

Beirut, November 1, 2020

The purpose of this letter is to shed light on national and global circumstances that are impacting the Lebanese community.



To begin with, Lebanon has been considerably struggling financially for almost a decade, but in the last two years and due to economic sanctions, many institutions from different sectors have been suffering drastically leading to a jump in the level of unemployment among Lebanon's population estimated by 50% to 60 % according to official sources. This changed the socio-economic status of thousands of families leading eventually to an increase in the rate of poverty and unemployment. Civil unrests and cutting main roads to protest against the government's performance crippled the economic life even further for months. Then, on August 4, 2020 came the unfortunate and the catastrophic Beirut blast which was internationally perceived as one of the strongest non-nuclear explosions in the history of mankind. The explosion led not just to exponentially high-priced calamity, but the aftermath of the explosion had its toll on the psychological well-being of the whole population.

Also, Covid-19 pandemic has severely tossed its toll on the whole globe but the effects on Lebanon have been catastrophic. This global adversity and the procedures that nation-states had to take in order to contain the spreading of the virus have led to dramatic upheaval in the Lebanese case. When the Lebanese government started to enforce nation-wide lockdown on February 2020, the country had already been suffering the consequences of almost two years of economic stagnation.

In addition to the above, the teaching and the learning conditions in Lebanese Schools have changed drastically. With recommendations from the MOPH and WHO, schools have taken the decision to teach remotely since February 2020 which was a dramatic shift in the world of education. The schools have barely managed to finish the school year 2019-2020. Then came the decision to resume with on-onsite/distance learning with 2020-2021. All this while the Lebanese schools are struggling on many levels: online learning is applied with strangling conditions ranging from constant power cuts in most Lebanese cities, to weak internet services, to having students unable to access classes due to lack of devices

such as laptops or tablets because of their families' financial struggles. The community of education in Lebanon is pretty much a micro level reflection of the struggle of the Lebanese state where schools are unable to properly take care of the well-being of their teachers and students. They are living the difficult conditions of the country and are expected to perform the way they perform under normal conditions.

In brief, the impact of the economic crisis, devaluation of currency, and lack of access to the foreign currency, and the interruptions of education are unique circumstances to our country. We have these serious local problems added to the pandemic. Many people have had to seek jobs abroad as the salaries have lost their purchasing value. Not to forget that we are facing an outbreak of the second wave of the virus with a fragile health system which is also restricting our control on the teaching and learning due to continued lockdowns.

I have already been in direct contact with an NGO called "Lebanese Young Talents" which decided to switch its operations from funding talented young with their education to helping the victims of the August 4 blast.

I am immensely grateful to the compassion, empathy, transparency, and support of two young volunteers – Mr. Georges Assaf and Ms. Aya Neaimeh whom I had the chance to work with for six years. I cannot but commend them for the tremendous humanitarian efforts they put in helping many families after the Beirut blast.

I am calling on you as an international community to stand by Lebanon, show solidarity and provide timely and meaningful support to Lebanese people who have been generous in volunteering. I will be very grateful for any type of support that you can offer to this NGO on your behalf. Lebanon's community is in desperate need for urgent financial support. We hope this drastic situation will be resolved soon.

I thank you for your cooperation and send you all my blessings.

Best Regards

Fr. Joe Bou Jaoude

