

**Speech of Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst  
Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon**

**Reception by Dr. Suzanne Jabbour, recipient of the 2013  
North-South Prize of the Council of Europe**

Four Points by Sheraton - Beirut, 25 June 2014

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

It is a pleasure to be here today to congratulate Dr. Suzanne Jabbour who was recently awarded the North-South Prize by the Council of Europe for her contribution to the promotion of solidarity and the protection of human rights. Dr. Jabbour is the first Lebanese woman in a list of 36 personalities, including Kofi Anan, Mary Robinson, Simone Veil, Mário Soares, the Queen Rania of Jordan and Lula da Silva, among others, to receive this prestigious award.

Suzanne, in Lisbon you said *This award is an encouraging message not only for me, but also for those who believe that the promotion and protection of human rights is not a slogan but a way of life.* For those women and men who risk imprisonment, harassment, torture, and even death to defend human rights - including their own. For those who worked hard and could witness dramatic shifts in laws, policies and practices despite the additional risks that they face, particularly as a woman. For those who challenge on a daily basis social conventions and deeply entrenched beliefs, risking their own alienation from colleagues and even family and friends.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Delegation of the European Union proposed Dr. Jabbour for this Prize to the Council of Europe because we believe it is essential to reward and recognise those who fight for the rights of others, asking for a meaningful change, offering protection and combatting shameful indifference towards human rights violations. We believe in the work done by Suzanne and her team over the last 20 years, we want to acknowledge their tireless and fearless dedication often in very difficult conditions, quietly and far from the media spotlight. Today their work allows many to restart a life where torture and violence have no place, and this deserves our recognition and encouragement.

Suzanne, you pointed, rightly, at what is being done already in Lebanon, in the region, and in the world to eradicate torture, to prevent it, to support victims and fight against impunity and the fact that so much more needs to be done. Despite our best efforts, torture and ill treatment persist in all parts of the world. Lebanon is not an exception.

Tomorrow is the International Day in Support of the Victims of Torture, a day to reaffirm the need to intensify our efforts to secure a world free from torture and other cruel, inhuman, degrading treatments or punishments. It is an occasion to highlight the need for dedicating ourselves to preventing all acts of hatred and to standing up for fundamental rights and freedoms.

Lebanon has undertaken a number of steps to prevent torture and ill treatment, including the ratification of the UN convention and its protocol, the creation of special human rights units within the Ministry of Interior and the Internal Security Forces.

We also as European Union work with Lebanon on its commitment to ensure that no person is returned or extradited to a state where they could be subjected to torture. There are the efforts to criminalise all forms of torture, to adapt the legal framework, to develop the National Prevention Mechanism embedded in the National Human Rights Institution as well as to finalise and submit the pending reports under UNCAT and OPCAT, and we hope that they will soon bear tangible results.

Numerous challenges remain to get to zero tolerance for torture in Lebanon. I can only but subscribe again to what you said as being your work to remind authorities that a society's human rights record is mirrored in the state of human rights protection in its places of detention, and you quoted Mandela who said: "No one truly knows a nation until he has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but how it treats its lowest." Detention facilities and prisons in Lebanon need to be managed in line with international standards by permanent staff with adequate training. Detention facilities and prisons have to be monitored and accessible to avoid human rights violations. The justice system should be reformed to ensure that convictions are made on the basis of evidence rather than confessions,

which might be extracted under duress. Perpetrators must be brought to justice, and victims should benefit from adequate legal and social assistance, as well as physical and mental rehabilitation programmes.

The fight against torture is a shared responsibility between governments, security forces, the judiciary, civil society, international partners, and citizens. We all have to join forces to eradicate torture and ill treatment and to make sure that the culture of impunity is not accepted. The EU Special Representative for Human Rights Mr Stravos Lambrinidis who recently visited Lebanon put it this way: "The human rights movement will have truly succeeded when every person feels a shared responsibility to respond to the urgent need to fight for the rights of others".

And yes, the European Union will continue to work with civil society in Lebanon to overcome these challenges and we do it in a way we are best known for and which is hopefully most effective: "multidisciplinary" supporting the public institutions to develop and implement actions that increase accountability, ensure justice for all and impunity for none; but also supporting civil society to decrease the suffering of the victims, denounce violations and advocate for change.

Let me conclude by reiterating our support for Suzanne Jabbour, for RESTART, for all those who collaborate with you, lawyers, judges, social workers and doctors, and for the civil society at large for their

continuous work on fighting torture and ill treatment, engaging with the institutions for its eradication, denouncing practices and helping in rehabilitating victims.

I would like also to thank the Council of Europe. By rewarding Suzanne, you reward the constant, consistent and coherent call for human dignity, in Lebanon and in the region.

Thank you.