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Human Rights Council

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Joint Stakeholders' Submission on:

Human Rights in Lebanon

Submitted by:

Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)
(NGO in Consultative Status with ECOSOC)

and

La Salle Foundation

Solidaridad, Educación y Desarrollo (SED)

Fratelli Association

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This stakeholders' report is a joint submission of the above-mentioned organizations. The report highlights key concerns related to **children's and young people's rights** in Lebanon, particularly **education, child labour, access to documentation, basic needs**. Each section conveys recommendations to the Lebanon Government.

2. The data and information obtained for this submission came from various sources and includes information from youth, educators, and other civil society actors living and working in Lebanon. All information concerned the period from February 2021 to June 2025.

3. **Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)** is an international organization promoted by the Marist Brothers, present in 80 countries. FMSI has more than 15 years of experience working in the field of international solidarity, advocating for children's rights especially in the field of education. It works at the international level, participating in the UN human rights mechanisms in collaboration with other organizations with similar interests. It has been accredited by ECOSOC since 2011.

4. **Fratelli Association** is a non-profit social association founded in the Republic of Lebanon, recognized by the Ministry of the Interior and Town Municipalities on April 2, 2016 under number 550. This association is the fruit of the reflection of the Institutes of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Marist Brothers, Institutes. Its purpose is to meet the emerging needs of the most vulnerable children and young people: the poorest, those most at risk and children displaced by war. Fratelli pursues the protection and defense of the rights of children and young people, promoting the socio-educational inclusion of each child so that he/she may be a main actor in the development of a more just, cohesive and equitable society.

5. **Solidaridad, Educación y Desarrollo (SED)** is a non-profit, state-wide, non-governmental development organization (NGO). It works mainly to promote the right to education in Africa and Latin America, as well as in some countries in Asia and Europe. SED's three objectives are: development cooperation, education for development and the promotion and training of volunteers. Its headquarters are in Madrid. It has four regional delegations in Barcelona, Valladolid, Pamplona and Seville. In Spain it works in the field of Development Education and Social Advocacy.

6. **La Salle Foundation** is a non-profit of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, a Catholic Institute active in over 80 countries, supporting more than 1 million students. La Salle Foundation mission is education. In fact, it envisions a world where every child can attend school, dream of their future of equality and justice. Its core values include protecting children's rights, equal opportunities (especially for girls, refugees and IDPs, and minorities), sustainability, and capacity-building for LLL of educators at all levels and in all contexts. The Foundation support local partners to build and equip schools (including canteens, dormitories, renewable energy), responds to emergencies to keep education ongoing after crises, and supports vocational and non-formal education. In 2023 it raised over €6.5 million, implemented 65 projects in 29 countries, benefiting around 70,000 direct participants and hundreds of thousands indirectly.

II. GENERAL REMARKS AND COOPERATION WITH THE UPR MECHANISM

7. Lebanon was reviewed in January 2021 at the 37th Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. This NGO coalition welcomes the constructive participation of Lebanon in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). On this occasion, Lebanon received 297 recommendations and supported 179 recommendations while noting 118 recommendations. The present joint submission represents the follow-up to the UPR recommendations accepted by the State in 2021.

8. The implementation of recommendations is critical in order to ensure a true advancement of human rights in the State under review. Therefore, Lebanon must pay particular attention to effectively follow-up those recommendations in consultation with Civil Society, both those that were accepted and those of which they took note.

9. We thank the government of Lebanon for the opportunity to submit this report, as well as for its adherence to the measures proposed by the United Nations for the participation of civil society. We welcome the recommendations adopted on the last UPR, as well as the country's efforts to implement these measures. At the same time, we are also aware of the need to further elaborate on the previous recommendations, as well as to address new ones that may arise at the next session.

10. As a coalition, we would like to thank the Lebanon government for its efforts to take measures to safeguard human rights, as can be seen in the adoption of multiple recommendations¹. It is important to provide the necessary funding for institutions and measures that ensure the fulfilment and improvement of rights across the population, particularly among the most vulnerable.

11. We also welcome the adoption of many recommendations that are connected to the Sustainable Development Goals (1: No poverty; 3: Good health and well-being; 4: Quality Education; 5: 6: Clean water and sanitation; 8: Decent work and economic growth; 10: Reduced inequalities; 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions).

III. METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Methodology:

12. An important part of this report has been carried out by listening to the direct voices of children, adolescents and young people, as well as adults directly involved in the lives of children and young people involving several groups, aged between 10 and 35. The total number of participants involved was over 60. In many of the themes, we highlight the coincidence in the opinions expressed by the children and the young adults. The main issues highlighted in this fieldwork are reflected in this report, although there were other concerns beyond those mentioned here.

¹ 150.47, 150.276, 150.15...

Overview:

13. **Education.** The aim is to strengthen the country's education system, asking the State to take measures to this end. It is considered necessary for all young people in Lebanon to have access to the education system, as well as appropriate methodologies and materials. There are difficulties of access both among the local population and among migrants present in the country.

14. **Child Labour.** We as a coalition recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Our organisations are aware of the existing difficulties to put an end to this situation, and at the same time we ask that the efforts already being made in this direction be intensified. Knowing and analysing the situation can lead to a better and quicker response.

15. **Access to documentation.** Having the appropriate and up-to-date documentation facilitates integration into the social life of the country. In this same sense, we understand that the agility in issuing the documentation requested by the people present in the country helps their integration into society and avoids labour exploitation processes and the difficulties that arise from not being able to access some public services (education, health, transport...).

16. **General welfare.** Our coalition also proposes several other important aspects for the development of the country and for safeguarding the rights of people, especially children, young people and the most vulnerable. This includes access to shelter, food, clothing, water, medicines. There are several issues that will be covered under this heading, which will be discussed later in a separate section.

17. In addition, children and young people are increasingly concerned about other issues that directly affect them and their families. Many aspects of human rights are interconnected so that when one fails, other rights are also threatened. Therefore, other concerns can be heard in the voices of children and young people that are less developed in this report: mental health, to have a voice, public spaces, corruption, public transportation...

18. Lebanon protects with laws and public policies the human rights. We are aware that some of the challenges facing the government are not easy to work on, so we appreciate the efforts to improve them, now and in the future.

IV. EDUCATION

19. Our coalition wants to join the efforts of the State of Lebanon in the field of education. The adoption of several recommendations from the last UPR clearly shows the country's commitment to this point². On the last UPR, the government accepted some measures on this issue. After

² Examples: 150.211 Continue efforts to improve education in schools and not restrict access to education on the basis of nationality or immigration status (State of Palestine). 150.210 Continue efforts to provide quality, equitable and inclusive education for all (Qatar).

actively listening to a group of adolescents and young people, we join their voices in recognizing the elements that have been improving in recent years, and we also invite the State to continue implementing policies that will improve the country's education system, and all that goes with it.

20. We highlight the need, which still exists, to strengthen the quality education system, and with them to respond to the Right to Education, particularly among the most vulnerable people³ (because of their economic situation, living in rural areas, refugees...).

21. There are several specific points that the voices of the next generation make. These aspects will be reflected later in the recommendations. The importance of investing in appropriate material is highlighted, as well as the possibility of access to quality public education, enabling people to acquire the skills necessary for a fulfilling adult life and to enter the labour market with guarantees of success.

22. We found the situation of children who do not have an adequate education to be worrying, as they are forced to work from an early age. Although this point will also appear later on, when talking about child labour, it seems to us that it is perfectly connected with this point. Accessible and quality education⁴ for all is helping to shape the next generations, and is a right that is specifically provided for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

23. We are also aware of the efforts made by the State authorities. We recognise that the recent economic crisis, which is still perceptible, has made this process more difficult. Furthermore, the situation caused by the violence between armed groups in the country and the State of Israel did not help the development of inclusive education policies for all and the actual implementation of concrete measures in this regard.

24. Access to quality education should be ensured for all children living in the country, regardless of their particular situation (poverty, migration, documentation, rural areas, etc.). This is why our coalition joins the petition of some children asking for quality education “regardless of our legal status: if we have or not valid documentations”.

25. Our coalition also proposes that this quality education can also be extended to sectors of the population who are not of school age and who need free vocational training programmes that will make it easier for them to find a decent job. Not everyone can go to school, or wants to go through all the stages of school education, but everyone needs training in order to get a decent job.

26. Linked to this last consideration, the increase in financial aid for quality education appears as a feasible possibility that would help many children and young people to continue with their educational processes (at all levels of education, including adult vocational training): “We need

³ 150.212 Continue efforts to ensure the provision of basic education, compulsory and free of charge for all (Sudan).
150.248 Ensure the promotion and protection of all rights of the child, including to end all forms of violence, and to ensure access to affordable quality education for all children, especially for children in the most vulnerable situations (Finland).

