

H.E. [Permanent Representative]
Permanent Representative of [HRC Member State]
United Nations Human Rights Council
Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland

4 August 2022

RE: Request for a United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution to establish an independent and impartial fact-finding mission to investigate the Beirut Port Explosion of August 4, 2020

Dear [Permanent Representative],

We, Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), write to you on behalf of 120 victims, survivors, and families of those injured and killed by the August 4, 2020, Beirut Port Explosion (the Explosion). We request your support for a United Nations Human Rights Council (UN HRC) Resolution to dispatch, an independent and impartial fact-finding mission, leveraging global expertise, to establish the facts and circumstances, including the root causes of the Explosion with a view to establishing state and individual responsibility and supporting justice for victims.

The Explosion, reportedly the most powerful non-nuclear explosion in history, ripped through Beirut after the detonation of around 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate – highly explosive material stored in the port of Beirut since 2013, with the knowledge of many high-ranking Lebanese officials, who had been made aware of the danger and took no action to prevent the loss of life, injury or destruction of land and property. The Explosion killed more than 220 people, injured approximately 7,000 people, and has left 150 people with permanent disability.

The failure of the domestic investigation has been extensively documented by [Legal Action Worldwide](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), and the [International Commission of Jurists](#). Two years have passed since the Explosion and the domestic investigation remains deeply flawed and stagnant. For example, Lebanon's domestic investigation has been suspended four times for approximately eight months in total with more than 25 different requests filed to dismiss the current Judge Bitar and other concerned judges from their duties by politicians and government officials within a context of multiple political and security threats. In the absence of an effective domestic investigation: victims, survivors, and families of those injured and killed are requesting an independent fact-finding mission to investigate. LAW has identified 50 requests for an impartial and independent investigation into the events that led to the explosion from a cross section of victims; organisations, Member States and individuals including; UN senior officials including Special Rapporteurs and independent experts, the Beirut Bar Association, Lebanese religious leaders, Lebanese members of parliament and prominent human rights organizations.

The victims, survivors, and their families, have been requesting an independent investigation for nearly two years now. In December 2021, they submitted a letter (Annex II) to the UN Secretary General who has stated that it is not possible to establish a Board of Inquiry and in March 2022, another [letter](#) (Annex III) was submitted to the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights which remains unanswered. It is vital to achieve justice and uncover the truth, not only for victims, survivors, and their families but also for a new Lebanon, which cannot be built on the absence of rule of law and accountability.

We now urge you to exercise your mandated authority and power as a UN HRC member state. Firstly, by issuing a statement of support for the victims, survivors, and families of those killed and injured in the Explosion and their request for the truth and an independent investigation and secondly, to table a resolution at the 51st Human Rights Council session which calls for the establishment of an independent, impartial fact-finding mission to investigate:

- alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law in the context of the 4 August Beirut explosion, whether before, during or after the explosion;
- to establish the facts and circumstances of the alleged violations and abuses;
- to identify responsibility for such violations and abuses, including those most responsible;
- to make recommendations, in particular on identifying legal responsibility for human rights violations and abuses, with a view to protecting civilians against further violations and abuses; and
- and to present an oral update thereon to the Council at its 52nd session and a final, written report at its 53rd session.

The victims, survivors and their families deeply appreciate your action on this issue.

CC – Ambassador/General Consul of [member state] in Lebanon

Yours sincerely,

Antonia Mulvey

Executive Director of Legal Action Worldwide

The victims, survivors, and families of those injured and killed by the August 4, 2020, Beirut Port Explosion which we are writing on their behalf:

~ 120 signatures from the victims and survivors of the Beirut Port Explosion, along with their families, including the families of the firefighters

