

Anniversary of Beirut explosion: Foreign Secretary speech at Lebanon conference, August 2021

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

One year ago, Beirut was devastated by one of the largest ever non-nuclear explosions.

And today, we remember those who lost their lives, those who were injured, and those whose homes and livelihoods were destroyed.

Now, from the outset, the British government called on Lebanon's leaders to urgently and transparently investigate the blast and to hold to account those responsible.

One year later, we are no closer to justice.

The Lebanese people deserve better.

Lebanon's caretaker government must deliver on its promise.

The investigation should conclude swiftly and transparently.

There must be full accountability.

And those responsible for any criminal wrongdoing should face justice.

The international community stands with the people of Lebanon.

The UK was one of the biggest donors after the blast.

We helped the Lebanese Red Cross expand its first responder network.

We provided counselling and rehabilitation to over 1,500 people who suffered trauma or physical harm.

And we supported the most vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees with £20 million of funding to meet their basic needs in the aftermath of the blast.

Surveys by the Royal Navy ensured the port was brought quickly back into action.

Now, looking forward, we will continue to help the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces maintain their operational capability in order to counter terrorism and other forms of instability.

We will continue to help the most vulnerable in order to meet their basic

needs.

And we will invest in Lebanon's future, promoting governance reform and more inclusive politics.

To truly address the root causes of Lebanon's crisis, its leaders must act.

Of course, that includes the new PM-designate, Najib Mikati.

Lebanon's leaders must deliver transparency and accountability for the victims of that terrible blast.

They must hold timely elections.

But action cannot just wait for those elections to happen.

The cost of delay would be itself a humanitarian crisis.

We need to see a capable government in place immediately, and essential reforms being properly implemented.

The international community stands ready to assist if the Lebanese politicians follow this path.

But if they fail, Lebanon's friends must look at how we can tackle the corruption that has seen narrow vested interests placed above the needs of the people.

And that's our commitment.

We stood with the Lebanese people a year ago.

We continue to stand with them today as they strive for the future that they deserve.

Thank you.