

**Text of Press Conference held by LPESPL and the Public Vocational and Technical Education Teachers League  
on 30/3/2010- Beirut**

Dear media people,

Dear colleagues,

*At the beginning of this press conference, we would like to thank, in the name of LPESPL and the Public Vocational and Technical Education Teachers League, the media that have and will always be the voice of the unions, claim and education movement. The media have played a great role in showcasing the truth and revealing the facts to the Lebanese public opinion, and especially in covering the crowded central sit-in executed by the teachers on February 24, 2010 as well as the great demonstration executed on March 23, 2010 under the title “Restoring the secondary teacher’s professional, social and financial position as well as what remains from the 60% (seven levels) allowance for the increase in work hours as per Law 53/66”.*

Dear media people,

We have carried out a long series of dialogues and discussions throughout many months starting with the Minister of Education and Higher Education with whom we have held many meetings **upon our request**. During and after such meetings, the Minister used to declare our right to our claim and show his readiness to follow up with the issue and present it to the officials in order to approve it. However, we were forced each time **to request another meeting with him** after weeks pass by from the deadline we set with him to pursue the dialogue without any reply on his behalf. Therefore, we confirm at the beginning of this press conference that **we have not and shall not cut any contact or dialogue with anybody especially the Minister of Education and Higher Education because we are professionals who seek to continue positive constructive dialogue until we restore our complete right.**

Under the logo **“We seek dialogue on the one hand and are the holders of an acquired right on the other hand”**, we have also met with the political (ministerial and parliamentary) authorities. We aim at completing this step by holding meetings with the President of the Parliament and the Prime Minister as well as all the parliamentary and ministerial blocs, in order to show them the **injustice** befalling teachers’ rights since the passage of Law 717 of 1998 “Raising the minimum level of wages and salaries and merging compensations”. This law **has deprived us of the 60% allowance for the increase in working hours that we had been receiving throughout 32 continuous years as per the Law 53/66 of 1966**. Furthermore, we shall provide them with detailed scientific files including all the documents and tables that prove the soundness of our claim and our right and show how secondary and vocational teachers can retrieve the position they have always held on the employment scale before they lost the 60% in 1998.

Here-below are the parties that we have contacted until the present date:

- 1- His Excellency General Michel Sleiman President of the Republic.
- 2- Head of the Change and Reform Bloc General Michel Aoun.
- 3- Head of the Parliamentary Education Committee MP Bahia Hariri.
- 4- His Excellency Minister Boutros Harb.
- 5- Secretariat General of March 14 Forces.
- 6- Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc.
- 7- Minister of State Adnan Al-Sayed Hussein.
- 8- His Excellency Minister of Administrative Development Mohammed Fneich.
- 9- Also, the branches of the leagues have established a series of contacts and meetings with MPs and authorities in the different regions and governorates.

In parallel, our teachers have carried out sit-ins to put an end to the injustice facing their employment, professional and financial positions. The sit-in in front of the Ministry of Education building and the latest demonstration (**encompassing more than 80% of the teachers in Lebanon**) clearly showed the scope of this movement, just like the movement of teachers in 2000 following the promulgation of Law 717 that has deprived them of the 60%. At that time, teachers boycotted the correction of the official exams for one month and were able to restore a part of the 60% (25%). Today, they are even more determined to complete this movement until they restore what remains of their rights (35%- 7 levels).

From a union and educational position, we assure the Lebanese public opinion that the officials' recurrent statements and praise of the secondary educational role, its success, its excellence and its productivity are not enough. And trying to place the educational sectors in opposition to each other will not do. The positions of the sectors that were apparent in their participation in the demonstration prove best the unity of the teachers' union bodies in both private and public sectors.

Let no one offer as an excuse the lack of funds for two reasons: First, “**no work without pay**” and second, what we are asking for is an acquired right that used to be paid to us, and its funds were available from the general budget. However, payment stopped twelve years ago: Where did the funds go?

Why doesn't the government provide the necessary funds for our right from imposing a tax on the rich, owners of big companies and bank profits? Why isn't the interest rate decreased by one percent (1%) hence reducing the yearly public debt by 750 billion L.P. to the benefit of the Treasury? Why is the amount of 500 billion L.P. being paid from the Treasury for the governmental debts that are not used to conserve the profitability of the banks?

Why don't they close at least one of the corruption doors?

Why don't you restore the secondary teachers' rights in return for the increase in their working hours, which are minimal when compared to all that we have mentioned!!

They want us to negotiate in order to reach a settlement? Were we taking action to improve our wages, it would be possible to negotiate and reach compromises as the Minister wants us to. However, the matter is completely different: We are taking action to correct a wrong. We are taking action to lift the oppression that has befallen us, to restore a lost right firmly established since 1966 by the laws which we are still implementing by an increase in work hours since 12 years without anything in return: How can we reach a settlement that neglects acquired rights? The 25% equaled 6 levels, is it possible that the 35% be less than 7 levels?

**For all of the above, LPESPL and the Public Vocational and Technical Education Teachers decided to escalate the movement. They invite the delegates' councils in the different districts to meet on April 7, 8 and 9 in order to prepare for the meeting that will be held on Sunday 18/4/2010 to discuss the recommendation to implement the escalation steps that will restore the 35% (7 levels). From strike, sit-in and demonstration to implementing the "Most detestable of all lawful things", to be declared by the two councils after endorsing it, and to laying on the Ministry of Education and Higher Education as well as the political authority full responsibility resulting of the teachers' need to carry out the suggested escalation steps due to the continuous stalling in endorsing this right. Parallel to that, the campaign of contacts and dialogue with the officials will carry on with the aim of obtaining these claims.**

We salute the unity and solidarity of the secondary and vocational education teachers that were clearly expressed in their participation in the sit-in and demonstration as well as their rallying round their union tools. We also salute the teachers unions and especially the Teachers Syndicate in Lebanon, the Central Council for the Public Primary Education Teachers Leagues as well as the League of Full-Time Teachers at the Lebanese University for their support and solidarity with our right and actions.

**With the hope of pursuing this union unity, solidarity and readiness to implement future steps and to complete the movement until we obtain our claims.**