

International Labor Network of Solidarity and Struggle
Réseau Syndical International de Solidarité et de Lutttes
Rede Sindical Internacional de Solidariedade e de Lutas
Red Sindical Internacional de Solidaridad y de Luchas
Rete Sindacale Internzionale di Solidarietà e di Lotta
الشبكة النقابية العالمية للتضامن والنضال
Internationales Gewerkschaftsnetzwerk der Solidarität und des Kampfes



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Lebanese: The International Labor Network of Solidarity and Struggles supports this call

The CADTM supports the struggle of the Lebanese people to break away from social injustice and shake off the burden of illegitimate debt

As the Lebanese government suspends any payment of its external debt from 9 March 2020, the CADTM reasserts its support to the Lebanese people in a struggle that started in October 2019. Popular meetings and marches have been continuously organized in Lebanese towns and neighbourhoods since the start of the upheaval on 17 October 2019 after the government had announced new taxes on WhatsApp calls, cigarettes and petrol. It has been the most significant protest since the citizens' "Vous Puez" ("You Stink") campaign in 2015 against poor management of waste and the power cuts that exposed the shortcomings of public services and the failure of a political system defined by corruption and cronyism. Under the catch phrase "Tous, c'est-à-dire tous" (Everybody Means Everybody), demanding that all members of the ruling class should go, the present movement is part of the second wave in the revolutionary process in the Arab region that started with the upheaval in Sudan on 19 December 2018, then developed in Algeria on 16 February 2019 and affected several countries such as Iraq, Iran and Jordan. More generally, it is one of the popular mobilizations on the global scale against the consequences of the crisis of capitalism in imperialist centres from 2008 onward, which aggravates its destructive impact on the Global South.

Protesters, most of them young, coming from various communities and social backgrounds, occupy the squares and organize debates, sit-ins, peaceful marches and human chains that symbolize unity in action independently of their social, geographical or religious origins. They turn away from the confessionalism used by nepotist religious leaders to stir up sectarian cleavages and divide the population. Lebanon's laws, now inspired by religion, are deeply discriminatory towards women – hence the strong presence of women in the protest, their determination, and their active militant initiative. In early March 2020, marchers also challenged the risks of being contaminated by the Coronavirus as well as intimidation by repressive forces. They demand the immediate departure of the caste of highway robbers who have plundered the public treasury and driven the country into a deep social and economic crisis. From 2005 to 2014, the richest 1% captured 23% of income and 40% of the total personal assets in Lebanon, while the poorest 50% had to share half of the income of the top 1%. [1] The Lebanese people are living in a situation of general want, degradation of public services such as education, health care, access to drinkable water, power, sanitation and transport, and rising prices. About a third of the population lives on less than 4\$ a day. The rate of unemployment is estimated at 25%, and reaches 37% among people under 25. [2]

Banks are particularly targeted by protesters. UltraLiberal economic policies implemented since the country's independence have actually benefited the financial sector, turning it into the main driver of a rent-based economy. Productive sectors such as farming and manufacturing have been neglected. The country imports close to 80% of its consumption needs. The trade deficit and balance-of-payment deficit have steeply increased. Public debt is unsustainable and amounts to 170% of the GDP (in early 2019), according to Standard and Poor's (S&P). [3] Nearly 40% of the debt is in US dollars.

Lebanon's economy is supported by hard currency sent by the large diaspora of Lebanese, estimated at more than 12 million persons, [4] living on all continents. The amounts transferred amounted to 8 billion dollars in 2018 and are an important source of dollars in particular. Public aid to development amounted to 1.42 billion dollars for the same year.

These dollar flows from abroad are used by Lebanon's commercial banks to speculate on sovereign-debt instruments denominated in Lebanese pounds (LBP) at *interest rates* significantly higher than the international market rates granted by the Lebanese *central bank* (BDL). Along with the commercial banks, the latter holds a large share of Lebanon's public debt. The high *interest rates* on government bonds and bank deposits strongly limit investments of capital in the productive economy. As a result the great majority of the population suffer from poverty and unemployment. This fictional edifice constructed by financial engineering is beginning to collapse with the slowdown of flows of hard currencies in recent years in the context of the worldwide crisis of capitalism and war in the region, and in particular in Syria. The expatriation of capital organized by the wealthiest 1% of the population, who dominate the financial sector, is increasing and exacerbating the lack of cash. The banks, who are responsible for the crisis, want to put the burden of it on small depositors, who cannot withdraw their wages and pensions. The demonstrators have directed their frustration at ATMs and front windows of several banks, whom they accuse of stealing their money and aiding the corrupt politicians and high civil servants in transferring colossal amounts abroad. The Lebanese are brutally impacted by the consequences of the strong depreciation of their currency. Their purchasing power has been drastically reduced and the social situation has deteriorated due to massive firings, wage reductions and difficulty in accessing credit and bank deposits in dollars.

