

International Support for Lebanon: Ways Forward

Recommendations to Donors

After the shocking and tragic blast that hit Lebanon on Tuesday 4 August, an international donor conference was organised by French President Macron on 9 August. Nearly \$300 million was pledged in direct support to the Lebanese population. In his opening remarks, Macron said the funds would primarily support healthcare, food security, education and housing.

On 4 August, at 18.08 local time, an enormous blast in the port of Beirut shocked Lebanon and the whole world. The blast has cost the lives of more than 200 people (and counting), and left over 7000 injured while numerous individuals are still missing. Additionally, thousands of buildings, houses and businesses were destroyed and 300.000 people were left homeless. Hours after the explosion a state of emergency, transferring control of security to the military was announced, which has after been extended through 21 August.

Citizens, NGOs and voluntary rescue teams mobilised to help in the cleanup and immediate relief work in response to the explosion. This happened at a time where state and municipal actors were disengaged and absent, further increasing the levels of mistrust between the government and the Lebanese people. Thousands of Lebanese demonstrated to demand accountability from their political leaders, voicing their frustration and anger over negligence and mismanagement of their country. Security agencies responded with tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition, injuring more than 230 people. Following the protests, the cabinet led by prime minister Diab announced its resignation on the 10th of August, yet it is uncertain what its replacement will look like and whether it will bring an end to corruption and mismanagement, or will usher in any form of accountability. **A credible and impartial investigation should be conducted into the blast to hold all those responsible, or had acquiescence of such dangers and failed to act appropriately, accountable.**

The undersigning organisations welcome the direct support for Lebanon pledged by a number of donors, but emphasize it is essential to recognize that humanitarian aid is not apolitical, and local political realities need to be carefully taken into consideration in responding to the disaster.

This is why donors should:

- Push for an international independent inquiry into the blasts that happened on the 4th of August;
- Ensure that life-saving and humanitarian aid is delivered with clear monitoring and tracking mechanisms, ensuring that aid reaches people in need and does not benefit/is not diverted to political elites or their associates. These accountability mechanisms include, but are not limited to, setting up clear and transparent processes to monitor funding streams, grant awards, and the use of banks (such as agreements on exchange rates used and fees charged). Sufficient financial and human resources should be allocated to implement and monitor the efficiency of these mechanisms;
- Focus interventions on restoring livelihoods and cash for work programming, given the inability to work for those who lost their business or income as a direct result of the disaster, and the highly limited social protection coverage in Lebanon;
- Insist and ensure that longer-term recovery and reconstruction funding to the Government of Lebanon goes hand in hand with political and economic reforms, human rights reforms, and the presence of effective and functioning regulatory bodies;
- Systematically include local humanitarian actors in the design, planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation of all humanitarian interventions;
- Ensure that each grant agreement or partnership with local humanitarian partners includes sufficient budget lines to cover safety and security-related costs, health insurance, severance pay and other risk management priorities for staff of the local partner;

- Ensure that any funding is additional to already existing funding in response to the multiple crises Lebanon is facing, and the high needs that were already prevalent across Lebanon (protracted displacement, economic crisis and COVID-19);
- Ensure that humanitarian interventions are balanced geographically across Beirut's affected neighbourhoods, to avoid biases that can potentially be exploited by local political interests;
- Ensure that interventions maintain a strong focus on human rights violations, legal assistance and anti-corruption initiatives;
- Ensure that all assistance includes targeted assistance to particularly vulnerable groups – including, but not limited to - economically disadvantaged host communities, refugees, migrant workers, elderly people, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community;
- Ensure that, in response to the explosion and recovery of the affected areas, HLP rights of affected residents are not violated and concrete measures are taken to protect against land grabs.



ALEF act for human rights is a Lebanese non-profit, non-partisan human rights organisation that works on documenting and promoting human rights.

Basmeh & Zeitooneh is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to serving and empowering individuals so that they may lead a life of dignity and independence.

PAX means peace. PAX brings together people who have the courage to stand for peace. Together with people in conflict areas and concerned citizens worldwide, PAX works to build just and peaceful societies across the globe.

11.11.11 is the coalition of NGOs, unions, movements and various solidarity groups in Flanders (Dutch speaking Northern part of Belgium). It combines the efforts of about 60 organizations and more than 20,000 volunteers, who work together to achieve one common goal: a fair world without poverty. 11.11.11 supports development initiatives in the South, by lobbying national and international governments and organizations, by campaigning in Belgium for a world that upholds solidarity.