



May 12, 2023

## **Second conference for pensioners in Arab countries**

**Lebanon 10-11 May 2023**

### **Final Declaration and Recommendations**

The second conference of the Coordination of Trade Unions and Pensioners' Associations in Arab Countries was held in Beirut from 10 to 11 May 2023 under the auspices of the International Union of Pensioners' and Pensioners' Unions (UIS) of the International Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in partnership with the Association of Lebanese University Veterans (APUL).

The conference sessions were moderated by: Mr. Quim Boix, General Secretary of the International Union of Pensioners' and Pensioners' Unions (UIS) of the International Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), Mr. Bachir Hakem, Coordinator of Pensioners in Arab Countries, Dr. Chebib Diab, President of the Association of Former Professors of the Lebanese University, and Dr. Hassan Ismail, Secretary of Trade Union Relations at the Association of Former Professors of the Lebanese University.

The conference brought together delegates from Algeria, Palestine, Iraq/Kurdistan and Lebanon. Representatives from Morocco, Tunisia and Syria participated via social media. Delegates from Libya, Somalia and Palestine were unable to attend (five delegates were supposed to participate in the work of the conference) and Yemen was absent because they could not obtain an entry visa (visa), Sudan (living in a state of war) and Egypt (for financial reasons) were forced to give up their participation.

The proceedings of the conference included a comprehensive presentation of the conditions of retirees in the Arab countries participating in the conference, including pensions and health conditions of retirees, and the laws regulating retirement in these countries. The participants presented the experiences of their trade union bodies in the struggle to defend the rights and interests of pensioners, as well as the difficulties they face in the face of the constant attack on their pensions to get rid of them. The meeting focused on the phenomenon of pensioners taking to the streets after being classified as a neglected category, a new issue that derives its importance from the fact that pensioners constitute 20% of the world's population and 30% of the electorate. The conference resulted in the following outcomes:

#### **Decisions and recommendations:**

A- The participants expressed their deep regret and sadness by observing a minute of silence for the death of Dr. Chebib Diab, head of the Association of Former Professors of the Lebanese University, who passed away while fighting for the success of the conference in the preparation, organization and implementation. They decided to name the conference "Dr. Chebib Diab Conference for Retirees in Arab Countries".

b- Election of an Executive Bureau composed of one member from each country participating in the conference, provided that this Bureau has a coordinator.

C- Create a WhatsApp group that brings together representatives of Arab countries and allows them to meet frequently.

D- Hold periodic meetings through social media.

E- Coordination among retirees from Arab countries and regional coordination of the International Union of Pensioners' and Pensioners' Unions (UIS) affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

F- Encourage work to establish pensioners' unions, as the most effective means of consultation, exchange of experiences and solidarity to defend the rights of pensioners in Arab countries.

G- The conference declares its full solidarity with the Lebanese people who have been subjected for years to siege, starvation and external interference in their affairs, preventing them from exploiting their wealth on land and sea, plundering state funds as a result of endemic corruption, smuggling of capital out of the country and theft of depositors' money by Lebanese banks, covered by the political authority. The conference decided to submit two complaints to the International Labour Organization. The first concerns the restoration of the purchase value of retirees' pensions, which they lost after 19 October 2019. The second concerns the recovery by the Lebanese University of its right to funds (PCR), which are the funds imposed by the Lebanese State to those who come to Lebanon through its land, sea and air ports, at the equivalent of fifty US dollars for a control on the possibility of infection by the Corona epidemic that is carried out by the Lebanese University.

H - The conference declares its full solidarity with the Palestinian people against the persistent Israeli aggression, in particular the aggression against Gaza City and other Palestinian cities. The Conference renews its solidarity with the Palestinian people for their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent state on their land with Jerusalem as its capital.

I- Sending a letter to the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq asking it to annul the Pension Law No. 27/2006 and to implement the unified law No. 9/2014.

## 2- Claims:

The conference noted the lack of progress in coordinating and improving communication between trade union organizations and bodies in each Arab country, which prevented the conference from including all or most Arab countries. Therefore, the conference will organize a movement to expand communication with pensioners, as permitted by the laws of these countries, in order to unify efforts for a common struggle among pensioners in Arab countries, and to coordinate with the International Union of Pensioners' and Pensioners' Unions, to focus on the following demands:

A- Unify pension systems in all Arab countries through collective bargaining for retirees, in order to obtain the best retirement conditions.

B- Pensions are paid according to the highest salary at the rate of 100%.

C - Unification of pension funds in countries with more than one regulation.

D - Ensure free public transport for pensioners.

E- Protect pension systems directly and through the laws in force.

F- Abolition of the pension tax (IRG) and (IGB) in the countries that apply it.

G - Set the maximum retirement age at 60, lower it to 50 for workers in high-risk occupations, voluntarily lower the retirement age for women, and encourage workers in scientific and intellectual

research to produce scientific and intellectual production for as long as they can give and benefit from their scientific and intellectual expertise, Write and supervise master's theses, doctoral theses and other research work in return for financial allowances added to the retirement pension under the protection of the law.

H- Link retirement pensions with wage trends (indexation), provided that it changes annually or quarterly according to the inflation rate of the country concerned, and avoid differences between workers' wages and pensioners' pensions.

I- The right to voluntary early retirement for those who have completed 25 years of active service.

J- The retirement pension in each country must not be lower than the minimum wage (SMIC) guaranteed in it.

K - Eliminate discrimination between men and women, whether in wages or pensions.

L - The pensioner's right to a health guarantee such as medical care and hospitalization, as befits modern times, provided that the financing of institutions and bail funds is borne by the employer and State contributions, and access to the necessities of a decent life such as energy, water and transport, in addition to benefiting from modern technologies, especially the cheapest means of communication prices.

M- Provide the necessary funds to fight against incurable and permanent diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, AIDS, kidney disease, corona and other diseases that particularly affect retirees, and ensure that they are financed at the expense of the World Health Organization.

N - Ensure social and health security for the unemployed and provide them with retirement pensions at the expense of the State.

O - Establish homes for the elderly and rest homes for pensioners, the cost of which will be borne by the State and employers.

P- Give retirees a 50% discount on national and international travel tickets.

A- Finance pension funds by imposing taxes on multinationals that earn billions of dollars based on the exploitation of countries' wealth.

Achieving these goals requires unifying the struggle and solidarity between retirees and workers, because what retirees achieve today will be a pillar for those who retire in the future. The battle is one, and any victory on any front is a victory for all those who are subject to the system of wage labour. It also needs to exchange experiences and forms of struggle between retirees from different countries, especially Arab countries.

We believe that this process is a prerequisite for the unification and strengthening of the popular workers' movement in all Arab countries and at the international level, in the face of the common problems faced by workers and pensioners, who, if they do not work more, do not lose their class membership or their combativeness, as can be seen and verified where there is a movement of pensioners.

We provide you with the link to the website of the UIS des PeR to allow Arab retirees to have access to more information on the activities of retirees around the world as well as that of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

<http://www.pensionistas.info/web/ar>

<http://www.wftucentral.org/?language=ar>

Bringing down capitalism  
Long live the struggle of pensioners for their rights  
Long live socialism

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Trade Unions and Associations of  
Pensioners of Arab Countries

Bashir Hakem



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