



[Lebanese Government Resigns in the Aftermath of Last Week's Explosion in Beirut](#)

Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab announced his government's resignation following public outrage and protests over last week's deadly Beirut port explosion. After addressing the nation, Diab visited the presidential palace where the move was formally accepted by President Michel Aoun. In the meantime, until new elections are held, Diab's government will stay on in a caretaker capacity. The administration's resignation was prompted by widespread protests calling for regime change and criticism of its negligent handling of the over 2,700 tons of ammonium nitrate which resulted in the catastrophic explosion. The massive blast destroyed much of Beirut's port, one of the country's main economic hubs, and caused largescale devastation across the capital city.

In his remarks announcing the resignation, Diab attempted to align himself with the protesters and their frustrations, as he blamed the country's problems on chronic corruption: "I discovered that the system of corruption was bigger than the state and that the state is bound by this system, and that it is not possible to confront it or get rid of it." For the time being, Diab will remain in his post while the political parties represented in parliament consult with the Lebanese president to choose a new prime minister. Since temporary caretakers usually lack the political backing to pursue significant policies, the country's government is likely to become even less responsive until a new cabinet is officially in place – a process that could take several months.

Public outrage directed at government officials is amplified by the fact that Lebanon is facing its worst economic crisis in modern history. The country is afflicted with high rates of unemployment, rising prices, and a plummeting currency. The Lebanese pound has lost 80% of its value since last Fall as many have lost jobs and been forced to shut down businesses. Protesters blame the ruling elite for continued mismanagement and corruption, which manifested itself in last week's deadly Beirut port explosion. The impact from the blast killed more than 150 people, wounded over 6,000, and left thousands more homeless.

Despite Diab's announcement, demonstrations across the capital city of Beirut continue as residents demand the dismantling of Lebanon's entire political elite and the system which has been plagued with rampant corruption. The country's political structure is beholden to its system of consensus government, which divides leadership among the nation's various demographic groups. Lebanon has a power-sharing set-up whereby different groups are each represented by an arm of the government. The political system mandates that the presidency must go to a Christian, the prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament must be a Shiite Muslim. While it aims to ensure that no sector of society is left out of the political process, this structure has often resulted in political gridlock and patronage, with parties looking out for their own interests as opposed to the interests of the entire country as a whole. Additionally, the split-up nature of Lebanon's governmental system has made it extremely difficult for citizens to organize effectively against those in power and secure positive and meaningful political change when necessary.