ANNEX I – Timeline of the Domestic Investigation

Date	Update
4 August 2020	An explosion occurred in the Beirut Port at 6 PM.
5 August 2020	An administrative committee was formed to conduct an investigative into the causes of the explosion and present its findings to the Council of Ministers. The Committee did not issue any reports and seems to have stopped its work after the Council’s resignation.
	French prosecutors open a probe into “involuntary injury” under jurisdiction to investigate acts abroad where French people are among the victims.
	Former Prime Ministers Najib Mikati, Fouad Siniora, Saad Hariri, and Tammam Salam, call for an international investigation into the explosion.
	Amnesty International call for international mechanism to investigate cause of Explosion.
6 August 2020	Human Rights Watch call for impartial expert probe of Beirut blast
	President of France Emmanuel Macron calls for an international investigation into the explosion.
9 August 2020	European Council President Charles Michel calls for an independent investigation into the explosion.
10 August 2020	Based on the recommendation of the Public Court of Cassation of referring the case to the Judicial Council, Judge Fadi Sawan was appointed as the Investigative Judge for the investigation into the explosion which marks the start of the domestic investigation
13 August 2020	30 independent experts of UN Human Rights Council Special Procedures call for a prompt, impartial, credible and independent investigation based on human rights principles.
14 August 2020	Press conference held by survivors and families of victims calling on the UN Security Council to launch an international investigation.
1 September 2020	By 1 September, a total of 25 individuals are arrested, including current and former public and security officers allegedly involved in the Explosion.
8 September 2020	Fire breaks out in Beirut port, leading to allegations of crime scene interference.
10 September 2020	A second fire breaks out in Beirut port, leading to allegations of crime scene Interference.
14 September 2020	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, calls for an impartial, independent, thorough and transparent investigation.
13 October 2020	The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation confirms it has reached no firm conclusion about what caused the August 4 explosion.
26 October 2020	The Head of the Beirut Bar, Melhem Khalaf having filed a criminal complaint on August 6, 2020, remits to Mr. Jan Kubis a letter addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations, requesting access to all available satellite photos by member states on the day of the explosion, and other information relating to the vessel Rhosus that carried 2,750 metric tons of military grade ammonium nitrate.
28 October 2020	The Beirut Bar Association presents 681 criminal law suits on behalf of the victims and their families before the Judicial Council and the General prosecutor, and another significant number of lawsuits are to follow
3 November 2020	Judicial investigator Fadi Sawan is informed that French experts have so far reached no conclusion on the cause of the blast.
13 November 2020	The Intelligence unit of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) Directorate prepared a report that was refused by judicial investigator Fadi Sawan. The report contained a summary of the investigations, violations, responsibilities, and suspects.
	UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jan KUBIS expressed his disappointment as the explosion has marked 100 days and the investigation still lacks transparency and information.

24 November 2020	State prosecutor Ghassan Khoury charged senior customs official Hani Hajj Shehadeh and former customs chief in Beirut, Moussa Hazimeh raising the number of individuals charged in connection with the explosion to 33, 25 out of which are under arrest.
25 November 2020	The judicial investigator sent a letter to the Parliament through the Public Cassation Court Prosecutor requesting to take action and appropriate measures regarding the responsibility of ministers for neglecting “what” contributed to the explosion of the port. He also asked the Parliament to do what deems appropriate in accordance with two articles of the Lebanese Constitution related to immunities and the right authority to prosecutor ministers.
2 December 2020	A retired customs officer, Munir Abu Rjeili was found dead inside his home in Qartaba. A “hypothesis” was made by media outlets that the cause of his “mysterious” death is related to the investigations of the Beirut port explosion.
3 December 2020	An official in the French presidency stated that Paris has handed the images to Lebanese authorities contrary to what was rumored in some media outlets. The source emphasized that the Lebanese government must therefore "disclose" the results of an investigation into the explosion and "make them public."
10 December 2020	Judge Fadi Sawan called Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab and former Finance minister Ali Hassan Khalil in for questioning next week, along with former Public Works ministers Ghazi Zeaiter and Youssef Finiano
14 December 2020	Zeaiter and Hassan Khalil said that they would not appear before Judge Sawan for questioning because “Sawan is violating constitutional principles.” The Prime Minister’s media office repeated Diab’s previous position, which “respects the Constitution that has been violated by Judge Sawan.” Former minister Youssef Fenianos won't appear before judge for questioning
15 December 2020	The Lebanese Parliament addressed a letter to the judicial investigator Fadi Sawan through the Public Cassation Court Prosecutor Ghassan Awaidat claiming immunity for members of the Parliament. The letter also stated that according to article 70 and 71 of the Lebanese Constitution, the Parliament must undertake the investigation, and in case of evidence former government ministers can be tried only by a special tribunal after they have been indicted by a two-thirds vote in Parliament.
16 December 2020	Judge Fadi Sawan postponed the interrogation of former ministers Ali Hasan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter, to January 4 th 2021, after they failed to show up.
18 December 2020	The judicial investigator in the Beirut Port explosion also accused the Management and Investment Administration of the Port of Beirut as a legal person, holding it criminally responsible for the crimes stipulated in Article 210 of the Lebanese Criminal Code.
5 January 2021	The two judges, Francois Elias and Roula Moussalem, presented a request to recuse themselves from the Court of Cassation in reference to the initial request submitted by the judicial investigator Fadi Sawan to recuse himself from the investigations of the port explosion, each for their personal reasons. The request presented by the two judges was presented before judge Roukoz Rizk who presides one of the Court of Cassation’s chambers
10 January 2021	The Criminal Court of Cassation headed by judge Jamal Al-Hajjar issued its ruling and rejected the claim submitted by former ministers Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter, in which they requested that the case be removed from the custody of Judge Sawan.
11 January 2021	The Court of Cassation denied Sawan’s request to stop the investigation and decided that the judicial investigator should resume his task. Yet, the judicial investigator decided to cancel a previously scheduled interrogation session despite the presence of relevant parties, and regardless of the situation of the detained suspects who have been in prison for a period of five months.
12 January 2021	The public prosecutor Ghassan Khoury received a letter from the Interpol confirming that, at his request which has been made in October 2020, it has issued the “red notices” for the arrest of the owner of the ship, Russian national, Igor Grechushkin, the captain of the ship, also Russian national, Borys Prokoshew, and Jorge Moreira, who is Portuguese. He allegedly sourced the ammonium nitrate from a Georgian factory, Rustavi Azot.

