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Despite progress, Lebanon continues its failure in dealing with Palestinian refugee rights from a human rights perspective

(Geneva, 20 March 2011) On Thursday 17 March 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report of Lebanon. Lebanon accepted all three pending recommendations regarding working possibilities of Palestinian refugees, documents for non-identified Palestinian refugees, and strengthening the capacities of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee. Lebanon also accepted recommendations relating to the ratification of the Geneva Conventions; criminalizing all acts of torture and increasing penalties in this field; abolishing the crime of honor in its penal code; as well as setting up a national commission on missing persons, including setting up a DNA database and exhuming mass graves. In addition, Lebanon extended a standing invitation to all UN Special Procedures,

“We welcome this as a gesture of Lebanon’s openness and commitment to cooperate with the human rights mechanisms,” said Rola Badran, Programs Director, Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO).

However, during its UPR in November 2010, Lebanon rejected essential recommendations regarding the rights of Palestinians to own property, their right to free movement, to work in liberal professions regulated by syndicates, and their overall legal treatment.

Moreover, during the adoption on Thursday, and in response to the CIHRS and PHRO Joint Oral Intervention, the Lebanese government blatantly denied restrictions on the Freedom of Movement of Palestinian refugees. Further, Lebanon claimed that all non-identified Palestinian refugees, whose situation is most dire amongst the Palestinian Refugees, had been granted identification documents – a fact that the PHRO verifies is false.

Despite the obvious shortcomings of the UPR of Lebanon, all Arab States that spoke during the adoption, offered only praise, with no constructive criticism, which does not contribute to establishing a constructive dialogue, and contributes to escalating the level of human rights violations.

“We urge the Lebanese Government to put in place a clear plan for the implementation of the accepted recommendations, and to begin an open dialogue with all stakeholders regarding the rejected and denied ones,” says Rola Badran,