



PRESS RELEASE

Contact : Arthur Didier Deren, Media Coordinator

Company : Sine Qua Non

Email : arthur.didierderen@sinequanon-eu.com

info@sinequanon-eu.com

Web : www.sinequanon-eu.com

14/01/2020

EU'S POLICY IN LEBANON HAS FAILED TO PUSH FOR POLITICAL REFORMS

In 2019, the European Union has kept on providing financial aid to Lebanon while giving up tools of political pressure. Rather than engaging with the Lebanese civil society, the EU has focused on technical bargaining with local traditional powers. Sine Qua Non argues that renewed political conditionality on EU's aid to Lebanon could help meet protestors' demands and pave the way for the democratization of the country.

The European Union has turned a blind eye on the failures of the Lebanese government despite the country's steady economic deterioration. The 2019 annual Action Plan of the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI), the EU's key assistance structure in Lebanon, renounced on the imposition of political conditionality on financial assistance to Lebanon. Sine Qua Non's latest policy brief particularly accuses the EU of ignoring Lebanon's failure to comply with its 2017 national anti-torture law.

The article thus calls on Brussels to make financial assistance conditional on the government's compliance with protestors' demands. To better help implement those demands, the European Union should also engage with Lebanese civil society organizations. The ENI has thus far relied on the traditional political leadership that protestors are now dismissing. This has reduced EU action to technical measures that ignore the situation on the ground.

Similarly, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have provided significant financial aid to the Lebanese private sector. But this aid came **without "a credible anti-corruption policy"** and turned EU foreign policy into a form of **"direct financial transfer in disregard of the volatile status quo"**.

The policy brief therefore advises the European Union to take advantage of the nomination of Hassan Diab as Prime Minister to reorganize its financial assistance to Lebanon by setting up a credit line, recapitalizing local banks and strengthening the EU's twinning program. Mr. Diab's stated openness to international institutions' intervention in the national economy provides Brussels with a unique window of opportunity.

For more information, arthur.didierderen@sinequanon-eu.com