	The first investigative Judge of North Lebanon, Samaranda Nassar, has issued an indictment against the accused a number of individuals who are found guilty of perpetration or co-perpetration, or instigation, at a later stage of the investigation.
15 January 2021	The London shelf company Savaro Ltd owned by three influential Syrian businessmen, has been linked to ship carrying the ammonium nitrate which caused the explosion. The minister of Justice, Marie Claude Najem, stated that those allegations should be investigated along with any other information related to the Port explosion. She also indicated that those investigations are in the hand of the judiciary and that at the time being will remain confidential.
20 January 2020/2021	New information suggests that the ammonium nitrate that exploded at the port may have been intended for the Syrian government. A document obtained by Foreign Policy shows that the buyer was not FEM directly (Mozambique) but a firm registered in London called Savaro with ties to Syrian businessmen.
23 January 2021	Beirut blast investigator Fadi Sawan will seek international cooperation to probe possible links between sanctioned Syrian businessmen and the ammonium nitrate
2 February 2021	The Lebanese are calling for the establishment of a specialized international court, similar to the courts established in Yugoslavia and Rwanda.
3 February 2021	British parliament members have called for an investigation into a UK-registered firm that a Lebanese investigative journalist linked to the blast and to Syrians sanctioned by the United States
4 February 2021	The new US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian have issued a joint statement calling on Lebanon to form a “credible and effective” government and conduct a rapid investigation into the Aug. 4 explosion without political interference.
11 February 2021	Former Army Chief Jean Kahwaji appeared before the judicial investigator Fadi Sawan as a witness and confirmed that the army carried out all its duties in accordance with the law. Judge Sawan summoned for questioning the acting Director General of the Port, Bassem al-Qaissi, and Mustafa Baghdadi, the shipping agent for the MV Rhosus, the ship that transported the ammonium nitrate to Beirut in 2013
15 February 2021	Judge Fadi Sawwan summoned former minister of public works Youssef Fenianos and former customs chief at Beirut port, Moussa Hazmieh as defendants for questioning.
18 February 2021	Lebanon’s Court of Cassation has issued a decision to remove Judge Fadi Sawan as Investigative Judge over the Explosion.
20 February 2021	Judge Tarek Bitar was appointed as the new lead investigator of the Explosion and began his work on the same day.
22 February 2021	Strong Republic parliamentary delegation delivers to UN Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon a petition calling for an international investigation into the Explosion.
1 March 2021	U.S. Congress agreed to impose foreign investigators in the port explosion file because the US administration has no confidence in the Lebanese investigation, and this will lead to the internationalization of the investigation
3 March 2021	The Strong Republic parliamentary delegation meets with US Ambassador to hand her a copy of the memorandum submitted to the UN, demanding on behalf of the Lebanese people to establish an international fact-finding committee to follow up the investigation of the explosion.
8 March 2021	A delegation from the Strong Republic parliamentary delegation moved to the Russian ambassador, and request to demand an international investigation committee for the explosion.
10 March 2021	Judge Bitar issued judicial writs aiming to uncover “how the ammonium nitrate was purchased, the owners of the shipment and the companies involved.
25 March 2021	It was found that Savaro Ltd bought the ammonium nitrate from a Georgia-based factory and is reportedly linked to the Syrian regime. Judge Bitar is requesting from Switzerland, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Cyprus, and Germany to lift banking secrecy from the company’s accounts.
30 March 2021	Judge Bitar questioned the detained Customs chief, Badri Daher for seven hours.
31 March 2021	Bitar has also summoned former Defense Minister Yaacoub al-Sarraf for questioning.
10 April 2021	Minister of the Economy Raoul Nehme calls on the examining magistrate to exclude the possibility of a terrorist or bellicose act, in order to allow compensation by insurance to be

