

Dear Caritas Australia staff and volunteers, and supporters

It is with great heartbreak that we learnt of the explosion in Beirut which killed over 100 people and wounded thousands. Lebanon has suffered multiple waves of conflict and disaster. A drawn-out civil war, followed by years of conflict with her neighbours, has been compounded by the strain on resources caused by the Syrian war and an influx of refugees. Tuesday's explosion came at a time when the country is already gripped by an economic crisis and reeling from the impacts of COVID-19. The situation is dire. Yet the Caritas network is on the ground, doing what it can to alleviate suffering by delivering emergency food and medical resources at a time of intense crisis.

Caritas Australia has committed to provide immediate response in the form of crucial financial support as part of its already established Middle East Regional Appeal. Additionally, through its in-country staff and partners in Lebanon, the wider Caritas network is working to deliver:

- Food and water.
- Hygiene kits including masks and soap.
- Material for shelter repairs and the clean-up of debris.
- Medication and other health services.

Currently Caritas Australia supports two programs in Lebanon, including a Protection program supporting shelters for women and children who are survivors of gender-based violence, and a Humanitarian program supporting Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese host communities. Caritas Australia has a weblink <https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/emergency-response/middle-east-emergency-appeal> for interested donors to support our current programs in Lebanon through our Middle East Regional Appeal. They can also call 1800 024 413.

At a time when prayer is so important, Sr Jo has written a beautiful prayer for the people of Lebanon, which is attached.

In solidarity,

Caroline Preston

Head of International Programs

PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE OF LEBANON

following the Beirut blast

God of Compassion,

You are strength to those who suffer and comfort to those who grieve.
We pray for the people of Lebanon in this time of disaster.
Embrace those who died so suddenly and console those
who grieve for loved ones.

United in solidarity with our Lebanese sisters and brothers we pray:
For healing and strength for those injured and suffering
That the international community will respond with generosity
and compassion
And that stability and peace will be restored in Lebanon.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

- Jo Brady RSJ Caritas Australia