



Introduction

Once known as the 'Paris of the Middle East', Beirut is the capital city of Lebanon, a small country on the Mediterranean coast, west of Syria. It is one of the oldest cities in the world, having been inhabited for more than 5,000 years. The first historical mention of Beirut can be found in the Amarna letters of Egypt, which date back to the mid 1300s BC.

For fifteen years, Beirut, along with the rest of Lebanon, was devastated by civil war. The city has almost recovered from this and from the war with Israel in 2006. Now, however, it struggles economically thanks to the huge influx of refugees from neighbouring Syria. Beirut is unique in that it is a city divided. It has Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims and Christians, all living in different areas and not mixing. There are only a handful of cities like this worldwide.

About Beirut

Population: 2.2 million

Religion: Muslim (Shia, Sunni, Alawi, Druze) and Christian (including Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Protestant Evangelical, Armenian Orthodox).

Ethnic groups: Arab (95%), Armenian (4%), other (1%)

Geographical size: 26 sq miles / 67 sq kilometres

Location: On a peninsula at the midpoint of Lebanon's Mediterranean coast.

Key historical events: Destroyed by Diodotus Tryphon, 140 BC. Conquered by Romans, 64 BC. Ravaged by earthquake, AD 551. Conquered by Muslims, AD 635. Syrian Protestant College, now American University of Beirut, established 1866. Became capital of (now independent) Lebanon, 1943. Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990. Prime Minister Rafic Hariri assassinated, 2005, followed by the Cedar Revolution, which led to withdrawal of 14,000 Syrian soldiers

Challenges

People

Many people are thinking or dreaming of leaving Lebanon because of the bad economic and political situation. With one refugee for every four nationals, Lebanon has the highest number of refugees per capita in the world.

Seekers

Most are not in churches because most churches are not welcoming to believers from a Muslim background (BMBs). Beirut is very segregated, and Muslims and Christians do not really mix. Seekers and believers need established groups and churches that they can join.

Team

Workers are taking time with individuals to disciple BMBs until the local church is ready to accept and trust them. They think it is better for the future of the country to have one strong, healthy church than to have a church divided between those from Christian background and those from Muslim background.



Prayer points

Pray that:

- ▶ God would bring peace and stability to Beirut and the country of Lebanon. Pray against war and conflict.
- ▶ Church leaders would have a vision to preach the gospel to all Lebanese people.
- ▶ A new partnership with some other media organisations would help the church to find more true seekers.
- ▶ Pray that workers would make the most of every opportunity to share Jesus' love with refugees.
- ▶ Pray against emotional fatigue. Listening to people's often harrowing stories and trying to bring comfort to those who have been traumatised is draining.
- ▶ Pray for those who want to return to Syria but fear the consequences. Will they be seen as deserters?

One last thing...

Re-entering Beirut one month from the blast, one worker said:

'We see the reality of the situation and the tragedy of so many people. We walked around downtown at the weekend and saw how whole neighbourhoods have been destroyed, and how streets that used to buzz with people, restaurants, cafes are all shut down because of the damage.'

Workers are seeking ways to support their community at this time, as many people lost homes in the recent blast. Please pray for them as they help with practical needs, including at the local hospital, and seek to be God's hands and feet. May He show them more ways to bring Christ's light and hope in these difficult times.

Thank you for praying with us.

[Click here to visit our website and pray for more cities in the Arab world.](#)

