

How can the Lebanese authorities be the judge and the accused?

Victims of the August 4th explosion call for justice in a new report released today by Legal Action Worldwide

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BEIRUT: International human rights NGO Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) says an independent and impartial fact-finding mission must be established immediately to investigate the root causes of the devastating port explosion in Beirut, which killed more than 200 people and injured 7,000.

LAW's Executive Director, Antonia Mulvey, says "justice cannot be delivered if the investigation remains solely with Lebanese authorities."

"There is no reason that victims and their families should trust a system which, as the UN describes it – is deeply flawed," she says.

"Victims cannot be a 'test' case in order to show that 'truth' can be delivered when history has shown that this is not possible."

The report has been submitted to the United Nations and key member states, and comes as the United Nations Security Council is set to discuss Lebanon on Tuesday.

LAW, alongside Lebanese international lawyer Nada Abdelsater, supports a group of more than one thousand victims from the explosion. She says, "LAW's report proves that this explosion is the most dramatic expression of Lebanon's endemic corruption."

The report is the first comprehensive overview of all publicly available facts and provides compelling victims statements, some of whom said;

"Why didn't they tell us and why did they not remove the explosives"

Another said "I ask these officials, if it were your children, how would you have acted? What would you have done?"

The victim's five requests are:

1. To immediately dispatch an independent fact-finding mission to establish the facts and root causes of the explosion;
2. The Lebanese Government must not destroy or block the gathering of evidence;
3. Victims are properly represented in any civil or criminal proceedings;
4. The United States, France and other member states who have conducted investigations into the explosion must release their findings;
5. The Lebanese Government must apologise to victims and consult them about establishing a memorial.

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