

IMF and World Bank tie aid to Lebanon to normalization with Israel, Hezbollah disarmament



Women walk past the debris of a mosque destroyed during Israeli bombardment as residents, accompanied by the Lebanese army, return to the southern Lebanese village of Maroun al-Ras,

on February 18, 2025. (Photo by AFP)

Washington, February 28 (RHC)-- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, two of the most powerful international financial institutions, are reportedly seeking to tie reconstruction funds for Lebanon to the normalization of the country's relations with Israel and the disarmament of the Hezbollah resistance movement.

Citing informed sources, the Beirut-based Al Akhbar newspaper reported that IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva has told the acting governor of Lebanon's central bank, Wassim Mansouri, in a recent meeting that the country's access to international funding will be "linked to specific steps and procedures with a specific time frame and objective."

"According to those familiar with the matter, these steps coincide with expected political pressures under the title of 'normalization' and 'disarmament,'" the report added.

The report came after U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff speculated that Lebanon and Syria could be drawn into the normalization agreements that U.S. President Donald Trump brokered with some Arab countries during his first term in office.

Earlier this month, Lebanese Finance Minister Yassin Jaber announced that the World Bank had prepared a "preliminary plan" for a \$1 billion reconstruction project following a brutal Israeli war.

The Al Akhbar report said the World Bank will approve the fund at its Executive Board meeting on March 25th if Lebanon enacts financial and political reforms demanded by the West.

The EU, the report noted, had conditioned funding for Lebanon on the "need to restructure its banking system," holding up the disbursement of \$500 million in aid that is part of a 2024 deal signed between Beirut and Brussels to reduce the flow of refugees into Europe.

New estimates say Lebanon needs some \$6-7 billion to rebuild infrastructure and remove debris caused by Israeli aggression. Hezbollah has thus far provided the majority of the funding, allocating an estimated \$650 million for housing and restoration in southern Beirut and Lebanon's southern areas.

Hezbollah opened a support front for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip after Israel unleashed a genocidal war on the besieged territory on October 7, 2023, launching numerous retaliatory attacks against targets in the occupied lands.

Israel was forced to accept a ceasefire with Hezbollah on November 27, 2024, after suffering heavy losses on the battleground and failing to achieve its goals despite killing over 4,000 people in Lebanon.

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