The president has announced that Lebanon will not honour payments on the Eurobonds reaching maturity on 9 March 2020. They correspond to 1.2 billion dollars in securities held by the Lebanese central bank, the country's other banks and a group of foreign investors. Two other payouts are scheduled for April and June, for a total of 1.3 billion dollars. It is the first time in the country's history as an independent State that authorities have declared a suspension of external debt.

An emergency team from the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF) was sent in February to study the possibility of restructuring the debt. Already in late June–early July 2019, an IMF team had gone to Lebanon and published a report recommending drastic austerity measures which triggered acute discontent among Lebanon's people. [5] Application of these unjust measures was the condition placed on the release of 11 billion dollars in the form of loans for financing the Capital Investment Program adopted at the CEDRE conference in April 2018.

Various activist groups demand suspension of repayment of the interest and principal and adoption of a program of reforms to guarantee the social protection, nourishment and health of the country's people. They feel that the suspension of payment must not take place at the expense of the population. To accomplish that, an exceptional progressive tax needs to be levied on the huge fortunes deposited in the banks in order to spare small depositors. These active groups also demand an end to the dictatorship of the banks and their nationalisation, ousting of the governing oligarchy, sentencing of corrupt officials and the construction of an economy based on social justice.

The CADTM International network supports these demands originating in the popular protest movement in the country. The suspension of repayment of the debt must be a sovereign unilateral act by Lebanon. That can only happen if there is a radicalisation of the current movement and a profound mobilization of all Lebanon's working people. The suspension must be accompanied by a complete audit of the debt and unconditional repudiation of the share of the debt identified as illegitimate, illegal, odious and unsustainable. The cancellation of public debt needs to be done in such a way as to protect small depositors who have invested their savings in public-debt securities.

The slogan calling for socialization of the banking sector with expropriation, without compensation, of the major private shareholders goes to the heart of the capitalist system and must be a political goal of the protest movement. It needs to actually establish a government of popular sovereignty which can break with dependence on the financial markets. Such a government will institute oversight of capital, take back control of the central bank and create a new, public regulation of banking.

The CADTM international network:

- conveys its solidarity with the Lebanese people struggling for social justice and popular sovereignty;
- denounces the repression of protesters; supports the demands of the protest movement for :
 - ▶ the suspension of debt repayment,
 - ▶ socialization and expropriation of the banks,
 - ▶ the downfall of the current capitalist oligarchy,
 - ▶ the sentencing of corrupted and corrupting senior civil servants and political leaders.
- recommends :
 - ▶ a citizen audit of the debt,
 - ▶ the cancellation of illegitimate debt,
 - ▶ selective control of capital movements, allowing international payments in sensible amounts, say less than USD 2,000 a month. Similarly, individuals must be allowed to draw a reasonable amount from their bank accounts,
 - ▶ expropriating goods that were stolen by the ruling class and giving them back to the people via a fund for social justice monitored by citizens.

The CADTM international network hopes that the insurgency by the Lebanese people will achieve its political aim and set up a popular government that will :

- implement a programme of sovereign, solidarity development,
- put an end to neo-liberal policies and to privatization of public services,

Long live the struggle of the Lebanese people!

Footnotes

[1] <https://wid.world/document/assouad-appendix-widworldwp201714/>

[2] <http://www.databank.com.lb/docs/Unemployment%20in%20Lebanon%20Findings%20and%20Recommendations%202019%20ECOSOC.pdf>

[3] <https://www.france24.com/en/20200307-lebanon-can-t-bear-brunt-of-debt-says-pm-setting-stage-for-first-ever-default>

[4] <https://www.ministryinfo.gov.lb/fr/810> in french

[5] <https://www.imf.org/fr/News/Articles/2019/07/02/mcs070219-lebanon-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2019-article-iv-mission>

Les organisations membres du Réseau syndical international de solidarité et de lutte

