



**Council of the EU**

**August 6, 2021**

**Introductory facts prepared by United for Lebanon Anti-Corruption Alliance (UFL)**

**Dear Madam or Sir,**

What is happening in Lebanon today is a direct threat to the Lebanese citizens in their corroding state and in their official, constitutional and health institutions, and the best evidence of this is the port explosion that Beirut witnessed on August 4, 2020, which not only indicates neglect and corruption, but rather on reaching the end of the state that failed to protect citizens in their security, social life, and their health and life requirements, and it pushed the country to the beginning of the failing society stage. All this is the result of a conflict of interest between the personal benefits of the participants in the decision-making process, and those of public interests who are the main victims today and in urgent need of protection.

As for today, and in the face of this bitter reality that we live in, the Lebanese people have not and will not remain silent about all those transgressions that affect basic human principles, which are a right enshrined in constitutions and international conventions, except in Lebanon, where they unfortunately have become a demand.

Our goal today, as United For Lebanon Alliance (UFL) composed of lawyers specialized in fighting corruption, assisted by activists and media figures from civil society, is to confront those responsible for waste and corruption in institutions, who have been unjust to the people and plundered the money of the state and the Lebanese citizens by concluding suspicious deals in all sectors of the productive state. While ensuring protection from their parties and securing sectarian cover that prevents them from being held accountable before the judiciary.

The Alliance also aims to free the judiciary and remove the hands of politicians from it, since corruption cannot be fought if the judiciary is corrupt. Therefore judicial reformation is the bridge to other improvements and the rebuilding of the state.

The alliance operates according to three pillars: first, lawsuits, second, public awareness through communication on social media platforms and media channels, and third, through movements on the ground.

Based on clear criteria: transparency, openness, accountability, and free opinion, the journey of the UFL Alliance began humbly, and today it has become a reference for the Lebanese citizens who want to collect their stolen rights and expose every corrupt, accomplice and partner in wasting the lives of the Lebanese people and their future, and opening files through judiciary and public awareness. Among which the file of waste and landfills, the file of the Beirut Port explosion, the file of the governor of “Banque du Liban” and other banks, suppressing peaceful demonstrators and freedom of expression, up to the arbitrariness of the judiciary and behind it the judicial police and its excessive use of authority, so that no one could practice the policy of “silencing the mouths” on the activists of the Lebanese people, or confiscate their rights without anyone supporting them.

UFL is simply the voice of every Lebanese who wants a free, advanced, democratic, just and sovereign Lebanon.

Following the European Council’s adoption of a legal framework for a penal system targeting people and entities responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon, we decided as an alliance to shed light on some of the situations we faced, which fall under the category of obstructing the proper course of justice and obstructing the judicial facility, the only redeemer of the situation in Lebanon.

Attached you can find a vital report that constitutes blatant example of exposure to anti-corruption activists.

First: the UFL legal team has filed dozens of lawsuits against a series of important violations committed by users and members of the Board of Directors of the National Social Security Fund within the Social Security Institution, the most prominent of which was known as the “Main Complaint”, which exposed the corruption mafia network at the command of the godfather of corruption, the president of Technical Committee, Samir Aoun. The value of the annual waste exceeded 133 million US dollars, with the continued escalation of the deficit within the institution.

And since all the crimes committed are financial crimes, in which, the main reference for taking decisions is the Financial Prosecutor, who, when we filed a complaint before him, tampered with the files so as not to issue a decision to initiate a public lawsuit against the perpetrators.

Based on what happened, UFL Lawyers filed a complaint against the Financial Prosecutor, Judge Ali Ibrahim, before the Judicial Inspection Authority on October 8, 2019 for violating the fundamental principles of law enforcement, and that is based on the manipulation of the file of the “main complaint” related to corruption in Social Security, the keeping of dozens of complaints documented with conclusive evidence, and the failure to take any decision to hold the corrupt accountable.

Second: In the midst of the severe economic and living crisis that Lebanon is witnessing, the banks came to exacerbate the crisis, disregard all laws, withhold depositors’ money, and set a ceiling for monthly withdrawals in a manner that suits them, without any consideration for people’s needs and rights, of course after allowing large “supported” depositors to transfer their dollars abroad.

Therefore, and in the absence of accountability and follow-up from the regulatory or governmental bodies, and prioritizing the interests of the members of the board of directors of Lebanese banks and their shareholders over the interests of the Lebanese citizens and the sanctity of the constitution, the UFL Alliance took upon itself the task of addressing the file of banking corruption.

On April 22, 2020, the UFL Alliance submitted, through the President of the Supreme Judicial Council headed by Judge Suhail Abboud, and after repeated reviews, a criminal complaint against the defendants, the Association of Banks and a number of banks being complained on represented by the chairmen of the boards of directors, accused of credit abuse and incitement, as well as issuing circulars in violation of the provisions of the Lebanese Constitution.

On May 7, 2020, the alliance has sent legal warnings to the Banks Association and 20 other banks, stressing on the necessity of handing over deposits and funds, that are kept with them, to their owners upon request, and UFL lawyers are legally representing the depositors with the aim of claiming their rights before the judiciary.

The alliance also succeeded in following up on a number of files before the Appeal Public Prosecution Office in Mount Lebanon, as well as the first investigative judge in Zahleh, where the alliance was able to obtain a decision prohibiting disposal of shares and real estate, belonging to banks from companies and banks in Lebanon and abroad.

