

## **STATEMENT – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Perpetrators Still At Large 30 Months After Beirut Explosion**

#### **Activists in Lebanon & the Diaspora Unite in Calling for Immediate International Sanctions Against Individuals Obstructing Justice**

January 30th, 2023 – In a joint appeal supporting Judge Tarek Bitar’s investigation into the Beirut Port Explosion, we, the undersigned groups and organizations in Lebanon, as well as Lebanese diaspora groups all around the world <sup>1</sup> urge the governments of the European Union countries, Australia, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States to take prompt measures and impose sanctions to hold the perpetrators accountable in the August 4<sup>th</sup> 2020 Beirut Explosion, several of whom have been relentlessly trying to obstruct justice and enjoy impunity despite the efforts of Judge Tarek Bitar to subpoena these suspects for questioning.

Our global appeal for immediate international action follows calls for accountability by the Lebanese Judges’ Association, the Beirut Bar Association, and more than 40 Lebanese MPs, some of whom have been staging an open-ended sit-in inside Parliament in protest of the wider breakdown of the rule of law and constitutional order in Lebanon.

The Beirut Explosion investigation has been facing several obstructions by various political actors in Lebanon. Attempts to intimidate and overthrow the investigative judge, Judge Tarek Bitar, include death threats, a travel ban, and counter charges filed against him. The General Prosecutor, Ghassan Oueidate, who tried to dismiss Judge Bitar, had previously refused to appear when summoned for questioning in the same investigation. Furthermore, Mr. Oueidate completely disregarded the principle of independence of the judiciary and acted in violation of articles 356, 357 and 362 of Lebanon’s Code of Criminal Procedures which do not allow the dismissal of the investigating judge Tarek Bitar, and which empower Judge Bitar to summon any official for questioning without prior authorization, in effect granting the judge the powers of the General Prosecutor in relation to the criminal case at hand. Other forms of obstruction that the investigation faced include officials not showing up when subpoenaed, judicial and administrative stalling tactics, as well as the use of violence by some political actors. As a result

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<sup>1</sup> Diaspora groups present in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Kuwait, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States, as well as in Africa, and Latin America.

of this breakdown of the rule of law, families of victims have not yet been given neither justice nor closure, while suspects and Politically Exposed Persons enjoy impunity.

Our call for international sanctions is due to the Lebanese state's failure to comply with its international obligations as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights & the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, which Lebanon is party to.

**Consequently, we hereby call upon the international community to:**

- Impose immediate financial and travel sanctions against all those who are obstructing the investigation and access to justice in the Beirut Explosion, and whose corrupt behaviour is undermining the rule of law. Several political and security officials, in addition to some members of the judiciary, publicly expressed their contempt of the investigation and/or refused to comply with the investigating judge's summons; (A non-exhaustive list\* of names of those officials is found below)
- Exert pressure on the Lebanese Authorities to ensure the safety of Judge Bitar and to cease all harassment and intimidation directed towards him;
- Pressure the Lebanese Authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure that this crucial domestic investigation proceed without any political interference, in order to provide redress for violations of the right to life;
- Request a United Nations Human Rights Council fact-finding mission to support the investigation.

We, the undersigned groups and organizations in Lebanon and the diaspora, stand united in support of Judge Bitar and the families of Beirut Explosion victims, who are seeking justice for more than 220 men, women and children killed, over 7000 more injured, and hundreds of thousands of residents who were displaced by one of the most powerful powerful non-nuclear blasts in history.

(\*) Non exhaustive list of individuals who took measures to obstruct justice, including refusing to comply with the investigating judge's summons in the Beirut explosion investigation:

1. Ghazi Zeaiter, former Minister of Public Works;
2. Nohad Machnouk, former Minister of Interior;

3. Hassan Diab, former Prime Minister;
4. Antoine (Tony) Saliba, Director General of State Security;
5. Abbas Ibrahim, Director General of General Security;
6. Ghassan Oueidate, General Prosecutor;
7. Ghassan Khoury, judge;
8. Joseph (Youssef) Fenianos, former Minister of Public Works;
9. Ali Hassan Khalil, former Minister of Finance.

**Signatory groups in the diaspora:**

- 1- Lebanese-Swiss Association
- 2- Meghterbin Mejtemiin/United Diaspora
- 3- Lebanese International Lobby
- 4- DART/Diaspora Action Round Table
- 5- TLDN/The Lebanese Diaspora Network
- 6- ALIF/American-Lebanese International Federation
- 7- Associazione dei Libanais a Ferrara
- 8- Committee of the UNSCR for Lebanon
- 9- Coopération Franco-Libanaise
- 10- Expatriates for Lebanon
- 11- LDX/Lebanese Diaspora Exchange
- 12- Lebanese in Norway
- 13- Lebanon Hub in Australia

- 14- Li-Haqqi Diaspora
- 15- MCLM/Mouvement des citoyens libanais du monde
- 16- Our New Lebanon (USA)
- 17- Shamaluna Australia
- 18- TeamHope
- 19- Together for Lebanon (Germany)
- 20- United Lebanese League (USA)
- 21- Wassel Sawtak (Canada)
- 22- “17 WALC”/World Australian Lebanese Council

**Signatory groups and organizations in Lebanon:**

- 23- Beirut Port Explosion Victims' Families Association
- 24- Al-Marsad al-Shaabi
- 25- Ettihad Thuwwar al-Shammal
- 26- Liqaa Teshrin
- 27- Lubnan al-Taghyir
- 28- Intafed
- 29- Madinati
- 30- Mustamerroun Nahwa al-Taghyir – Ain Zehalta
- 31- Reform
- 32- Sarkhet Shaab
- 33- Taqaddom



LEBANESE INTERNATIONAL LOBBY



إحقي الإغتراب

جَمْعِيَّة أَهْلِيَّ حَبْرَايَا إِنْفِجَارَ مَرْفَأَ بَيْرُوتَ



THE LEBANESE DIASPORA UNITED FOR LEBANON



Expatriates For Lebanon

TEAM HOPE



انتفض



تقدم PROGRESS