



A plane carrying 20 tonnes of WHO health supplies landed in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 5, to support the treatment of patients injured by the massive blast that occurred in the city on 4 August. The supplies will cover 1,000 trauma and 1,000 surgical interventions for people suffering from injuries and burns resulting from the blast. The plane was donated by the United Arab Emirates.

137

reported
deaths

6,014

casualties treated in
public and private
hospitals

300,000

estimated number
of people left
homeless

5

hospitals completely
destroyed or partially
damaged

20

Tonnes of WHO health
supplies delivered or being
delivered to 10 private and
public hospitals

SITUATION

- A warehouse exploded at the Beirut Port causing widespread significant damage to buildings and infrastructure reaching the outskirts of Beirut. The cause of the explosion is still unclear and investigation is underway linking the blast to some 2,750 tonnes of confiscated ammonium nitrate that were stored in the warehouse for the past six years.
- Lebanon's cabinet declared a two-week state of emergency in Beirut and handed control of security in the capital to the Lebanese Army. The death toll (137 reported to date) is expected to rise further as emergency workers dig through the rubble to search for survivors. Search and rescue operations are ongoing with over 100 persons reported missing on the site of the explosion.
- This latest emergency comes in the context of recent civil unrest, a major economic crisis, COVID-19 outbreak, and heavy refugee burden.
- Three hospitals are non-functional and two are partially damaged as a result of the blast, requiring patients to be transferred to health facilities across the country. Early reports indicate that many health centers and primary healthcare facilities are also damaged and/or out of action.
- Due to the non-functionality of some hospitals and health facilities, injured patients are being transferred to hospitals across the country, as far as south Saida and north Tripoli.
- Seventeen containers of WHO essential medical supplies were destroyed as a result of the blast. Personal protective equipment that were at the airport at the time were also completely burnt.
- Hospitals and health workforce are overburdened, facing shortage of medicines and medical supplies along with impact of the chemical fumes, especially on people with respiratory and underlying health conditions.

- Prior to the blast, the number of COVID-19 cases in Lebanon was drastically increasing and an intermittent lockdown was in place just when the blast occurred. WHO aims to avoid any reduction in COVID-19 response efforts, ensuring that all pillars of the response remain active and that there is a reliable supply of PPE and other supplies to replace the lost and damaged materials.

HEALTH NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

- Meeting emergency trauma and medical needs
- Participating in ongoing assessments of health system and humanitarian impact
- Coordinating the international response, including EMTs
- Ensuring continuity of COVID-19 care
- Addressing humanitarian health needs of displaced persons
- Undertaking environmental impact assessment and providing health guidance

WHO RESPONSE

- Coordination with the national health authorities, ICRC, UN agencies and national NGO health partners is ongoing.
- WHO is working towards meeting urgent trauma and emergency medical needs through the provision of medicines and supplies to public and private hospitals across Lebanon. WHO delivered 20 tonnes of trauma and surgical supplies for 2,000 treatments. The equipment will cover the needs of 1,000 trauma interventions and 1,000 surgical interventions for people suffering from injuries and burns resulting from the blast.
- Supplies will be distributed to 10 major hospitals which have been selected based on the following criteria: having received more than 200 casualties as reported by the National Authorities as well as bed capacities of hospitals. The distribution will take place within 24 hours. Another WHO shipment is underway, including PPES as well as various supplies and equipment for hospital emergency departments and intensive care units.
- WHO supported the MOPH by reinforcing the infrastructure of the central warehouse which was completely destroyed due to its close proximity to the explosion site. The medicine supply was safely extracted and transported to the Rafic Hariri University Hospital (RHUH) which is being properly equipped to store and manage the distribution of the material. The warehouse housed the cold room (vaccine and insulin), along with the acute, mental health, TB and HIV drugs. A system is being put in place by WHO to manage the operation of the temporary warehouse and regulate storage and distribution.
- WHO will work in parallel with national health authorities and partner agencies to fully assess the public health impact of the blast, and identify gaps and immediate lifesaving needs. A comprehensive health facility damage and needs assessment in the affected area along with access to health services of displaced persons will be conducted.
- WHO is supporting the MOPH to establish an Emergency Management Team (EMT) Coordination Cell and an EMT coordinator has been deployed and is due to arrive to Beirut end of this week.
- WHO is also closely coordinating with the humanitarian health response for displaced people by ensuring access to essential health services, strengthening disease surveillance, and collaborating with other sectors to ensure disease control measures are in place.
- Together with the American University of Beirut, WHO will conduct an environmental assessment on the impact of the fumes caused by the blast and is developing guidance for people on how to protect themselves from potentially harmful smoke and polluted air.
- Surge missions are being dispatched to Beirut to assist in the emergency response and rescue operations. WHO will ensure that international response teams are most effectively integrated into the national response and work according to international standards.

Funding needs

- USD 15 million to cover emergency trauma and humanitarian health needs and continuity of COVID 19 response.

