



5 August 2020, Beirut, Lebanon – A plane carrying 20 tonnes of WHO health supplies has landed in Beirut, Lebanon, to support the treatment of patients injured by the massive blast that occurred in the city on 4 August. The supplies will cover 1000 trauma interventions and 1000 surgical interventions for people suffering from injuries and burns resulting from the blast.

The shipment was airlifted from WHO's logistics hub in Dubai earlier this afternoon using a plane donated by the Government of the United Arab Emirates, a key WHO partner in health emergency response.

“Our hearts and prayers are with all those affected by this tragic event as we continue our mission to serve all people in Lebanon with life-saving and essential health care services. We are working closely with national health authorities, health partners and hospitals treating the wounded to identify additional needs and ensure immediate support,” said WHO Representative in Lebanon Dr Iman Shankiti.

As a result of the blast, 3 hospitals in Beirut are now non-functional and 2 hospitals are partially damaged, leaving a critical gap in hospital bed capacity. Injured patients are being transferred to hospitals across the country, as far as south Saida and north Tripoli, and many facilities are overwhelmed. WHO will distribute the supplies to priority hospitals across Lebanon receiving and treating injured patients.

This latest emergency comes in the context of recent civil unrest, a major economic crisis, COVID-19 outbreak and heavy refugee burden. The legendary resilience of the Lebanese people has rarely been so severely tested. Ensuring that there is continuity of the response to COVID-19 – including targeting the most vulnerable for assistance – is a priority for both the Ministry of Public Health and WHO.

“With the emergence of new challenges due to the latest devastating event, the United Nations in Lebanon and partners have been mobilized to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese people in support of the Government’s response to this tragedy. We are in this together, and we are committed to supporting Lebanon in this very difficult time,” said Dr Najat Rochdi, UN Resident Coordinator in Lebanon.

Related link



SITUATION

135 deaths 5000 people suffering from injuries and burns - 100+ people reported missing

Severe damage to critical health infrastructure:

- 3 hospitals non-functional
- 2 hospitals with substantial damage
- 500 hospital bed equivalents lost
- 17 containers with essential medical supplies destroyed

WHO PRIORITIES

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

FUNDING NEEDS

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

Current Situation and Impact on Health Sector

The recent explosion near the main port in Beirut on 4th August 2020 has caused widespread damage and resulted in over 135 dead and 5000+ people injured. These casualties have significantly overwhelmed the health system that was already reeling from a socio-economic crisis and the ongoing COVID pandemic. Although needs assessments and search and rescue operations are still ongoing, WHO is deeply concerned about the hospital and health workforce capacity, supplies of medicine, and chemical fumes which might have a harmful impact on the health of people with underlying conditions.



Heavily damaged central drug warehouse, WHO Lebanon

Furthermore, the MOPH central warehouse where WHO-supported essential medical supplies were stored has been severely damaged, necessitating immediate relocation to a different warehouse. Moreover, a recently delivered shipment of PPE, stored at the Beirut port warehouse pending transfer to MOPH warehouse was completely destroyed, leaving the nation in need of urgent trauma and PPE supplies.

While initial assessments indicate that three major hospitals are now non-functioning and two others are functioning well below capacity, a more thorough assessment of the impact on the health system is required. Early reports indicate that many health centers and primary care facilities are also damaged and/or out of action. WHO proposes to support the MOH in a detailed assessment of the damage to and functioning of health facilities.

International emergency medical teams (EMT) are already arriving in-country to support the government’s response. WHO proposes to assist the MOH by establishing an EMT Coordination Cell and deploying an experienced EMT Coordinator. The Coordination Cell will be responsible for overseeing the reception and tasking of EMTs, promoting adherence to international EMT standards, and ensuring appropriate monitoring of and reporting by EMTs.

While the immediate response must address trauma and emergency medical needs, it is clear that a major humanitarian crisis is also evolving. Up to 300,000 people have been displaced from their homes and need urgent support for shelter and food assistance. But the acute displacement of so many people also risks accelerating the spread of COVID-19 and the outbreak of other diseases, including other respiratory and water-borne diseases.

Donor alert: Lebanon blast

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