



23 August 2020 – Two weeks after the explosion that damaged several areas of Beirut, Qaratina Public Hospital is still reeling from the damage. The hospital is located a few hundred metres from the epicentre of the blast and is one of 3 hospitals in the area that were totally destroyed.

A post-disaster rapid hospital assessment conducted by WHO found 80% of the hospital's old building to be severely damaged and the structure unsafe as a result of the explosion; 30% of the hospital's new building also sustained damage.

Before the blast, Qarantina hospital was known to be a hospital for the poor, providing medical care for families who had no insurance or social security and who could not afford private care. No one was turned away. As one of the few public hospitals in Lebanon that had a neonatal intensive care unit, it also served people coming from many areas outside Beirut.

At the time of the blast, Qarantina hospital's paediatric section housed 8 newborns in the neonatal intensive care unit, which cares for babies who are either born prematurely and need special incubator care, or babies who have weak organs and cannot leave the hospital without special care.



“Our only concern was to evacuate the babies,” said Fatima Ghader, paediatric Head Nurse, recalling the time of the blast. “We created a human chain to get the babies out of the hospital and to safety as fast as we could.”

The outer walls of the neonatal intensive care unit and paediatric floor of the hospital were completely damaged, and many of the rooms housing incubators were badly affected. Thankfully, however, no babies were killed or injured. “The incubators are made from very thick sturdy plexiglass and that protected the babies from the falling debris,” added Nurse Ghader.

