

Right to the City Charter in Greater Beirut

ميثاق الحق في المدينة: بيروت الكبرى

Preamble

Whereas, for millennia, our City of Beirut, like the whole of Lebanon, has been a refuge and sanctuary for people of our region fleeing disaster, war and persecution, now hosting a great blend of deeply intermingling cultures and religious communities;

Whereas the ongoing refugee crisis and displacement in our region is a responsibility of the whole international community, but that global duty is disproportionately discharged locally, where municipalities and local authorities are the closest public administration to Greater Beirut inhabitants; and whereas the refugee and displacement crisis is one of the most pressing urban challenges concerning both service delivery and governance in cities, where municipalities and local authorities play primary roles, along with civic institutions and communities, in providing protection and assistance to vulnerable groups, while treaty bound¹ to respect, protect and fulfill their basic human rights;

Recognizing the great disparities in wealth and opportunities in our city and that poverty is a trigger of further exploitation, abuse and, in itself, a violation of human rights, and stressing the need to respect human rights at all times, particularly of those living in vulnerable situations, especially in situations of crisis;

Knowing from historic and collective experience with the particular vulnerability that refugees and displaced persons face, many in the Lebanese and host population of Greater Beirut are struggling also to achieve a decent quality of life, despite all kind of challenges and constraints that hinder their well-being, empowerment and individual development;

Whereas the measure of human rights and freedoms of a society is reflected in the human rights and freedoms of women, thus it is appropriate to act in favor of the effective and substantive equality of men and women and actively to promote the participation of women in all spheres of public life, including local decision making;

Realizing that Greater Beirut lives in symbiosis with the surrounding rural areas and people to form a wider social and economic fabric that gives Greater Beirut its particular character and culture;

Convinced of the need to promote in Greater Beirut and surrounding territories a form of development that is sustainable, equitable, inclusive and progressively realizes human rights without discrimination; and of the need to extend democracy and local autonomy so as to generate the citizenship that contributes to a social fabric, country, region and world of peace, justice and solidarity;

Whereas Greater Beirut is a politically diverse community in which all its citizens should participate and share in a common project of freedom, equality of men's and women's rights, and sustainable development, where full citizenship—with its composite rights, duties and responsibilities—is particularly expressed in the local sphere;

Knowing that peace requires the elimination of the root causes of conflict by ensuring freedom from want, fear and any form of discrimination and violence form the basis for a healthy, stable, cohesive and secure society, and recognizing that people living in situations of vulnerability, such as poverty and displacement, are more prone to abuse and exploitation, and suffer particular forms of coercion and violence;

Recognizing the need for an equal and balanced social, environmental and economic development, that respects, protects and fulfills the rights and dignity of all people without exception, in order to improve

the quality of life and eliminate situations of vulnerability of all inhabitants of Beirut, wherever they were born;

Recognizing also the indispensable role of publicly interested civil society organizations in building a peaceful, just and fair society, and the shared social responsibilities of public and private sectors, while realizing social progress starts within each individual;

Whereas all human beings are endowed with the rights and freedoms recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the international instruments that were built upon it, in particular, the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the human rights conventions and charters that Lebanon has ratified, binding all spheres of government;

Whereas all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent,² and that, therefore, not only is the realization of economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for the full exercise of political rights, but at the same time only the exercise of civil and political rights permits participation in the justice and decision-making mechanisms that enable everyone to achieve economic, social and cultural rights;

Understanding that Greater Beirut and Lebanon share the universal 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, with its goals and targets, which “seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”³;

Realizing nonetheless that the external pressures and challenges confronting Greater Beirut also call for a special measure of international support of all kinds, in order for its inhabitants to realize their potential through human rights-based sustainable development;

Raising the voices of Beirut inhabitants calling for equality, dignity and international solidarity, we adopt this Charter for a Right to the City, calling for adherence to its principles in our words and deeds, and in our relations:

Principles

Right to the City in Greater Beirut

- We recognize and are inspired by the Human Rights City,⁴ Human Rights in the City⁵ and Right to the City⁶ movements and their experiences at integrating and mainstreaming human rights into municipal ordinances, policies, budgets and practices;
- We endorse the right to the city as a concept and approach that strengthens local good governance and human rights in Greater Beirut for the benefit of all its residents, permanent or temporary, ensuring full and progressive realization of needs for food and nutrition, education, decent work, adequate housing, energy, water and sanitation, health, sustainable environment and mobility, as well as supportive public services and facilities that are available, adequate, affordable, acceptable and adaptable.

Human Rights, Dignity and Justice in Greater Beirut

- We respect all human rights recognized by the existing relevant international human rights norms and standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as mentioned in the Lebanese Constitution’s preamble and the human rights treaties ratified by the Republic of Lebanon;
- We seek to respect and uphold dignity, justice and fair treatment for all of inhabitants, reducing and eliminating all factors that put its people in vulnerable situations and at risk of being abused and exploited and works to eliminate all forms of violence;

- We pledge to ensure equal justice under law, dignity and human rights, including fair trial and just treatment for all deprived of their liberty.

