

Revised UPR Pre-Session Statement

Introduction

My name is Ali, and I speak today as a child representative on behalf of [insert organization name]. I will address the situation of children's rights in Lebanon, highlighting the main issues affecting children and offering key recommendations.

We call on permanent missions and state representatives present in this room today to urgently support the following priorities:

Issue 1 – Impact of the Compounding Crisis on Children (Education, Poverty, Health)

Lebanon underwent its third UPR cycle in January 2021, receiving 297 recommendations, 31 concerning children—yet many critical issues remain only “noted.”

Lebanon's children continue to experience overlapping crises:

- Education collapse: Nearly 700,000 children are out of formal schooling. Public education funding has dropped sharply, transportation costs are prohibitive, and hundreds of schools have been closed due to insecurity and displacement. Inclusion for children with disabilities remains extremely limited.
- Health system failure: Vaccine coverage has declined; preventable diseases are re-emerging. 8 out of 10 families cannot afford medical care.
- Rising child poverty: Child labour is increasing with no updated national plan or enforcement mechanisms. Families rely heavily on income from children to survive.

Recommendations (Issue 1)

1. Establish an emergency education support package, including transportation, psychosocial support, and reintegration pathways for out-of-school children.
2. Guarantee universal access to primary healthcare and essential vaccines for all children—Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian.
3. Adopt and finance a national plan to eliminate child labour, including enforcement and family economic support mechanisms.

Issue 2 – Children Affected by Conflict, Displacement, and Refugee Status

- Palestinian children: 80% live below poverty. UNRWA's collapse threatens schooling for 36,000 students, and access to psychosocial and health services has sharply declined.
- Syrian refugee children: 44% remain out of school, and 80% lack legal documentation, exposing them to exploitation and risk of deportation.
- War impact: By end 2024, over 4,047 people were killed, including 316 children, and 1,250 children injured—many with disabilities and long-term trauma.

Recommendations (Issue 2)

1. Ensure continued and increased donor support to UNRWA to prevent the collapse of education and health services for Palestinian children.
2. Guarantee that all children have access to legal documentation, birth registration, and protection from forced return.
3. Expand psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and disability-inclusive services for children affected by conflict and displacement.

Issue 3 – Persistent Legal and Structural Protection Gaps

Lebanon ratified the CRC in 1991 but has not aligned national laws with international commitments. The country still lacks:

- A unified personal status law, allowing child marriage to continue, especially among refugee girls.
- Equal nationality rights for women to pass nationality to their children.
- Adequate protection for victims of violence, trafficking, and sexual exploitation.
- A raised minimum age of criminal responsibility, among the lowest globally.
- Criminalization of the recruitment of children by armed groups.

Recommendations (Issue 3)

1. Enact a Unified Personal Status Law, setting 18 as the minimum age of marriage without exception.
2. Reform the nationality law to grant Lebanese women equal rights to confer citizenship.
3. Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 13 and criminalize the recruitment of children in armed conflict.

Issue 4 – Weak Child Protection Systems and Institutional Gaps

The child protection system remains fragmented, under-resourced, and inconsistent across regions. Reporting channels for violence are unclear or unsafe, and specialized child protection units are insufficient.

Recommendations (Issue 4)

1. Establish child-friendly and confidential mechanisms for reporting violence, exploitation, and trafficking.
2. Invest in specialized social workers, child protection units, and trained juvenile judges.
3. Reform Law 164/2011 to shift the burden of proof away from child trafficking victims and ensure protection, rehabilitation, and compensation.

Accountability and Implementation

To bridge the gap between commitments and action, we propose the establishment of a National Child Rights Implementation Task Force with government, civil society, and UN agencies to:

- Develop an implementation roadmap within 60 days,
- Set measurable indicators and KPIs,
- Publish quarterly progress reports.

Closing Appeal

Lebanon's children are trapped at the intersection of war, poverty, displacement, and state neglect. Their rights are not abstract—they determine survival, dignity, and the future of this country.

We call on permanent missions and state representatives:

Do not let this be another report.

Let it be a rescue plan for an entire generation.