	released. His called fueled many including the families of victims and Melhem Khalaf, Head of the Beirut Bar Association.
13 April 2021	Two lawyers, Anthony Hachem and Imane Tabbara, yesterday requested the opening of a judicial investigation to the Attorney General at the Court of Cassation against Minister of the Economy, Raoul Nehmé, for "interference" aimed at attempting to orient the investigation in the direction of an accident.
15 April 2021	Six people detained in the Beirut port blast investigation will be freed after a judge approved their release.
	Judge Tarek Bitar sent a judicial request to authorities in Georgia to investigate the owners of "Rustavi Azot", which manufactured ammonium nitrate and sold it to a company in Mozambique through Savaro Ltd registered in the UK.
4 May 2021	Lebanon requests satellite images for site of port again.
17 May 2021	Judge Bitar questioned the acting director general of the port of Beirut, Bassem el-Kaïssi. The magistrate also postponed the interrogation of Mustapha Baghdadi, the maritime agent of the Rhosus ship due to being currently hospitalized.
22 May 2021	A fire broke out in an empty area in the Beirut port.
31 May 2021	Lebanon receives French report regarding the explosion.
4 June 2021	Judge Bitar reveals that the technical phase of the investigation is almost complete and that two more months would be needed to identify the causes of the explosion.
6 June 2021	Judge Tarek Bitar excluded the possibility that the explosion was caused by a "rocket attack".
15 June 2021	A group of international and regional rights groups urged member states of the UN Human Rights Council to establish an international investigative mission into the explosion via a Joint Letter to the Human Rights Council calling for an International Investigative Mission into the Beirut Blast.
	Judge Bitar investigates into the simulate welding operation that preceded the explosion. The three welders who carried out this mission have been arrested, along with the owners of the company that is responsible for welding works at the port
16 June 2021	A session brought together Judge Bitar and the families of the martyrs, during which judge Bitar informed them of the latest developments in the case, which will carry, before the 4th of August, a major development towards the indictment.
22 June 2021	The Judge Bitar referred to the Attorney General Ghassan Khoury requests for the release of thirteen of the nineteen people still detained. Judge Bitar continued his interrogations and heard the testimonies of five witnesses.
23 June 2021	Attorney General Ghassan Khoury ordered the release of seven people who were detained, most of them were junior port employees. The request to release senior employees was rejected.
29 June 2021	Judge Bitar will hear the testimony of two witnesses. The hearing of ten other witnesses who have not been heard before will continue, on June 30 th and July 1 st . The decision on requests for the release of 16 detainees will begin after the witness file is completed
2 July 2021	Judge Bitar said in an interview that he had asked parliament to lift the immunity of three of its former ministers, Ali Hasan Khalil, Ghazi Zeaiter, and Nouhad Mashnouq. Bitar also needs the permission of the Ministry of Interior to file charges against Lebanon's Head of General Security Abbas Ibrahim. He also asked the Prime Minister's office to approve pursuing a case against Tony Saliba, who led security operations at the port. He filed charges against an ex-army chief and other former security officials as well.
3 July 2021	Judge Bitar set a date to question as a suspect the caretaker prime minister, Hassan Diab, and the three former ministers on suspicion of homicide with probable intent and criminal negligence. He also asked the bar associations in Beirut and Tripoli, to lift the immunity that is conveyed by membership of Mr. Khalil, Mr. Zaiter and a former transportation minister, Youssef Finianos.
9 July 2021	The request from Judge Bitar to question Major General Abbas Ibrahim, head of the General Security, was rejected by caretaker Interior Minister Mohamed Fahmy.
19 July 2021	Amal Movement, Hezbollah and Future Movement have signed a petition to launch procedures whereby Parliament would interrogate the sitting MPs and former ministers, Nohad Machnouk, Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter, as well as former minister Youssef Fenianos — all of whom were called for questioning by the blast probe's lead investigator Tarek Bitar.