Right to Security of Person and the Right to Peace in Greater Beirut

- We recognize peace among people—and peoples—as the way to create a cooperative and cohesive society free of conflict, want, fear and any form of violence, including gender-based violence and domestic violence;
- We recognize the human right to security of person as one of the most vital services of municipalities and local authorities, while the best guarantee of security for all is social peace and cohesion achieved through the realization of the human rights for all.

Nondiscrimination and Gender Equality in Greater Beirut

- We work to achieve equality and equal opportunities for all, without discrimination of any kind based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status, in conformity with the Lebanese Constitution;
- We shall prevent and oppose stigmatization of particular groups as posing inherently greater threats than others;⁷
- We work to achieve gender equality and the elimination of policies and practices that hinder the full realization of women’s rights.

Rights to Protection of the Family in Greater Beirut

- Greater Beirut embraces the obligation to provide the widest possible protection and assistance to the family, particularly for its establishment through marriage entered into by free consent between intending spouses,⁸ officially recognized and documented to affirm their civil status;
- This obligation includes the assurance of special measures and protection accorded to mothers during a reasonable period after childbirth, including paid leave or leave with adequate social security benefits.⁹

Rights of Children in Greater Beirut

- We work to ensure the rights of children and their decent life’s condition and the elimination of policies and practices that hinder the full realization of their rights, such as early marriage and child labor;
- We declare Greater Beirut to be a child-friendly city, ensuring safety and protection for boys and girls in public spaces that are sufficient for their recreation and development as members of a cohesive society;
- We seek to provide equal and adequate schooling opportunities for all girls and boys, acknowledging quality education as the most-essential tool for individual empowerment and social development.

Rights of Persons with Special Needs, Older Persons and Persons with Disability in Greater Beirut

- We seek to fulfill all the rights of persons living with special needs such as older persons and persons with disability, and encourage their equal and full inclusion and participation in public life and acknowledge their perspectives;
- We seek to remove all physical, social, administrative and other obstacles and barriers to grant full participation and accessibility to services, facilities, public spaces, transport and mobility to all persons with special needs.

Right to Participation in Greater Beirut

- We commit to respect, protect and fulfill the human right to participation in public life, including the

right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in matters related to local civic affairs;

- We consider the engagement of Greater Beirut's inhabitants in local urban planning and policy formulation to be essential to successful participatory development and assurance of the best possible quality of life for all within Beirut's jurisdictions.

Freedom of Mobility in Greater Beirut

- Greater Beirut works to fulfill all mobility rights and freedom of movement for all, including persons living with special needs;
- Greater Beirut supports the provision of safe and affordable local transport that is sufficient to meet daily needs and accessible to all, including persons living with special needs.

Rights of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Greater Beirut

- Greater Beirut municipalities, local authorities and inhabitants recognize the rights of refugees and the corresponding public obligations under general principles of international law;
- Greater Beirut has welcomed and hosted refugees and displaced persons, including many displaced Lebanese citizens, acknowledging, in particular, their rights to remedy and reparations, including consensual return, resettlement and other durable solutions;
- Greater Beirut municipalities, local authorities and inhabitants also recognize the need for accountability and due process for the acts and conditions that have led to refugees' and displaced persons' flight.

Right to Education in Greater Beirut

- As a region (منطقة) with many outstanding institutions of learning, Greater Beirut strives to provide equal opportunities for education and training that contribute to personal and professional development, in respect to human rights;
- We pledge to contribute to the periodic review and revision of curricula to ensure that education corresponds with the civil, cultural, economic, political and social needs of Greater Beirut;
- We recognize the importance of investing in education to build a region that respects, promotes and fulfills human rights locally and in the wider world.

Right to Work and Economic Development in Greater Beirut

- Greater Beirut seeks sustainable, fair and people-centered economic development that takes into account the actual and potential contributions of all and provides equal opportunities;
- We share the commitment to ensure the human right to decent work for all citizens as a means of personal, professional and economic development, and in order to sustain, improve and achieve an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families;
- We seek to eliminate all forms of discrimination toward migrant and foreign residents and enable service and innovation that contributes to Greater Beirut's sustainable development;
- We welcome socially responsible business and private-sector investment in public spaces and services that is transparent and consistent with public human rights obligations, especially public-private partnerships that enable popular participation in planning, implementation and management.

Right to Food and Food Security and Sovereignty in Greater Beirut

- The municipalities, local authorities and inhabitants of Greater Beirut recognize the human right to food and nutrition and its components, including availability, accessibility and affordability, adequacy and sustainability, and accept that access to adequate food represents one of the most-essential

human needs, vital to the well-being of all individuals and their families;

- The municipalities, local authorities and inhabitants of Greater Beirut strive for all people, at all times to have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and to define their own local and regional food and agriculture systems.

