



# Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions

## Situation Report No. 1

As of 5 August 2020

This report is produced by OCHA Lebanon in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 4 to 5 August 2020. The next report will be issued on or around 6 August.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- On 4 August, a warehouse at the Beirut Port exploded, causing widespread casualties and material damage.
- National and international search and rescue teams and disaster management experts have been dispatched to support ongoing emergency efforts.
- Initial reports indicate more than 135 people were killed and an additional 5,000 people were injured. Scores more remain missing.
- Widespread structural damage was reported at the port and surrounding commercial and residential neighborhoods.
- Multiple health facilities sustained damages. Hospitals have been overwhelmed with casualties, with many intensive care units (ICUs) already near capacity due to COVID-19.
- The Government of Lebanon estimates that the explosions have left more than 300,000 people homeless in the Greater Beirut area.
- The United Nations is mobilizing assistance to support the ongoing government-led emergency response.



**135+**

reported deaths

**5,000+**

people reported injured

**100+**

people reported missing

**300K**

Estimated people homeless

### SITUATION OVERVIEW

On 4 August, at approximately 18h00 (local time), a warehouse at the Beirut Port containing large quantities of ammonium nitrate exploded. After an initial explosion, a subsequent blast caused widespread damage, with reports of damage more than 20 kilometers from the port area. The explosions and ensuing fires reportedly released toxic materials in the environment.

First responders searched through the night to reach survivors. Debris from the explosions obstructed efforts to assist victims. More than 135 deaths have been reported, with an additional 5,000 people injured. More than 100 people are missing.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed with casualties. Reports indicate that many patients have been treated in makeshift conditions, including on sidewalks and in parking lots. Some facilities have reportedly had to turn away patients. The explosions come as many ICUs are already reaching capacity with COVID-19 patients.

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The blasts have also damaged numerous buildings in the Greater Beirut area. Multiple medical facilities, including several major hospitals, sustained structural damage. Numerous residences have also been damaged or destroyed. The Government of Lebanon estimates that the explosions have left more than 300,000 people homeless.

On 5 August, the Government of Lebanon declared a two-week state of emergency in Beirut. All imports and exports have been redirected to the Tripoli Port, which is about 85 kilometers north of Beirut.

The explosions come as Lebanon faces a multi-faceted crisis. In recent months, economic contraction, increasing poverty and rising prices have compounded needs among Lebanese and non-Lebanese communities, including the large refugee population in Lebanon. Increasing COVID-19 transmission is straining the country's health systems. Social tensions continue to grow in many parts of the country.

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Efforts are underway to support the ongoing Government-led response to the explosions, including in search and rescue operations. UNOCHA is coordinating the deployment of experts from the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) to support first responders in Beirut. Additional emergency teams are arriving from around the world to help mount a coordinated humanitarian response.

The Syndicate of Engineers and the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) are responding and conducting assessments in affected areas. UN-Habitat is in contact with Government authorities to support damage assessments in the affected neighbourhoods. LRC is providing temporary shelter for families, with support from Shelter Sector and its partners.

The United Nations and NGOs are supporting health responders. WHO is providing assistance for more than 1,000 trauma cases and 1,000 surgical interventions. Health organizations have started to procure medical equipment and supplies.

Several donors have dispatched relief supplies, mobile medical teams and field hospitals to support the medical response. Additional bilateral financial pledges have been announced to support ongoing efforts.

Further assessments are underway in coordination with the Ministry of Health to identify available capacity, material needs and operational gaps. Initial priority needs include additional medical professionals, mobile medical units (MMUs) and medication for acute and chronic conditions. Personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers is another priority, as the explosions destroyed large stocks at the Beirut Port.

Greater ICU capacity will be essential to treat the large number of burn and trauma patients from the blasts. Such capacity is also needed to support the increasing burden of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Lebanese health system. The risk of further transmission is high following the blast, as social distancing and other precautions are much more difficult in many areas.

Medical support is urgently required in the Greater Beirut area. Further needs are anticipated in other parts of the country, especially in primary health centres (PHCs), as affected families relocate outside the capital.

Humanitarian workers are collecting available data to assess the situation and needs across affected areas. An adapted version of the Rapid Needs Assessment tool is being used to identify priority humanitarian needs.

Volunteers have started to clean streets and remove debris from the explosions as part of a wider clean-up operation.

With the Beirut Port inoperable, the United Nations and its partners are looking to adjust logistic networks to ensure sustained operations. Humanitarian materials will likely be redirected through the Tripoli Port. The change may have adverse consequences for some supply chains, as Tripoli Port has a lower capacity than Beirut Port. Beirut International Airport remains open for passenger and cargo flights.

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