

Over 60 still missing in Beirut as search operations continue



Beirut, August 8 (RHC)-- More than 60 people are still missing four days after a massive explosion in Beirut on Tuesday, a Lebanese health ministry official says.

"The number of dead is 154, including 25 who have not yet been identified," the official told AFP on Saturday. "In addition, we have more than 60 people still missing." Lebanese Health Minister Hamad Hassan said on Friday the explosion also left some 5,000 people injured.

According to Lebanese officials, the explosion of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, a substance used in making fertilizers and explosives, stored in a warehouse at the port in Beirut caused the disaster.

The United Nations said up to 100,000 children are among the 300,000 people made homeless, including many who have been separated from their families.

The explosion has generated a mix of shock and anger in Lebanon and seen French President Emmanuel Macron to make an uninvited visit to the country, prompting comparisons with the country's "colonial" past.

A large supply of confiscated explosive material that had been stored in a warehouse at the city's port for the past six years is suspected to have caused the massive explosion, the biggest to ever hit the Middle

East, but investigators have only just started to look into what happened.

On Friday, Lebanese President Michel Aoun dismissed calls for an international probe into the devastating Beirut port chemical explosion that shook the capital, stating that such attempts are meant to “dilute the truth.”

“There is no meaning for any verdict if it takes too long to be issued and the judiciary must be swift, because belated justice is not justice then,” Aoun told a press conference.

He added: “Just like all Lebanese people, I’m angry about the blast that occurred at the port and our goal today is to unveil the truth. No one can push me to commit a mistake, no matter whether we are in a state of war or peace, and no one can prevent me from disclosing facts.”

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