



New York

10 August 2020

Secretary-General's Briefing on the Humanitarian Situation in Lebanon [as delivered]

[Watch the video on webtv.un.org]

I want to express my total solidarity with the people of Lebanon in the aftermath of the horrific explosion that destroyed the port of Beirut and part of the city last Tuesday.

I offer condolences to the families and loved ones of the more than [150] people who were killed, and a full recovery to the many thousands of injured.

Even now, almost a week later, many people remain missing.

The blast was truly shocking.

In an instant, it flattened vital infrastructure and shattered windows near and far.

Surrounding neighborhoods were levelled.

Many thousands are now homeless.

Three hospitals were left inoperable, and two more sustained substantial damage.

Dozens of other health facilities were damaged and those that remain are overwhelmed with casualties.

The blast produced a colossal toxic cloud that was visible for miles.

The shock waves were felt across the city – and indeed across the Mediterranean.

The economic, social and other reverberations will be felt for some time to come.

The United Nations has [undertaken] a swift and wide-ranging response.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs helped to organize the deployment of experts from the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system to help first responders in Beirut.

A plane carrying 20 tons of World Health Organization health supplies landed in Beirut on Wednesday to cover 1,000 trauma interventions and 1,000 surgical interventions for people suffering from injuries and burns as a result of the blast.

Within hours of the blast, the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon released US\$9 million from the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund to address immediate needs.

On Friday, the Emergency Relief Coordinator released a further US\$6 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund.

The United Nations is supporting the Lebanese Red Cross and other partners in providing temporary shelter for displaced families.

The World Food Programme is importing wheat flour and grains for bakeries and mills to help protect against food shortages across the country given that the Port had housed Lebanon's only major grain silo.

The United Nations system will continue to support Lebanon in every possible way through this emergency.

The blast has come at an already difficult time for Lebanon, with the country already facing economic hardship and impacts of the coronavirus.

In the face of multiple challenges, the people of Lebanon have remained generous hosts to large Palestine and Syrian refugee communities.

The legendary strength of the Lebanese people now faces an additional test.

In the past few days we have seen that spirit yet again – neighbours helping neighbours, people clearing their streets of broken glass and opening their homes to those who have lost theirs.

I call for robust international support for all people in need in Lebanon, especially women and girls who are most vulnerable in times of crisis.

I thank those countries that are already providing tangible financial, material and specialized assistance.

I urge donors to give speedily and generously.

At this time of both sorrow and prolonged frustration, the anger of the Lebanese people is palpable.

Their voices must be heard.

It is important that a credible and transparent investigation determine the cause of the explosion and bring about the accountability demanded by the Lebanese people.

It is also important that reforms be implemented so as to address the needs of the Lebanese people for the longer term.

Let us build on the initiative of President Macron of France, with whom the United Nations yesterday co-convened the International Conference on support to Beirut and the Lebanese people.

The Conference generated much-needed financial support and reaffirmed the commitment of Lebanon's many partners, including world leaders, international humanitarian organizations and key multilateral and regional financial institutions. We are assessing the results and are committed to quick and effective follow-up.

The catastrophe is huge. The sense of loss and even disbelief is profound.

But Lebanon is resilient. Lebanon has immense spirit and will.

Perhaps most of all, Lebanon is not alone.

The United Nations will stand with Lebanon to help alleviate the immediate suffering and support its recovery.

This is a moment for solidarity, and it is the time to change things for the better.

Thank you.