

UK envoy: Lebanese government formation is a domestic issue

Richard Moore, Director General for Political Affairs at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, visited Lebanon yesterday for high level meetings with Lebanese officials, accompanied by Her Majesty's Ambassador to Lebanon Chris Rampling. His meetings included discussions with President General Michel Aoun, Caretaker Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Speaker Nabih Berri, Caretaker Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, and the LAF Commander-in-Chief General Joseph Aoun.

In his meetings, Richard Moore listened to the views of interlocutors on the current situation in Lebanon, and underlined the urgent need to form a government and implement policies that reflect the aspirations of the Lebanese people including for better governance. It is vital that a new government is formed quickly so that it is able to implement the economic reforms which will help Lebanon regain long-term stability and more inclusive growth.

Director General Richard Moore said:

I am pleased to be able to visit Beirut again, at what is perhaps a seminal moment for Lebanon. We have been following developments here closely, as the UK has long been an important partner and supporter for Lebanon, for example investing \$200m last year to support Lebanese security, stability, prosperity and sovereignty.

We and partners in the international community stand ready to continue our support to Lebanon. But let me be clear that the matter of choosing leaders and a Cabinet is a domestic issue for the Lebanese. The people of Lebanon have been clear in their demand for improved governance, and they should be heard.

As protests continue, we recognise that the security agencies have a difficult but essential role in safeguarding Lebanese security. It is vital that the right to peaceful protest continues to be respected, and suppressing the protest movement through violence or intimidation from any organisation is completely unacceptable.

Ambassador Rampling said:

We are pleased to have Director General Moore here at this crucial time for Lebanon. As well as listening to the views of Lebanese interlocutors, our meetings today reiterate the importance the UK places on having a new, capable, responsive Lebanese government, able to implement the overdue reforms that will benefit all Lebanese.