

The Director General launches from Beirut the international call "Li Beirut" to support education, culture and heritage

Paris, 27 August—The Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, on Thursday launched an international fund raising appeal, *Li Beirut* (For Beirut in Arabic), to support the rehabilitation of schools, historic heritage buildings, museums, galleries and the creative economy, all of which suffered extensive damage in the deadly explosions that shook the Lebanese capital on 4 August.

As she launched *Li Beirut*, the Director-General expressed the unflagging solidarity of UNESCO with the people of Lebanon.

"UNESCO, of which Lebanon is a founding member, stands at their side to mobilize the international community and support the city's recovery for and through culture, heritage and education" Ms Azoulay declared.

The Director-General emphasized UNESCO's commitment to applying the highest internationally recognized professional and management standards in coordinating support for education and culture in the framework of UN assistance to Lebanon. *"I solemnly call for the historic centre to be protected – through administrative measures and appropriate regulations – to prevent property speculation and transactions taking advantage of residents' distress and vulnerability," she added.*

In addition to coordinating UN efforts to support education in Beirut, which will require \$23 million, UNESCO has committed to the immediate rehabilitation of 40 of the 159 affected schools with funds it has already raised. In the coming months, UNESCO will prioritize funding for schooling and distance learning, an urgent issue for the 85,000 affected students. *"We must focus on education, because it is a major concern for families and it is where Lebanon's future will be played out,"* said the Director-General. To this end, the [Global Education Coalition](#), put in place by UNESCO during the early weeks of the COVID-19 crisis, will hold a Special Session on the situation in Lebanon on 1 September.

UNESCO will also lead international coordination efforts for the recovery and reconstruction of Beirut's culture and heritage and raise funds to respond to the crisis affecting the cultural sector. *"We must protect the spirit of the city, even as we work to rebuild it. We must build back – but, more importantly, we must build back well. This means protecting the unique heritage of these neighbourhoods, respecting the city's history, and supporting its creative energy,"* said Ms Azoulay. According to preliminary estimates, \$500,000,000 are needed to support heritage and the creative economy over the coming year, with museums, galleries and cultural institutions expected to experience substantial losses in revenues. UNESCO will conduct priority interventions to stabilize, secure and safeguard several historic buildings located in the most affected neighbourhoods.

As part of these actions, Ms Azoulay said, *"We are determined to mobilize the international community both for built heritage and museums, and for the hard-hit creative sector, by*

supporting artists and cultural professionals, whom UNESCO will also bring together in three [ResiliArt](#) debates in September.” To finance these operations on the ground, a UNESCO donors' conference for Beirut will be organized before the end of next month.

During her two-day visit, the Director-General took stock of the situation through meetings with artists, members of the cultural sector and creative industries, including NGOs and local partners.

Donate to Li Beirut <https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/beirut/libeirut>

More about UNESCO's work for Beirut: <https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/beirut/libeirut>

Global Education Coalition <https://fr.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/globalcoalition>

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