MEDIA RELEASE: Caritas Australia remembers one year since Beirut blast

5 August 2021

On August 4 2020, a tragic explosion in the Beirut port in Lebanon killed more than 200 people, injured more than 7,500 and left approximately 300,000 homeless.

"The Beirut blast came at the worst possible time for Lebanon," said Suzy McIntyre, Caritas Australia's Program Coordinator for Global Programs & Partnerships.

"The country was already grappling with political turmoil, economic ruin, the challenges of hosting over a million refugees from Syria and the Palestinian territories, the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing protests against the government - and the blast brought another hurdle to communities that were already struggling."

"It's also tough for the country to rebuild when the economic situation is so poor. The country is deeply in debt, which means that everyday people find it nearly impossible to pay for basic goods, and there are long queues to withdraw money from ATMs, or to buy fuel, food and medicine."

"To have the destruction from the blast on top of all that is a massive challenge - although certainly a challenge that many volunteers have met wholeheartedly over the past year."

Despite these challenges, Caritas Lebanon is working to rebuild lives after the deadly blast. Immediately after the explosion, Caritas Lebanon's youth volunteers leapt into action, along with a network of Caritas field staff, and were able to distribute food kits, medical first aid kits and hot meals to people affected by the explosion.

"Caritas Lebanon quickly mobilised a passionate force of selfless young people who showed such great respect to community members," Ms McIntyre said. "They have experienced one crisis after another and still have the incredible desire to serve others."

Since the blast, Caritas Australia has supported Caritas Lebanon to distribute hygiene kits, food kits, and hot meals to those in need. Caritas Lebanon has also supported with medical and psychological first aid, medicine and repairs to damaged housing.

Caritas Australia is supporting Caritas Lebanon on the ground in Beirut. Caritas Australia is accepting donations to help support vulnerable communities in the Middle East through the Middle East Regional Appeal.

Visit caritas.org.au or call 1800 024 413 toll free to provide much needed support.

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