Organisations syndicales nationales interprofessionnelles

- Central Sindical e Popular Conlutas (**CSP-Conlutas**) - Brésil.
- Confederación General del Trabajo (**CGT**) - Etat espagnol.
- Union syndicale Solidaires (**Solidaires**) - France.
- Confédération Générale du Travail du Burkina (**CGT-B**) - Burkina.
- Confederation of Indonesia People's Movement (**KPRI**) - Indonésie.
- Confederación Intersindical (**Intersindical**) - Etat espagnol.
- Confédération Générale Autonome des Travailleurs en Algérie (**CGATA**) - Algérie.
- Batay Ouvriye - Haïti.
- Unione Sindacale Italiana (**USI**) - Italie.
- Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs - Solidarité Ouvrière (**CNT SO**) - France.
- Sindicato de Comisiones de Base (**CO.BAS**) - Etat espagnol.
- Organisation Générale Indépendante des Travailleurs et Travailleuses d'Haïti (**OGTHI**) - Haïti.
- Sindacato Intercategoriale Cobas (**SI COBAS**) - Italie.
- Confédération Nationale du Travail (**CNT-f**) - France.
- Intersindical Alternativa de Catalunya (**IAC**) - Catalogne.
- Union Générale des Travailleurs Sahraouis (**UGTSARIO**) - Sahara occidental.
- Ezker Sindikalaren Konbergentzia (**ESK**) - Pays basque.
- Confédération Nationale de Travailleurs du Sénégal Forces du Changement (**CNTS/FC**) – Sénégal
- Sindicato Autorganizzato Lavorator COBAS (**SIAL-COBAS**) - Italie.

- General Federation of Independent Unions (**GFIU**) - Palestine.
- Confederación de la Clase Trabajadora (**CCT**) - Paraguay.
- Red Solidaria de Trabajadores - Pérou
- Union Syndicale Progressiste des Travailleurs du Niger (**USPT**) - Niger.
- Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes du Sénégal (**UNSAS**) - Sénégal.
- Unión Nacional para la Defensa de la Clase Trabajadora (**UNT**) - El Salvador.
- Solidaridad Obrera (**SO**) - Etat espagnol.
- Confederazione Unitaria di Base (**CUB**) - Italie.
- Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (**IWGB**) - Grande-Bretagne.
- Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy Inicjatywa Pracownicza (**OZZ IP**) - Pologne.
- Centrale Démocratique des Travailleurs de Martinique (**CDMT**) – Martinique.
- Associazione Diritti Lavoratori Cobas (**ADL COBAS**) – Italie
- Bangladesh Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation (**BASF**) - Bangladesh
- Pakistan Labour Federation (**PLF**) - Pakistan

Organisations syndicales nationales professionnelles

- National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (**RMT/TUC**) - Grande-Bretagne.
- Centrale Nationale des Employés – Confédération Syndicale Chrétienne (**CNE/CSC**) - Belgique.
- Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores del Sistema Agroalimentario (**SINALTRAINAL/CUT**) - Colombie.
- Trade Union in Ethnodata - Trade Union of Employees in the Outsourcing Companies in the financial sector - Grèce.
- Syndicat national des travailleurs des services de la santé humaine (**SYNTRASEH**) - Bénin
- Sindicato dos Trabalhadores da Fiocruz (**ASFOC-SN**) - Brésil.
- Organizzazione Sindacati Autonomi e di Base Ferrovie (**ORSA Ferrovie**) - Italie.
- Union Nationale des Normaliens d'Haïti (**UNNOH**) - Haïti.
- Confederazione Unitaria di Base Scuola Università Ricerca (**CUB SUR**) - Italie.
- Coordinamento Autorganizzato Trasporti (**CAT**) - Italie.
- Syndicat des travailleurs du rail – Centrale Démocratique des Travailleurs du Mali (**SYTRAIL/CDTM**) – Mali.
- Gıda Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası - Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (**GIDA-IŞ/DISK**) – Turquie.
- Syndicat National des Travailleurs du Petit Train Bleu/SA (**SNTPTB**) - Sénégal.
- Asociación Nacional de Funcionarios Administrativos de la Caja de Seguro Social (**ANFACSS**) – Panama.
- Palestinian Postal Service Workers Union (**PPSWU**) - Palestine.
- Union Syndicale Etudiante (**USE**) - Belgique.
- Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Call Center (**STCC**) - Portugal.
- Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores Petroleros (**Sinutapetrolgas**) - Venezuela.
- Alianza de Trabajadores de la Salud y Empleados Públicos - Mexique.
- Canadian Union of Postal Workers / Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes (**CUPW-STTP**) – Canada.
- Syndicat Autonome des Postiers (**SAP**) - Suisse.
- Federación nacional de trabajadores de la educación (**SUTE-Chili**) - Chili.
- Plateforme Nationale des organisations professionnelles du secteur public - Côte d'Ivoire.
- Fédération nationale des ouvriers et collectivités locales - Union Marocaine du Travail (**UMT-Collectivités locales**) - Maroc.
- Centrale Générale des Services Publics FGTB, Cheminots (**CGSP/FGTB Cheminots**) - Belgique.
- Botswana Public Employees Union (**BOPEU**) - Botswana.
- Organisation Démocratique du Travail – Organisation Démocratique du Travail (**ODR/ODT**) – Maroc.
- Federacao Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Transportes Aéreos do Brasil (**FNTTA**) - Brésil.
- Federação Nacional dos Metroviários (**FENAMETRO**) - Brésil.
- Namibia Football Players Union (**NAFPU**) – Namibie.
- Palestinian Electricians' Trade Union (**PETU**) – Palestine.
- Missão Publica Organizada – Portugal.

