, the Lebanese are living without electricity, and the almost chronic power outages are putting hospitalized patient lives at risk.*

*Lebanon has entered a very dark tunnel, and the suffering has reached to the borders of tragedy. The manifold severe crisis hitting the Lebanese in terms of daily life, living standards, social and health situation, as well as service delivery, is pushing the situation in Lebanon towards a major catastrophe whose repercussions go beyond the capacity of any state to contain, thus we find ourselves facing a frightening Lebanese reality.*

*The picture has become clear: Lebanon and the Lebanese are teetering on the brink of disaster.*

*Yet, I assure you that the threat posed to the Lebanese will not be limited to them. When the big collision occurs, its repercussions will resonate outside Lebanon’s borders through near and far places, on land and sea. No one will be able to shut himself off from the danger of Lebanon's collapse.*

*Stability in Lebanon constitutes an anchor for stability in the region. With about 1.5 million displaced Syrians and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, it will be difficult to predict the fallout of the collapse of stability in Lebanon.*

*These facts prompt us to assert that the world cannot punish the Lebanese or turn its back on Lebanon, for carrying this policy forward will inevitably have serious repercussions, as things will get out of control and this will foment extreme antagonism.*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*We have heard many repeated calls for Lebanon's assistance to be linked to reforms.*

*Yes, Lebanon needs financial and administrative reforms. The government has taken many decisions that include substantial and fundamental reforms before its resignation, and these decisions are ready for implementation. We have also developed an integrated recovery plan that embodies financial and economic reforms, and which could be subsequently updated and readily applied by the next government once it is formed.*

*The government formation is long overdue, and the Lebanese have been patient and have put up with all this waiting; however, they are running out of patience as a result of the growing crises and suffering. Hence, the fact of linking Lebanon's assistance to the formation of a new government has become a threat to the lives of the Lebanese and to the Lebanese entity. In fact, the pressures and the siege imposed on Lebanon do not affect the corrupt. Rather than that, the Lebanese people alone are paying a heavy price that impends their lives and their future, and threatens Lebanon as a model and a message in the world. Today, the wave of immigration is evidence that the Lebanese have become so desperate and have decided to leave the country.*

*The ongoing besiege and punishing of the Lebanese people will inevitably lead to a change in the historical trends of this country. This change will acquire a national legitimacy that goes beyond any political dimension, for livelihoods, medicines, and necessities of life have no geographical or political identity, and care little for western, eastern and northern axes; the most important thing for the Lebanese is to see this cordon broken through, for it began to choke them and cut off the oxygen from their homeland.*

*I call on the world to save Lebanon, and I appeal to brothers and friends to stand by the Lebanese people.*

*A verse in the Quran says, "No bearer of burdens shall bear another's burden". Hence, let the Lebanese people not be held accountable for the crimes of the corrupt.*

*What sin have the Lebanese committed to pay a dear price? Are the Lebanese people supposed to die at hospital's doors on the way to holding the corrupt accountable?*

*I appeal through you to the kings, princes, presidents and leaders of brotherly and friendly countries, and I call upon the United Nations and all international bodies, the international community, and the global public opinion to help save the Lebanese from death and prevent the demise of Lebanon.*

*Lebanon is a few days away from the social explosion. The Lebanese are facing this dark fate alone.*

*And let us talk frankly.*

*All the measures our government has taken succeeded in delaying the explosion, not preventing it.*

*We are making great efforts to reverse the collapse. But, come on, how can a major collapse be prevented in light of this severe siege that cuts the country's breath off?*

*Tell us, how can a country survive for eleven months without a government that has the parliament's confidence and constitutional powers, against the backdrop of the loss of all elements of financial, economic and political resilience, with brotherly and friendly countries turning their back on Lebanon?*

*Tell us, how can electricity be supplied with only 200 million dollars in the year 2021, while for decades, 2 billion dollars were spent per year to secure 14 hours of electricity?!*

*Tell us, how can the Lebanese pound be protected from collapsing at a time when the Lebanese treasury has been emptied, huge financial gaps have been detected, a false economy has been in place and a deep-rooted corruption has been tightening its grip on the country?*

*Today, there are those who trade slogans to yield electoral gains. They talk about 14 percent of the depositors' funds, while they spent or participated in wasting 86 percent of the depositors' monies over the past years, and some of them kept silent about the truth and are coming today in the guise of angels to lecture on the protection of what remains theoretically of those funds.*

*I boldly say with a clear conscience: Neither this government nor any other government can save the country from the predicament, without the help of brotherly and friendly countries and international institutions.*

*This government does not have the right to resume negotiations with the International Monetary Fund to implement the recovery plan set by the Cabinet, for this entails obligations on the next government that it may not endorse.*

*Therefore, we insist that the absolute priority is to form a government. It has been a long 11 months of a vicious circle that is no longer acceptable.*

*The formation of the government is the starting point towards the rescue path, and after that there is one pathway for achieving this goal, that is, negotiating with the IMF, while securing urgent assistance for Lebanon so that it can ease the pain of the difficult and critical stage it is going through.*

*I hereby invite you to convey our message to your respective countries and institutions: Save Lebanon before it is too late.*

*God bless Lebanon!*

*God bless the Lebanese!”*

Afterwards, PM Diab held discussions and deliberations with the ambassadors and ministers.