



Christian Conference of Asia

● Payap University, Muang, Chiang Mai 50000 Thailand
Tel: +66-(0)53-243906, 243907 Fax: +66-(0)53-247303

CCA's message of comfort and solidarity on explosion in Beirut, Lebanon

It is with great distress that the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) received the news of the massive explosion that rocked Beirut on Tuesday, 4 August 2020, flattening much of the city's port, damaging buildings across the Lebanese capital, and killing more than 100 people and leaving 4,000 injured, with many still feared to be trapped under the rubble. We share the grief of the Lebanese people and uphold the victims and families in our prayers. During this critical time in Lebanon, our thoughts are with the affected people and we stand in solidarity with those who are experiencing this painful situation and living amidst fear and deep anxiety.

We understand that although the cause of the blast was not immediately known, preliminary investigations have revealed that the explosion was not a premeditated act, but was caused due to the ignition of 2,750 metric tonnes of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive chemical used in the manufacturing of fertilisers and bombs. The chemical stockpile, accumulated through confiscation, had been stored in the Beirut port warehouse for over six years without any safety measures, thus endangering the safety of the people residing in the port's vicinity.

The explosion that rocked Beirut comes at an unpropitious time. Although Lebanon has confirmed only 5,062 cases of COVID-19 and 65 virus-related deaths, the pandemic-related restrictions have further exacerbated the country's deep and long-running financial crisis. Before the COVID-19 lockdown, the Lebanese government was also dealing with anti-government protests against the country's ruling political class and endemic corruption. The economy has been in a free fall for about a year, and as the Lebanese currency has plummeted, food prices have soared. Beirut's main port, now completely damaged, was vital for the import of much of Lebanon's food stocks, grains, and fuel. This has spurred fears of widespread food insecurity in the short term, as all the grain stored at the port has been destroyed.

CCA prays for the victims and their families at this time of their bereavement. As the entire country faces extremely tragic and painful moments, we urge all member churches and councils of CCA to pray for the comfort and solace of the numerous victims and their families. The impact of the explosion has revealed to the world the vulnerable situation in which the citizens of Lebanon are forced to now live. Even after the shock of the explosion fades away, the impact will be hard to fathom. Let us pray and hope that the people of Lebanon will overcome the grave crisis they are experiencing.

While this message of comfort and solidarity is conveyed to the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and its member churches, the Christian Conference of Asia joins the MECC in their prayer:

*"Beirut is devastated
Beirut is facing a tragedy
Let's stand together
Let's rescue the wounded and those who lost their homes
Let's pray for the victims
O God, have mercy on our beloved Lebanon and on its heartbroken people.
Do not hide Your face from us!"*

Dr Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA
5 August 2020