⁴ 150.248 Ensure the promotion and protection of all rights of the child, including to end all forms of violence, and to ensure access to affordable quality education for all children, especially for children in the most vulnerable situations (Finland).

financial support to continue our education, whether it's school, university, or vocational training.”

27. In order to improve the educational situation among children and young people, our coalition suggests the following recommendations:

- a. “To facilitate the access to quality education for all”.**
- b. “To offer free vocational training programs that offer practical skills to increase employability”.**
- c. To ensure that every child, regardless of their background, should have access to primary and secondary education.**
- d. Strengthen the system of financial aid for access to and monitoring of training processes, at all educational levels.**

V. CHILD LABOUR AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

28. In presenting the issue of child labour, in Lebanon, we would like to thank the Lebanon government for adopting several recommendations made during the last UPR cycle. We welcome the adoption of recommendations such as 150.243⁵; 150.246⁶ and 150.251⁷, which clearly call for determined efforts to protect children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's development.

29. The testimonies collected clearly show the great concern about the situation of children and adolescents working, with the negative consequences that this entails, also in the fields of education, play or other rights inherent to this vital stage in development. The uneasiness about this issue is very present and visible.

30. Our coalition joins the recommendation made in the last cycle of the UPR, in its number 150.253⁸, to take the necessary measures for the total elimination of all forms of child labour that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's development. We are aware that this begins first with recognising the problem, and then putting in place the appropriate means, both financially and in terms of prevention and rehabilitation programmes.

31. In this topic, we recall some items that were "noted" during the previous UPR, so that they can be accepted, and subsequently taken the necessary steps to comply with them⁹. Although we

⁵ 150.243 Strengthen measures to combat child labour by ensuring more effective legal protection (Angola).

⁶ 150.246 Establish a comprehensive plan of action on childhood, which includes measures to prevent the recruitment of children by armed groups, combat early marriage and sexual exploitation and eliminate child labour (Ecuador).

⁷ 150.251 Allocate adequate resources to ensure rehabilitative services to street children, and enforce legislation to address child labour (Malaysia).

⁸ 150.253 Enhance its measures for total elimination of child labour (Myanmar).

⁹ 150.249 Take necessary steps to prohibit child marriages and combat the worst forms of child labour (India).

want to put more emphasis on child labour, we do not forget other points that deal with adult labour¹⁰ and including the determined fight against unemployment¹¹.

32. Our first proposal, to prevent child labour, is closely related to the previous section. If the conditions for attending school are in place, regardless of the life situation of each child, we will be guaranteeing the reduction or elimination of child labour. We are aware that this implies policies that are translated into laws and initiatives. We therefore urge the government to continue its efforts in this direction. In doing so, we join with the voices of the next generation in calling for the promotion of “learning rather than being forced into child labor.”

33. We also think it is important to strengthen the system of monitoring and enforcement of the measures adopted by law to reduce and eliminate child labour. We understand the difficulties of the state to take effective measures in all cases, given the unstable situation that the country has experienced in recent years. For this reason, we ask for the collaboration of other countries and civil society to achieve this objective.

34. Establishing and enforcing laws is the first step in tackling this serious problem. We join the voices calling for “laws that protect us and are enforced”. We also consider it important to review and control the working conditions that some people suffer from, avoiding exploitation, violence and “...forced to work in dangerous conditions”.

35. Work-related situations that could be improved do not end with the analysis of child labour. There are other issues that are highlighted, especially among the young population, which have to do with job opportunities. Some opinions are related to the world of education and preparation for the world of work, and others more directly to the possibility of undertaking new businesses or projects.

36. The country's commitment to improving working conditions is welcome. The National Report, presented on the occasion of the previous UPR, noted this commitment, despite the difficulties the country was facing at the time¹².

37. To eliminate all forms of exploitative or dangerous labour for all children as well as to improve access to decent work, our coalition makes the following recommendations:

- a. Review existing legislation and introduce new measures to improve compliance with existing laws.**
- b. “To enforce the child labor laws in order to ensure that children focus on education rather than premature employment.”**
- c. To improve educational system, as well as the ease of access to it, regardless of children's personal or family circumstances.**
- d. Support small youth projects and young entrepreneurs.**

¹⁰ 150.270 Reform the sponsorship system for migrant workers, guaranteeing that the migratory situation of said workers does not depend on their employers, and promoting the use of a standard contract that includes protections for migrant domestic workers (Mexico).

