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Beirut licks visible wounds from explosion, but scars remain



Sources: Naiz

This Thursday marks two years since the explosion of the port of Beirut, which left more than 200 dead. The wounds are gradually closing, but the scars remain.

Elias has been able to rebuild his apartment and equip it with self-made belongings, but the house attached to his remains in ruins on the second anniversary of the [Beirut explosion](#), originated next to this humble neighborhood that many residents decided to abandon and that never became the same again.

The streets of Karantina, adjacent to the capital port where the deflagration that on August 4, 2020 caused more than 200 deaths and 6,500 injuries was generated, are practically empty, except for some young people who chat at a junction sitting on their motorcycles and some man who takes advantage of the shade of a cornice or a tree.

One of the boys says that the neighbourhood is now inhabited mainly by Syrian refugees and that most Lebanese families moved after the explosion, whose footprint is still visible in some abandoned buildings in this area confined between the sea and a highway.

"All my neighbors left; they came after the explosion, cleaned the house and left [...] Not many people came to live in the area since then," confirms to Efe the resident Elias, 52 years old and Syrian nationality, but settled in Lebanon since his youth.

Limited state aid

Sitting in the same room where he was surprised by the explosion two years ago, he explains how he was thrown to the door and how the fact that it burst inward saved his life.

Not all residents of Karantina suffered the same fate that fateful afternoon, when Elias had to help transport the bodies of his own neighbors.

"My apartment was severely damaged: the windows, the windows, the fridge, the washing machine, the kitchen in general was destroyed and the balcony on the other floor. As you can see, the decoration of the house is all made by me, there was nothing left," he says before showing on his mobile phone images of the destruction.

In his case, he received two payments worth \$200 in official aid from the Lebanese Army, one for each of his flats heavily affected by the deflagration. From the NGOs that contacted him after the disaster, he obtained food assistance. "I'm talking about my personal case, not the whole neighborhood," Elias insists.

Many Beirutis had to rebuild their homes on their own or supported only by humanitarian organizations, which carried the bulk of the aid provided to those affected by the tragedy amid the severe economic crisis unleashed in the country at the end of 2019.

On the part of the authorities, the Lebanese Army distributed in total the equivalent of about 6.7 million dollars at the exchange rate in the parallel market, reaching just over 27,000 housing units, of the at least 200,000 damaged or destroyed in the city and its suburbs, according to official data.

After the tragedy, Elias worked as a plumber with an NGO and helped them set up water tanks for the citizens. "I helped people and people helped me, but I lost a lot in this neighborhood," he acknowledges.

Living with trauma

A few streets from their home, four Syrian families still share the same flat they resided in on August 4, 2020.

The 20, including several children, survived with only minor injuries, but lost all their appliances and the apartment was badly affected, damages that they were able to fix thanks to the help of non-governmental organizations, Abdulá, 28, told EFE.

Above the entrance door there is a white sticker with an identification number, as in those of thousands of other homes visited by the Army during the months they spent inspecting the damage in the areas hit by the shock wave.

However, Abdullah assures that more than nine months have passed since members of the military institution visited his home and have not yet been given any help.

Children are frightened when they see smoke rising from the nearby ruins of silos located in the harbor, where a fire caused by the fermentation of wheat scraps has been active for weeks, but they have had to learn to live with the trauma and fear of another explosion.

"It's very difficult for us to move into another apartment, the rents are very high and everyone is asking for the money in dollars, at least 200 or 250 dollars. Here we are paying about 100 dollars, because our salary is in Lebanese lira and there is no good workflow," says the young man.

Source: <https://www.naiz.eus/es/info/noticia/20220803/beirut-se-lame-las-heridas-visibles-de-la-explosion-pero-las-cicatrices-permanecen>

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