Yesterday, a massive explosion—measuring 3.3 magnitude on the Richter scale and felt as far away as Cyprus—struck the port of Beirut. While search and rescue operations continue throughout the city, there are currently at least 135 dead and more than 5,000 wounded. According to the governor of Beirut, the blast damaged half of the city, leaving about 300,000 homeless and causing $3 billion to $5 billion worth of damages. Lebanon’s prime minister, Hassan Diab, blamed the explosion on the ignition of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, which had been stored in an unsecured fashion in a warehouse for six years.

The pairing of damage done to the healthcare system, along with the massive influx of patients, is of great concern in Beirut. Some city hospitals were damaged so severely by the explosion that they can’t treat blast victims. According to a New York Times article, at least four hospitals were too damaged to admit patients. All other hospitals are overwhelmed. Healthcare workers were reportedly among the killed, and nurses and doctors are in high demand. There also are worries about acute shortages of medicines, medical supplies and equipment, because facilities that stored them were heavily damaged in the blast.

**International Medical Corps in Lebanon**

International Medical Corps has approximately 250 staff in the country—with more than 100 in Beirut—and partnerships with 50 primary healthcare centers (PHCCs). Currently, we support access to primary healthcare services for Syrian refugees at 50 facilities across the country (in Bekaa, Beirut and Mount Lebanon, Akkar, and other areas in the north and south), including 34 PHCCs, seven health dispensaries, three community centers, one social development center and five safe spaces.

International Medical Corps has operated in Lebanon since 2006. In 2011, we were the first health organization to begin providing services for Syrian refugees in north Lebanon, following the influx of Syrian refugees into the country. Today, International Medical Corps provides health, community health, mental health and gender-based violence services to displaced Syrians and vulnerable Lebanese and other nationalities. Recently, our Lebanon team began providing services for people with disabilities and has recently completed structural alterations to several primary healthcare facilities to make them more accessible.

---

3. Ibid.
International Medical Corps Response

With the number of staff and partnerships in the country, International Medical Corps is well-positioned to support the urgent and ongoing relief efforts in Beirut. In addition to staff on the ground, we have an undamaged warehouse in Beirut, where we store prepositioned medical supplies and personal protective equipment. These supplies will be critical to the response in Lebanon, as initial reports suggest that the blast threatens the country's vaccine, medical supply and reproductive health supplies, which were stored half a mile from the blast site. We also have three mobile medical units (MMUs) based outside Beirut that are being deployed to support operations in the city. Among other services, these MMUs will house staff that can provide mental health and psychosocial support interventions and potential child protection services. We are beginning to supply medical facilities with medical supplies, medical equipment and surge capacity depending on their needs, which are still being assessed.

International Medical Corps has put an emergency response work plan in place and is currently working with the respective authorities and other INGOs to coordinate response efforts, within the guidelines that will soon be provided by the Ministry of Health (MoH). The plan includes providing medical supplies, medical equipment, PPE, trauma-related medicines, medical kits, hygiene kits, referral services and equipment through our 15 operating PHCCs and MMUs, as an immediate response to the affected hospitals in the area and supporting the primary healthcare system. As the situation evolves, International Medical Corps will consider the entire continuum of care—including mental health and psychosocial support—for people who have been traumatized, specifically for people with disabilities and children, who are often neglected in such traumatic events.

We will continue to work closely with the MoH and other agencies to provide much-needed support to Lebanon as it deals with a number of challenges, including the explosion, the ongoing financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.