

The tragedy has more than a thousand face: blood and body parts everywhere, houses crumbling and shattered glass flying, children dying and firefighters charred in split seconds. The list goes on, losses increase by the hour as Beirut collapses in an unprecedented and resounding way. How can we describe the tragedy? How can we make sense of it? And how can we document it.

The Beirut Port carnage came to remind us of a civil war that we thought long over. This was a trying year for Lebanon with blood and destruction and an uncertainty as to how the year will end. During the past few months, we have witnessed the political and financial suffocation of the October 17 revolution, the unprecedented collapse of the value of the Lebanese pound, the bankruptcy of more than two-thirds of the Lebanese economic activity, the layoffs of tens of thousands of Lebanese and foreign workers, and the complete closure of the country due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Right before the carnage of August 4th, Beirut was already gasping for air under the weight of poverty, hunger and unemployment and now, it is hardly breathing from the toxic ammonium nitrate released into the air.

The shock effect manifested itself in different ways. Protesters set up mock gallows targeting the political class in Lebanon, others took over and occupied a number of ministries as well as the Association of Banks that deprived the Lebanese of their money. In addition, Martyrs' Square transformed into a field for brutal and bloody clashes with security forces who did not hesitate to use excessive violence against all forms of protests since Saturday August 8th. The Lebanese expressed their anger and despair at this corrupt regime and were determined to seek revenge, and not just hold the culprits accountable. The shock also manifested itself in other forms. Indeed, thousands of non-politicized youths attempted to absorb the trauma by taking the initiative to help people in affected neighborhoods, collapsed buildings, and hospitals suffering from their limited capacity to deal with the huge numbers of casualties. Mourning also manifested itself through the hundreds of civilian initiatives which were set up to provide food, clothes and shelter after months of seclusion and social protective measures due to the economic collapse, social distancing rules imposed by the pandemic and the fear of a gloomy future.

As the injured expressed their shock, the Lebanese political system tried to slow down its free fall and the disappearance of its legitimacy by receiving French President Emmanuel Macron and Turkish Vice President Fouad Oktay. The government also rushed to participate in a donor conference with French support, and made - as usual - a number of vacuous promises to establish a ministerial committee for a swift investigation and

early parliamentary elections. This ignited, once again, the anger of citizens at the system's reluctance, subversion and hesitation to carry out its responsibilities and duties.

In the face of this overwhelming sadness and anger, the Asfari Institute team decided to open its blog for activists, as well civilians and academics, to share their oral or written testimonies and opinions in the form of opinion articles. As we do this, we seek to open a platform for mourning and a space for solidarity in support the revolution and in order to encourage accountability mechanisms, even if these will take time to materialise.

This new section of the blog comes under the title "**Beirut: Anger and Solidarity**" to reaffirm the commitment of civil society in general and the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at the American University of Beirut in particular to support the process of political change in all its different pathways. We are hoping to reach out and support all those who have been affected by the catastrophe, whether materially or morally.

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