



[A Major Explosion Rocks the Lebanese Capital City of Beirut](#)

A major explosion rocked the Lebanese capital of Beirut this week, after nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded near the city's port. At least 137 people have been confirmed dead, with another 5,000 injured and dozens unaccounted for. Lebanon's President Michel Aoun confirmed that the ammonium nitrate that caused the explosion was not stored safely, and he expected repercussions for those responsible. The blast happened during a precarious time for Lebanon, amid a steepening economic crisis and disintegrating public trust in government officials. The destruction of Beirut's port is likely to cause additional problems, as Lebanon is heavily dependent on imports and exports flowing through the port.

The explosion in Beirut occurred on Tuesday evening at around 6pm local time, with multiple videos of the blast going viral on social media. It was not immediately clear what the cause of the explosion was, with several reports originally mentioning the possibility of a fireworks depot exploding. However, it soon became clear that fireworks were not the cause, and Lebanon's government announced it was due to ammonium nitrate. Ammonium nitrate has the potential to be highly explosive, and is therefore dangerous to store in certain areas. Public court documents and emails from Lebanese officials show that the authorities were aware that a shipment of thousands of tons of ammonium nitrate had been confiscated near Beirut's port and was being stored at the port. The stockpile was once referred to as a "floating bomb" and Lebanon's government was aware of its presence for six years.

The revelation that governmental incompetence was partially at fault for the blast has increased public frustration toward the government in Lebanon. Widespread governmental corruption and incompetence has plagued Lebanon, which finds itself in the midst of an economic crisis that has been further exacerbated by the spread of COVID-19. The explosion will almost certainly deal a heavy blow to Lebanon's economy, evidenced by economy minister Raoul Nehme claiming that every business and apartment in Beirut was impacted in some way by the blast. Additionally, 90% of the city's hotels were damaged according to state media, and 300,000 people were displaced after their homes were destroyed. Deepening the crisis, 60% of all Lebanon's imports enter the country via the Beirut port. With the catastrophic damage to it, vital supplies such as food and medicine will be increasingly difficult to obtain.

Lebanese authorities have placed several port officials under house arrest while the government conducts a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding the explosion. President Michel Aoun pledged that those responsible would face "severe punishment." Director-General of the Beirut port Hassan Kraytem stated that he was aware that dangerous materials were being stored at the port, but he was unaware of the volume and volatility of the materials. Additionally, Lebanon's customs director said his officials had written to the relevant authorities on six separate occasions requesting that the ammonium nitrate be removed from the Beirut port, but all correspondence went unanswered.