Right to Adequate Housing and Sustainable Planning and Land Use in Greater Beirut

- The municipalities and local authorities of Greater Beirut recognize the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the human right to adequate housing and its components, including legal security of tenure, public and environmental goods, services and facilities, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location and cultural adequacy, and accepts that adequate housing represents one of the most essential human needs, vital to the well-being of all individuals, their families and the wider society;
- The municipalities and local authorities of Greater Beirut recognizes the importance of just, inclusive, sustainable and participatory urban and spatial planning, including streets, housing, civic facilities, public spaces and green zones, to achieve sustainable development, spatial justice and the well-being of inhabitants, including those with special needs and access challenges;
- Greater Beirut seeks to eliminate spatial segregation and injustice, and commits to end forced evictions by all means possible, as required in international human rights law.¹⁰

Sustainable Environment and Protection for the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Greater Beirut

- Greater Beirut municipalities, local authorities and inhabitants seek to protect their common habitat and shared tangible and intangible cultural heritage and natural endowment, acknowledging their unique value and importance for present generations, and honoring both past and future generations;
- We all—inhabitants, municipalities and local authorities—in Greater Beirut seek to fulfill our institutional, individual and collective responsibility in rationalizing production, consumption and physical development within respect for, and protection of the natural environment and ecosystems, including green spaces, water sources and coastline for public use;
- We all inhabitants of Greater Beirut rely on sustainable management of the environment, including protection of lands, forests, fisheries, marine ecosystem and air quality in cooperation with national and international partners, and on effective and efficient municipal services to ensure clean, sufficient and affordable water, energy, sanitation and waste removal and management considering environmental sustainability and eliminating harmful practices.

Good Governance and Common Good in Greater Beirut

- The municipalities, local authorities and inhabitants of Greater Beirut understand good governance as a means to respect and protect the commons, the common good and human rights in a sustainable way;
- We inhabitants of Greater Beirut want public administration that works effectively and efficiently for the well-being of all, while mediating diverse needs and interests, through transparency, [decentralization] and responsibility, accountability, democratic participation and responsiveness;
- We are convinced that the democratic management of the city is an indispensable project for any common future worthy of living in Greater Beirut.

Individual and Personal Empowerment in Greater Beirut

- We municipalities, local authorities and inhabitants of Greater Beirut believe in the infinite worth, value and potential of all individuals to support and contribute to civic, cultural, economic, environmental, political and social development in a sustainable way;

- The municipalities, local authorities and inhabitants of Greater Beirut seek to support lifelong empowering processes and develop individual talents and potential of all as a means of enhancing the quality of life, building human and social capital, facilitating employability and productivity, and contributing to the realization of dreams and aspirations of all individuals without exception or exclusion.

Shared Responsibility, International Cooperation and Solidarity

- Greater Beirut’s right-to-the-city vision transcends municipal boundaries and looks to global cooperation and solidarity in a world where all human beings seek well-being for themselves and each other;
- Greater Beirut’s municipalities, local authorities and citizens look forward to global cooperation and solidarity toward realizing the right to the city in Greater Beirut, knowing the importance of regional and international cooperation and solidarity in times of crisis, when human rights implementation is most urgent, toward rebuilding people’s lives and living spaces.

Endnotes:

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- ¹ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), in Article 50, and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), in Article 28, each stipulate that: “The provisions of the present Covenant shall extend to all parts of federal States without any limitations or exceptions.” Lebanon ratified both Covenants in 1976. International Law Commission has confirmed that “the conduct of any State organ shall be considered an act of that State under international law, whether the organ exercises legislative, executive, judicial or any other functions, whatever position it holds in the organization of the State, and whatever its character as an organ of the central government or of a territorial unit of the State.” Draft articles on Responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts, A/56/10 (2001), Article 4, at: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/56/a5610.pdf>; and Commentaries, at: http://www.evdner.org/dokumente/darsiwa_comm_e.pdf.
 - ² As indicated in the Vienna Declaration (1993), and reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration (2000) and the Declaration for the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations (2005);
 - ³ Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, preamble and paras. 3, 9, 1920, 2935, 4.7. 74(e), at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.
 - ⁴ See Human Rights Cities Forum, at: http://www.whrcf.org/index_en.php, and Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City, at: <http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Gwangju%20Guiding%20Principles%20for%20Human%20Rights%20City%20adopted%20-%202014.pdf>.
 - ⁵ See UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, at: <https://www.uclg-cisd.org/en/right-to-the-city/world-charter-agenda>, and Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City, at: https://www.uclg-cisd.org/sites/default/files/UCLG_Global_Charter_Agenda_HR_City_0.pdf.
 - ⁶ See Global Platform on the Right to the City, at: <http://www.righttothecityplatform.org.br/sobre-o-direito-a-cidade/>, and Global Charter on the Right to the City, at: <http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/World+Charter+Right+to+City+May+05.pdf> [Arabic: الميثاق العالمي للحق في المدينة, at: [http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/WSFCharter%20for%20the%20right%20to%20the%20city%20version%20\(2003\)%20%20Ar.pdf](http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/WSFCharter%20for%20the%20right%20to%20the%20city%20version%20(2003)%20%20Ar.pdf)].
 - ⁷ As committed in “The New Urban Agenda” (2016), para. 103.
 - ⁸ As in Article 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), ratified by Lebanon in 1976.
 - ⁹ Ibid.
 - ¹⁰ CESCR General Comment No. 7: “forced eviction,” 20 May 1997, contained in document E/1998/22, Annex IV, at: <http://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/GC7.pdf>.