Third: Efforts to reduce landfills on coastal beaches began in 2017.

The UFL Alliance has filed a lawsuit against the expansion of the Costa Brava landfill due to the health and environmental risks arising from several serious violations. An order was issued by the Urgent Matters Judge in Aley to stop the landfill expansion process and to appoint environmental and chemical experts to draw up a scientific report on the health and environmental condition of the landfill.

UFL & Partners also filed a complaint before the Public Prosecution of Discrimination on July 12, 2019 against the Council for Development and Reconstruction and Al-Jihad Trading and Contracting Company, for what will the composting plant, which is adjacent to the airport runway, would cause, in terms of the increase in toxic and unpleasant odors at and around Lebanon's airport, not to mention the serious damage it causes to the health of citizens, the poisonous gases, and a severe insult to the reputation of Lebanon and the Lebanese, and to tourism, on which its economy is primarily based.

On August 7, 2019, UFL and its partners filed two criminal complaints against the defendants, the Council for Development and Reconstruction and the companies executing the landfill, for violating the provisions of the Environmental Protection Law and the provisions of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean, wasting of public funds, disbursement of influence, embezzlement, job investment and other violations.

On March 20, 2019, the Alliance also filed two lawsuits for the pollution of the Ghadir River, one of the two causes of pollution to the Beirut Sea and its environment, and one of the sources of unpleasant odors in the district of the airport.

UFL also filed a lawsuit on July 12, 2019 against the Council for Development and Reconstruction, the Union of Fayhaa Municipalities and the implementing companies, to stop the work in the "temporary marine landfill" in Tripoli, for polluting the sea.

On August 26, 2019, UFL filed a criminal complaint against the Union of Miniyeh Municipalities, the implementing companies, and the Ministry of State for Administrative Development (OMSAR) as the co-executor of the waste sorting and composting plant in Dhour El Minyeh, calling for the operation of the waste sorting plant in Dhour El Minyeh in the proper manner, with the necessary monitoring since it lacks the required health and environmental conditions.

In conclusion, and because the above-mentioned complaints, especially the complaint of waste in the Minyeh landfill, that need permission to pursue, the alliance met with the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, and requested to grant permission to prosecute any perpetrator who has guardianship authority over the landfill in the waste files. Specifically, the Minyeh waste case,

in which the withholding of permission by the Governor of the North, Ramzi Nohra, prevented the prosecution from proceeding with the case by the Environmental Public Prosecutor in the North, Judge Ghassan Bassil. However, the aforementioned minister did not take the decision to prosecute and the permission remained withheld from the perpetrators.

Fourth: In light of the catastrophe that befell the Lebanese on August 4, 2020 after the explosion of Beirut Port, in which about 200 people were martyred, more than 6000 were injured, more than 300,000 people became homeless, and after it became clear that all concerned parties knew about the existence of 2,750 tons of stored ammonium nitrate illegally inside Ward No. 12 since 2014, coinciding with the judiciary's failure to take the decision to effectively hold those responsible accountable, the UFL Alliance took upon itself the responsibility to defend the affected and the families of the victims on behalf of all citizens.

As a result, the UFL Lawyers filed a lawsuit before the first investigative judge in Beirut against 28 officials in the Lebanese state, and they requested to refer it to the Judicial Council, including current and former heads of government and other officials (during the period of filing the complaint).

The Investigative Judge Fadi Sawan refused to register the complaint despite the intervention of the President of the Supreme Judicial Council to stop this serious and flagrant violation of the law.

After the difficult labor that the complaint went through before the first investigative judge in Beirut, UFL case was considered No. 1 in the Judicial Council, and was the first and only actual complaint before the Judicial Investigator, where one of UFL lawyers became a relevant party in the investigations and trial before the Judicial Council.

Immediately, the summoner attorney of the UFL Alliance, Rami Ollaik, submitted on September 7, 2020, a summon request before the General Assembly of the Court of Cassation against the Lebanese state, represented by the head of the Cases Authority at the Ministry of Justice, against the Public Prosecutor of Cassation, "Ghassan Oweidat", for the severe mistake he committed and the decisions he issued, in the file of the port explosion, stressing that he should be disqualified according to the law.

Recently, the judicial investigator, Tarek Bitar, requested from the Discriminatory Public Prosecution the permission to prosecute the Director General of Public Security, Major General Abbas Ibrahim in the case, after the caretaker Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Muhammad Fahmi, refused to give permission.

The discriminatory attorney general, Ghassan Al-Khoury, had called in his decision to listen to the testimony of Major General Ibrahim in detail, to confront him with witnesses and take from him the details about the tasks of the Public Security Agency and its role in the issue of the presence of ammonium nitrate in the port, to build upon later. And then depositing the papers and the content of the statements to evaluate the evidence and suspicions that are required to be prosecuted, which is contrary to Article 91 of the Constitution.

In conclusion, such a huge crime is getting obstructed by formal legal issues that are supposed to drop all immunities in front of the terrible catastrophe that affected Lebanese people and territory.

**Therefore,**

This letter represents a brief presentation of all those violations that affect the Lebanese people's security, health and social life, and for you to take what you deem appropriate in light of your recent decision to impose sanctions, including: banning travel to the European Union, freezing the assets of persons and entities, and preventing EU entities from transferring money to those included in the European sanctions list and those who obstruct and impede the proper conduct of justice, such as Judge Ghassan Oweidat, Judge Ghassan Khoury, and others.

Signature  
  
Rami Ollaik