¹¹ 150.193 Tackle unemployment, especially among young people and women (Malaysia).

¹² National Report, 96-97, 12 November 2020.

VI. ACCESS TO DOCUMENTATION

38. Our coalition is saddened to note the few references in the previous UPR report to the difficulties in properly documentation for those living in the country¹³. The large group of people displaced from their countries who are living in Lebanon is well known.

39. We would like to thank the government for the great effort it is making to care for the hundreds of thousands of refugees throughout the country. We also take this opportunity to invite the United Nations to support the government in this matter, with political and practical decisions that will lead to a substantial improvement of the needs of this population group.

40. We are aware that not having proper documentation, or lengthy processes to obtain it, makes people's daily lives difficult, as it prevents full participation in society (health services, education, etc.). This point was reflected among the recommendations accepted in the previous cycle¹⁴. It seems to us that it would be a good step to follow up on the recommendation made by Germany, so that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees¹⁵ can be more active in the country, not only in the registration of those without proper documentation, but also in the establishment of effective measures to help the population, in collaboration with the government of the country and other countries and/or organisations interested in collaborating on this issue¹⁶.

41. Active listening to people living in the country reveals the urgency of providing the necessary documentation for access to basic services, because there is a risk, and it is already happening, of leaving behind without access to education or shelter.

42. It is important to consider the value of the individual, in his or her own right, beyond his or her nationality, his or her abilities, his or her beliefs, his or her "official" training. These are basic principles and rights that we must commit ourselves to respect. We believe that everyone has a place in society, and can contribute to it. It seems important to us, therefore, to “recognise our skills”, not just the ID, the formation, the status...

43. To address better access to documentation, we recommend the Government of Lebanon to:

- a. Facilitate the process of obtaining and renewing the necessary documents for all inhabitants.**

¹³ Among the few examples we found the recommendation 150.291: 150.291 Take measures towards reducing and preventing statelessness (Mozambique).

¹⁴ 150.211 Continue efforts to improve education in schools and not restrict access to education on the basis of nationality or immigration status (State of Palestine); 150.272 Allow refugees legal residence and freedom of movement (New Zealand).

¹⁵ 150.266 Reinstate the ability of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to issue registration certificates for refugees (Germany).

¹⁶ 150.268 Provide support to enable Lebanon to alleviate the suffering of refugees and displaced persons resulting from the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the war in the Syrian Arab Republic (Kuwait);

- b. Provide identification documents to the children, to allow them to full access to education and essential services.**
- c. Recognise the personal value of each person, irrespective of their social status, religion, education, etc.**

VII. GENERAL WELFARE

44. In this last section of our report, we would like to highlight several main ideas that will help to improve the daily lives of the Lebanese people. These are themes that come up repeatedly when listening to children and young people, as well as adults.

45. **House.** An essential right is access to decent housing. It is found that many people do not have a place to live that has the minimum conditions of dignity. At this point, and speaking of rights and needs, several necessary elements can be listed: access to running water, hot and cold, for hygiene and consumption; minimum facilities that ensure a roof, hot and cold insulation, toilet facilities, electricity supplies.

46. **Health.** Another essential aspect of daily life and dignity is access to healthcare. Sometimes this is difficult due to lack of personal documentation, sometimes due to insufficient financial resources. This problem becomes especially relevant when it comes to children and vulnerable people. The problem of health, as is the case in many parts of the world, includes mental health as well as physical health. Several articles show the government's compromise¹⁷, and reaffirm our call for further improvement¹⁸.

47. **Social activities.** We would also like to mention some aspects directly related to life in society that have not been mentioned so far. Corruption appears as a social scourge that hinders a country's progress. The creation and maintenance of public spaces for recreation, where people can play, go for a walk or meet, is also an aspect that needs to be improved. The desire for improved and more accessible public transport will allow for greater mobility and access to basic services. We believe it is important to establish listening channels, where the voice of all people can be heard.

48. **In order to improve the general welfare of the country, we would like to recommend the following points to the Lebanon government:**

- a. Provide free healthcare, opening free clinics for all.**
- b. Provide mental health programmes, both educational and treatment.**
- c. Improve public transportation to facilitate access for the entire population to essential services (education, health, work, etc.).**

VIII. DIRECT VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

¹⁷ 150.196 Increase investment in health and education, and further guarantee people's right to health and education (China).

