

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

I am writing you this email to showcase to you the difficult circumstances we are experiencing in Lebanon.

As you well know, on 4 August, two explosions ripped through the port area of Lebanon's capital, leaving at least 178 dead and an estimated 6,000 injured. The blasts destroyed and damaged buildings across the city, leaving more than 300,000 people without homes.



*Sint Joriskathedraal in Beiroet -
Foto: Aartsbisdom Beiroet*

The blast comes on the heels of multiple other crises in Lebanon. The country currently (as of Sep. 10) has more than 22,437 COVID-19 cases, 4 times the cases since the explosion. This coupled with the worst economic crisis in years due to the accumulation of public debt and the collapse of the Lebanese pound, losing more than 80 percent of its value against the US dollar, which has led to a more than three-fold increase in the prices of consumer goods will result in increasing the burdens on the Lebanese people.

The shock wave created by the explosion severely damaged a large number of buildings as well as religious and educational institutions (7 churches, 6 schools, 1 university, 1 dispensary, 1 dormitory, 1 chancery, 1 pastoral center) belonging to the Maronite Archdiocese of Beirut existing within the perimeter of the blast.

We, The Maronite Archdiocese of Beirut, despite the damage that occurred to our premises are working around the clock to respond to this catastrophic situation, putting as our priority **to help people return to their homes in dignity**, as per the recommendations of His Excellency the Archbishop Paul Abdul Sater, **discerning that this our mission for the time being.**

Our immediate humanitarian efforts were focused on several key areas: shelter, food, health and protection. Therefore 3 tents were placed in the region to support people affected in Beirut by receiving their requests and needs.

Shelter:

Homes have been left without windows, doors, water or electricity as a result of the blast, and some have suffered substantial structural damage. In fact our main concern was the people and how to help them return to their homes. That is why our teams visited more than 1000 houses for damage assessments to indicate levels of interventions and they are helping by providing:

- New doors
- New windows
- Civil and sanitary repairs where necessary
- Blankets
- Mattresses
- Clothes
- Household items

Our engineer volunteers are still working day and night to follow up with contractors in order to accomplish the rehabilitation of the houses we took in charge.

Food:

Food security is also a primary concern. Due to the damage of the country's largest grain silo, which will result in a flour shortage, coupled with the economic crisis and the increased prices of basic food staples, more people are struggling to buy food to feed their families. Therefore, we are helping by:

- Allocating several food parcels to affected families.
- Cooking hot meals every day to be handed out to those areas affected by the blasts.

Health and protection:

The explosion destroyed one of the city's main hospitals and damaged many other healthcare facilities. Also, some medical supplies were already in short supply due to the coronavirus (Beirut has the highest concentration of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country). Therefore, we contributed through our dispensary "Saints Peter and Paul's Dispensary" by organizing providing health services, medical supports and donations of medicines and vaccines in response to the demands and needs of those affected.

Protection is another critical area of intervention particularly mental health and psychosocial support. That is why we are providing free psychological support services (listening units inside the tents) whose goals are to prevent chronic conditions including anxiety, depression as well as negative coping mechanisms.

Our **Call Center** is following up on a daily basis the work progress in the houses, the humanitarian aid, the food distribution with our social workers, the medical support for all those in need.

However, our greatest threat in the near future remains the mass exodus. In fact, after the Beirut explosion, many Lebanese citizens, especially the youth and particularly Christians, have been leaving or wanting to leave their homeland due to hopelessness in a state that has not only been refusing to undertake urgent critical reforms but has also caused a massive humanitarian catastrophe. According to Information International, the average number of departing passengers from Lebanon has increased by 36%, after the doomsday of August 4th (380,000 immigration requests from Lebanon at the Canadian embassy and European embassies, as well as the US embassy). Consequently, these departures abroad will strip the country of Lebanon's highly educated, multilingual youth generation: academics, doctors, artists and others. Without their presence, the Church will lose most of her faithful and once we lose the living stones there will not be any need for the buildings of the churches or her social and educational organizations.

In front of this real threat of our presence in the Middle East and especially in Lebanon, we are becoming more and more a minority and **we are risking extinction**. For this reason your support on all levels is really appreciated, and will help us focusing on our mission: **to witness to the Risen Christ amidst a world who ignore Him or deny Him**.

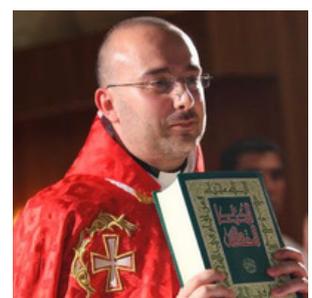
Yours in Christ

Fr. Jad Chlouk

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General Director of Finance

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