



Lebanon in Crisis

A massive explosion devastated the port city of Beirut on Tuesday 4th August, killing at least 200 people, injuring over 6,000, and leaving hundreds of people homeless and missing as thousands of homes were reduced to rubble.

The huge blast caused damage up to 10km away and was felt in Cyprus 160 km away. The explosion which ripped through the city ranks second only to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, producing seismic waves equal to a 4.5 Richter scale magnitude earthquake.

As the true numbers of lives affected continues to rise, the city has been affected in unimaginable ways. Hundreds are still trapped under the rubble and families are frantically searching for loved ones, often using social media to report the missing.

With hospitals destroyed, the emergency services are under severe pressure and residents of Beirut now face limited access to essential health care services; which were already struggling to cope with the Covid pandemic and lack of investment overall.

Likewise food is scarce and a further hike in prices is likely, as the port was not only the primary route for food imports, but was a place where much of the city's food was stored.

Also many will have lost jobs and their means of income, posing the very serious threat of abject poverty for many families - and children's education will be severely affected if schools remain closed for months.

The explosion itself - colossal and mushroom shaped, was quickly followed by another. Both were apparently caused by the 2,750 tonnes of highly combustible ammonium nitrate which had been carelessly stored in a portside warehouse.

The nitrate is said to have been ignited by the heat from a fire nearby and although details are sketchy, it's widely thought that explosives belonging to Hezbollah, which enjoys close ties to Lebanon's government, were also stored alongside or very close to the large stockpile of chemicals.

The sheer incompetence of a government that would store huge quantities of combustible chemicals and explosives in the heart of a busy port and city of nearly 7 million people is beyond comprehension, and it illustrates perfectly the utter mismanagement of the ruling party and lack of accountable governance.

When we examine the context of Lebanon's long history of corruption we find the country's governors and banking elite have insidiously allowed for the drastic fall of its currency last year to 4,000 Lira to the dollar, from previous years of 1,500 Lira to the dollar.

The country's fiscal policy has itself been to weaken the Lira against the dollar by maintaining the state treasury in dollars at the expense of its citizens, who are forced to contend with an ever weakening Lira. This in turn encourages investors to place money in banks rather than markets; and so continues the sordid cycle of impoverishment of the people and the enrichment of the elite.

The mismanagement of the nation's economy is rooted in the idea of a quick fix through the receipt of millions of dollars in loans and grants from the World Bank, rather

than investing in creating the means for stability and long term progress using the ambition of its own people and its own natural resources. Proving that endemic corruption has been perpetuated by the ruling elite whose so-called democratic elections have really only been a way of reproducing the flawed Capitalist system itself.

It is this corrupt mindset of greed, negligence and unforgivable mismanagement that makes Lebanon's government directly responsible for this disaster in which so many innocents have suffered.

In typical colonial style, France's President Macron has been quick to descend upon the chaos, no doubt believing himself to be the guardian of Lebanon given the French mandate after World War 1 until independence in 1943.

He toured the devastated areas offering support, even saying to one woman *"we are not here for your government, we are here for you"*. Macron also said he'd return in September, calling on leaders to reach a social pact with the country's population saying *"the current system no longer has the trust of the people"*, and promising a plan to support Lebanon's education system devastated by the nation's economic crisis and Covid pandemic.

So much for independence! The irony of President Macron preaching to the people against the very government that willingly facilitates his regional and economic goals, is a pathetic indictment of the utter subservience of Lebanese President Michel Aoun and his entire cabinet to their 'ex' - colonial masters.

Lebanon's condition is no different to its neighbouring Syria and indeed all of the Muslim countries. Under the guise of independence, it has been politically and economically occupied by global institutions acting on behalf of its colonial occupiers - ensuring that this tiny but strategic nation falls prey to the agendas and projects of those still wish an end to any semblance of Muslim unity and strength.

In light of the resignation of the entire Lebanese government today, the nation has been further plunged into a power vacuum. As usual amid the chaos and uncertainty, it is the people who are likely to suffer most. May Allah (swt) alleviate their hardship and reconsecrate the just political solution as defined by Islam to the Levant region and beyond.

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

"Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them". [Surah An-Nur: 55]

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
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