

The following is Executive's unofficial translation of the August 21, 2014 press release by Lebanon's Ministry of Environment.

The environment minister requests that the works minister protects the Dalieh Raouche Site from encroachment and that the mayor of Beirut not issue building permits before an environmental impact assessment

Minister of Environment Mohammed Machnouk sent a letter to the Minister of Public Works and Transport Ghazi Zaiter emphasizing [the importance of] protecting the Raouche Waterfront Site from infringements and private projects installed on it and the distorting acts via separating the seafront corniche from the site, and this was based on the letter from the Civil Campaign to Preserve the Raouche Waterfront, which complained about the placement of fencing and wires around the waterfront, thus preventing citizens from enjoying this public facility.

The Minister's statement included: "As the Pigeon Rocks and the coast surrounding them were suggested, by Decree No. 2366 dated 20/6/2009 (the comprehensive plan to arrange the land), to be classified as a natural coast with high ecological and scenic value and the head of a natural gulf;

And as the Raouche Waterfront Site is the natural extension of the Pigeon Rocks;

And as the Ministry of Environment has identified the Raouche Site among the proposed sites for marine nature reserves, within the Lebanese Strategy for Marine Reserves that was prepared by the Ministry of Environment and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 2012;

And as the field inspection carried out by specialists in the Ministry of Environment showed the following:

- The presence of a large quantity of concrete blocks on private property in front of the Pigeon Rocks that block the view, particularly on Lot No. 1121 in the Ras Beirut real estate region.
- The presence of piles of rubble in the fishermen's wharf located on Lots No. 1124, 1126, 2389 in the Ras Beirut real estate region, resulting from the work to destroy the fishermen's cabins and renovate the harbor, which was started by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and halted at a later date.
- The presence of fencing and barbed wire along the seafront corniche extending from the sidewalk adjacent to the Pigeon Rocks up to the Movenpick Resort, and this obscures the view of the sea.

To preserve the Dalieh Raouche and its environmental, archaeological and ecological characteristics, we hope that you take the necessary measures in cooperation with the relevant departments in order to:

- Remove the fencing and barbed wire at the aforementioned site,
- Remove the concrete blocks at the aforementioned site,
- Remove the piles of rubble at the fishermen's wharf"

Moreover, the minister of environment sent a similar letter to Mayor of Beirut Bilal Hamad, adding to it the following: "In accordance with Environmental Protection Law No. 444 dated 29 July 2002 (Part IV), which requires that initial environmental studies be conducted as well as an assessment of the environmental impact of the projects that may threaten the environment — whether due to their size, nature, impact or activities — and as the Environmental Impact Assessment Decree (Decree No. 8633 dated 7 August 2012), specified the marine coasts within the environmentally sensitive areas, and stipulated that the proposed projects that fall within these environmentally sensitive areas be subjected to the environmental impact assessment;

And as the Ain al-Mreiseh, Dalieh Raouche and Ramlet al-Baida sites are marine coasts and thus fall within the environmentally sensitive areas to which applies what was stipulated by the aforementioned environmental impact assessment decree;

Therefore, we request that you not issue building permits in the areas of Ain al-Mreiseh, Dalieh Raouche and Ramlet al-Baida without one of the authorized companies conducting an environmental impact assessment study, and not to start any work before submitting the required report to the Ministry of Environment and obtaining approval of the study provided."

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