

## August 2020 Newsletter

Since the last newsletter, Lebanon has been devastated by the August 4<sup>th</sup> blast on Port of Beirut. Our hearts are broken to see so much destruction. We have lived through many wars here in Lebanon but have never seen anything like this. We have never seen any destruction to a whole city in a few minutes. This is our first experience of an explosion that destroyed Beirut in such manner. Apparently, there were 3 blasts. The first one took place between 5:30 – 6 pm & the National Defense team was asked to go down to the port & extinguish the fire caused by the first blast. I didn't hear that one at all.

The second & third blasts were minutes apart right after 6 pm. The third explosion had the 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate in it & caused the severe destruction of Beirut. Our ministry center is only a few minutes from the explosion site but, Praise God, we didn't even have any shattered glass. Only the door of the power room was blasted. The Kurdish ministry across from us had shattered glass as well as other ministries in the area. A lot of the Lebanese as well the refugees who live next to the center in Borj Hammoud were affected by the blast. Some have contacted me to share with me about the immense damage they had on their little apartments. Broken glass, doors out of their hinges, light bulbs shattered, & destruction to their appliances took place all in one blast.

In 2019, the bad economy had already started to lay its toll on people. Husbands lost their jobs & families were struggling to get the essentials. Families had already started on *Survival mode* only, trying to survive with some dignity on minimal standards. These people, Lebanese & refugees, already have little to live on & now the devastation has left them under shock. There's no money to repair anything. On TV, victims are asking who will repay them for what they have worked for all their lives. They can't get to their money in the banks & they have no new resources. Who will stand by their side?

Right before the explosion, the Lebanese discovered that their savings accounts & retirement funds were stolen by the corrupt rulers & politicians. These corrupt people took the national money out of the Lebanese banks, all 320 billion dollars & put them in their accounts in other countries. The local banks had lent their money to the Lebanese government that is refusing to pay back anything & people discovered in October 2019 that this corrupt ruling class has robbed them of their savings too. People are not able to withdraw their money out of the local banks & the value of the Lira has deteriorated from one dollar to 1,500 to one dollar to 7,500 liras.

We came back from the US in March & have already done 3 food projects that fed 670 families each. In addition to the small food packages, we started assisting families with the basics like buying their medication for one month which became possible because the dollar appreciated in value. We're also helping families with small bills such as the generator bill. Sitting in the heat without a fan is really hard. Those of you who have visited us understand how hot it gets in Beirut.

300,000 people have been directly affected by the Aug. 4<sup>th</sup> blast. Chaouki & some of his men's group will go down to the devastated area tomorrow while I & the volunteer women will start packing some food packages. I already ordered some food items & will buy cleaning products & toiletries to reach out to the most hurt in the blast. What we're doing is very little & very helpful. And we can do much more (especially with replacing shattered glass which is very expensive & a big need) if we have more money. We pray that the Lord will help us reach many people & share His love with them.

If you would like to donate, you can do so by going to our website: [www.lfminternational.org](http://www.lfminternational.org). You can also make a check to Lebanon 2000 & send it to 936 Forbes Road, Fort Mill, SC 29707, to the attention of Chaouki Boulos.

Thank you for all the prayers & support to us & to Lebanon at this very hard time.

Blessings,  
Chaouki & Maha