Organisations syndicales locales

- Trades Union Congress, Liverpool (**TUC Liverpool**) - Angleterre.
- Sindacato Territoriale Autorganizzato, Brescia (**ORMA Brescia**) - Italie.
- Fédération syndicale SUD Service public, canton de Vaud (**SUD Vaud**) - Suisse
- Sindicato Unitario de Catalunya (**SU Metro**) - Catalogne.
- Türkiye DERİ-İŞ Sendikası, Tuzla et Izmir (**DERİ-İŞ Tuzla et Izmir**) - Turquie.
- L'autre syndicat, canton de Vaud (**L'autre syndicat**) - Suisse
- Centrale Générale des Services Publics FGTB, Ville de Bruxelles (**CGSP/FGTB Bruxelles**) – Belgique.
- Arbeitskreis Internationalismus IG Metall, Berlin (**IG Metall Berlin**) - Allemagne
- Sindicato Unificado de Trabajadores de la Educación de Buenos Aires, Bahía Blanca (**SUTEBA/CTA de los trabajadores Bahía Blanca**) - Argentine
- Sindicato del Petróleo y Gas Privado del Chubut/CGT - Argentine.
- UCU University and College Union, University of Liverpool (**UCU Liverpool**) - Angleterre.
- Sindicato di base Pavia (**SDB Pavia**) - Italie.
- United Auto Workers local 551 Ford Chicago (**UAW Ford Chicago**) – Etats-unis.
- Sindicato Uno Prodinsa, Maipú – Chili.
- Asociación Gremial de Trabajadores del Subterráneo y Premetro, Buenos Aires (**SUBTE/CTAt**) – Argentine.
- (واحد) Syndicat des travailleurs du transport de Téhéran et sa banlieue (**Vahed**) – Iran.

Organisations syndicales internationales

- Industrial Workers of the World - International Solidarity Commission (**IWW**).

Courants, tendances ou réseaux syndicaux

- Transnationals Information Exchange Germany (**TIE Germany**) - Allemagne.
- Emancipation tendance intersyndicale (**Emancipation**) - France.
- Globalization Monitor (**GM**) - Hong Kong.
- Courant Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire (**CSR**) - France.
- Fronte di lotta No Austerity - Italie.
- Solidarité Socialiste avec les Travailleurs en Iran (**SSTI**) - France.
- Basis Initiative Solidarität (**BASO**) - Allemagne.
- LabourNet Germany - Allemagne.
- Resistenza Operaia - operai Fiat-Irisbus - Italie.
- Workers Solidarity Action Network (**WSAN**) - Etats-Unis.
- United Voices of the World (**UVW**) - Grande-Bretagne.
- Unidos pra Lutar - Brésil.
- Corriente Político Social Sindical 1° de Mayo de Buenos Aires – Argentine.
- Coordinamento Nazionale Unitario Pensionati di oggi e di domani (**CONUP**) – Italie.
- National Association of Human Rights Defenders – Palestine.
- Red de Trabajadores – Argentine.