¹⁸ 150.205 Enhance measures aimed at promoting the right to health and provide universal access to health care (Sri Lanka).

49. We would like to bring to this report, albeit briefly, some direct voices of children and young people when talking about the situation of rights in Lebanon. These voices reaffirm the theoretical work that has been carried out by the organizations presenting the report, the result of interaction and listening to children, adolescents and young people, as well as groups of adults directly related to the lives of minors.

50. Some of the contributions have already appeared during the report, but we think it is interesting to specify the richness of the direct voices of those living in Lebanon. We believe that listening to the voice of the people and taking them into account is the way to provide the most appropriate response to their own needs.

51. For this reason, with the consultation work, we also wanted to work on the participation and protagonism of children and young people, giving them a direct voice in the drafting of the report. From this desire, the "quotation marks" of the report, and the contributions explained below, arise.

52. Education¹⁹:

- "I want free and good-quality education. Many of us have to drop out because we can't afford school, and even those who attend public schools don't get proper education."
- "We want real education, not just a place to sit. Fix the schools, train teachers, and give us transportation so we can attend".
- "Not everyone wants or can go back to school, but we still need skills to find decent jobs."
- "I need a chance to go back to school or at least attend vocational training. Many of us were forced to drop out, and now it feels like we have no future."

53. Child labour²⁰ and job opportunities:

- "Learning rather than being forced into child labor."
- "Many of us have ideas for businesses or projects, but we have no funding or guidance."
- "If we can't find jobs, let us create our own. Give us small loans, training, and spaces to start our own businesses."

54. Access to documentation:

- "Some of us don't even have legal papers, which means we can't register for school, work properly, or move freely."
- "Urgent solutions for undocumented children who are left behind."

55. General welfare²¹:

- "To offer good houses especially during the winter season (to not be in tents)."
- "Many of us are struggling mentally, but there's no support."
- "Medicines are expensive, and hospitals don't accept us without a lot of money."

¹⁹ 150.208 Enshrine the right to education for all, without discrimination, in the Constitution (Côte d'Ivoire).

²⁰ 150.257 Address the issue of child labour by allocating more resources for protective, preventive and rehabilitative purposes (Islamic Republic of Iran).

²¹ 150.198 Continue to strengthen the measures aimed at providing health-care services to all segments of society (Egypt).

- “No one listens to us”

IX. CONCLUSION

56. As members of Civil Society, we would like to thank the Government of Lebanon for accepting many of the recommendation that were done in the last cycle.

57. We sincerely appreciate the efforts made by the government to improve the standard of living of people in the country through the adoption of human rights mechanisms and instruments²². We are also aware of the challenges the country has faced in recent years, and of the effort to implement the "supported" recommendations of the previous cycle.

58. In the National Report presented in November 2020, on the occasion of the previous UPR cycle, the Lebanon government presented a series of measures, especially related to education, health, work and improving the standard of living, child labour, which we consider very positive from our coalition. Along with this recognition, we would like to encourage the government to continue to deepen the measures and programmes necessary for education, general welfare, work situation (both children and adults), access to documentation to continue to improve in the coming years.

59. Our coalition thank the government of Lebanon for its efforts to continue to listen to the voices of civil society, especially children and young people, and encourage it to continue to make its best efforts to improve the situation of rights in the country in all areas, with the inclusion of all the actors involved²³.

60. We are also grateful for the opportunity offered by the United Nations to participate through the UPR mechanism. Special thanks for allowing us to raise the direct voices of the children and young people with whom we have worked, reflected on and drafted the report we conclude here.

²² 150.14 Continue the existing cooperation with the Human Rights Council and its special procedures mechanisms (Tunisia). 150.45 Promote a national solidarity policy and strengthen national cohesion to confront the political, economic and social challenges that Lebanon faces (Algeria). 150.57 Continue efforts aimed at developing institutional structures for human rights and international humanitarian law (Bahrain).

²³ 150.96 Intensify efforts to develop and strengthen the necessary legislative frameworks, address cross-sectoral environmental challenges, including climate change adaptation and mitigation frameworks, and ensure that women, children, persons with disabilities and indigenous and local communities are meaningfully engaged in this implementation (Fiji).