

Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Dr. Gerd Müller
Stresemannstraße 92
10963 Berlin

19 November 2019

Dear Minister Müller,

It is with great concern that we observe the current developments in Lebanon. In light of the popular protests against corruption and mismanagement, we must question the Federal Republic of Germany's current measures in Lebanon as well as where we can expand our involvement.

In early September, our Member of Parliament Uwe Kekeritz broached the issue of the World Bank's support of the Bisri-Dam Project in Lebanon through a written question to the government (8/534). [shortened]

There has not yet been a confirmation by the World Bank on whether they will fund this project. So, there is still the possibility of stopping this unnecessary project. You have the possibility to ask the German representative on the World Bank's Board of Directors questions and either present your alternative approach to colleagues of other countries or work on a plan with local citizens.

From our point of view, there are numerous reasons why Germany should not support the World Bank's project:

1. Everyone in Lebanon knows that a project of this magnitude is not feasible without corruption and mismanagement. NGOs have presented concrete examples: how can the same company be contracted for ensuring environmental compatibility as well as for construction management? It is this type of 'politics' that is the cause of the current protests against the government.
2. Scientific studies have shown that the costs of dam projects increase significantly with the implementation of the project. [shortened] Since Lebanon's ability to meet financial obligations is already in doubt, any default risk would be shouldered by the World Bank, which in turn would be paid by the German taxpayer.
3. There are more sustainable solutions than this project, which is environmentally destructive and socio-politically questionable: Several years ago, commissioned by your ministry, the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), had developed a solution for Beirut's water supply for the KfW bank. [shortened] The alternative developed by your ministry could be a good basis for discussion within the World Bank.

4. In a letter dated from the 24th of June 2019 and addressed to World Bank's inspection panel, more than 30 000 petitioners and 60 NGOs pointed out that well-founded concerns had not resulted in enquiries and that former filings had been insufficiently answered or ignored. To conduct a large-scale project of this type without constructively involving the affected people is not just politically ill-advised but also in contradiction with the principles of the World Bank concerning the adequate participation of the local population. Germany should not be supporting such an undertaking.
5. [shortened]
6. The Bisri Dam is in a region which is affected by seismic activity and thus is prone to earthquakes. The risks which would result from the dam bursting are just as high as they are avoidable.

The Lebanese protests show that we are all in serious need of rethinking our approach. Large-scale projects without sustainable standards and without the involvement of the local population are contributing to the current outrage. They reinforce inequality instead of removing them. Projects such as the Bisri Dam are examples of failed policy.

Dear Mr. Minister,

Through your role at the World Bank, you have the opportunity to bring about a different route.

We look forward to your response and wise, responsible directives to the German representative at the World Bank.

Best wishes,

Katrin Goering-Eckardt

Uwe Keketitz