30 July 2021	President Michel Aoun said that he was ready to be heard by Judge Tarek Bitar, while the head of the Future Movement, Saad Hariri, is leading a force to demand the suspension of the immunities of all officials, head of state included.
2 August 2021	Judge Bitar had summoned the two military officials but only their lawyers appeared.
2 August 2021	The families of the victims of the explosion granted the Lebanese authorities a period of thirty hours to make "the right decision" concerning the lifting of the immunities of those responsible and the authorizations allowing them to appear in court to answer for their responsibilities.
4 August 2021	1 year since the Beirut Port Explosion. Thousands of Lebanese took to the streets to protest on the first anniversary of the explosion.
11 August 2021	Various parliamentary groups, more than half of the deputies, from different political backgrounds expressed their intention to boycott the parliamentary session to examine a possible indictment, before a parliamentary committee, of three deputies prosecuted by Judge Tarek Bitar. The Supreme Defense Council rejects the request for lifting the immunity of Head of State Security General Tony Saliba.
20 August 2021	Former Minister Youssef Fenianos was scheduled for questioning by judge Bitar, but police said they had been unable to reach him at his office or residence due to blocked roads and could not deliver the subpoena due to fuel shortages.
21 August 2021	Former Minister Youssef Fenianos, wanted for questioning over his alleged involvement in the Explosion, sparked anger for requesting anti-riot police to guard his daughter's wedding.
26 August 2021	Caretaker PM Hassan Diab fails to appear for his scheduled interrogation.
27 August 2021	Judge Tarek Bitar ordered security forces to ensure that Caretaker PM Hassan Diab appears for questioning on September 20 th . The Lebanese Parliament said that the Judge Tarek Bitar is incompetent to request the appearance of Caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab, following the issued warrant.
31 August 2021	Judge Bitar questioned former member of the Higher Council of Customs, Hani Hajj Shehadeh, after which he decided fit to issue an arrest warrant against him.
6 September 2021	Judge Bitar issued an arrest warrant against the former director of operations at the port of Beirut , Sami el-Hussein.
7 September 2021	Judge Bitar summoned former Minister Youssef Fenianos. The former minister's lawyer appeared before the magistrate and submitted admissibility arguments to try to prevent the legal proceedings from continuing. A new hearing has therefore been set for September 16.
13 September 2021	Judge Bitar questioned Former Army Chief Jean Kahwagi with the presence of his lawyer. The next hearing is set for September 28 th .
14 September 2021	Judge Bitar launched a new warrant against former Prime Minister Hassan Diab, after he changed his address following the formation of the new government. Prosecutor Ghassan Khoury forwarded the arrest warrant to the General Direction of the Internal Security Forces for implementation.
15 September 2021	A group of international and regional rights groups urged member states of the UN Human Rights Council to establish an international investigative mission into the explosion via a Joint Letter to the Human Rights Council calling for an International Investigative Mission into the Beirut Blast.
21 September 2021	Judge Bitar summoned former minister Ali Hassan Khalil for September 30 th and former ministers Ghazi Zeaiter and Nouhad Al Machnouk for October 1st.
22 September 2021	Judge Bitar postponed the questioning of former Prime Minister Hassan to October 4 th . Hezbollah sent Judge Bitar thinly veiled threats message to move up a gear in its attempts to put pressure on him after being repeatedly accused of politicizing the investigation and contesting the merits of his decisions to prosecute political and security figures.
27 September 2021	Judge Bitar was officially notified of the complaint lodged by MP Nouhad Machnouk before the Beirut Court of Appeal to demand that the investigation be entrusted to another judge, confirms a judicial source in L'Orient-Le Jour. Judge Bitar was suspended from the investigation. Judge Bitar cancelled the questioning of a former military intelligence general.
2 October 2021	US Congress Foreign Relations Committee: We demand the protection of investigative judges in the Beirut explosion case, and we are concerned about the role of Hezbollah in suspending the investigation.

4 October 2021	The Beirut Appeal Court rejected requests to remove Judge Bitar from investigation, which were presented by former ministers charged in the investigation.
5 October 2021	Judge Bitar resumed his work and set new dates for the interrogation of former Prime Minister Hassan Diab (October 28 th) and former ministers Ali Hassan Khalil (October 12 th), Ghazi Zwaiter (October 13 th) and Nohad Al-Machnouk (October 13 th).
8 October 2021	Former Minister and MP Machnouk's lawyer filed a lawsuit before the Criminal Court of Cassation to dismiss Judge Bitar from the investigation due to legitimate suspicion.
11 October 2021	The leader of Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah group Monday escalated his attack on the judge leading the probe into last year's port explosion, calling on authorities to replace him with a "truthful and transparent" investigator.
	Interior Minister rejects Judge Bitar's request for permission to prosecute Major General Ibrahim.
12 October 2021	The Lebanese Cabinet decided to continue investigations into the circumstances surrounding the explosion and approved a series of judicial and educational appointments, including members of the Constitutional Council.
13 October 2021	Judge Bitar was suspended again after two former ministers facing charges lodged a new legal complaint against him. This happened moments after Judge Bitar issued an arrest warrant for the former minister Ali Hassan Khalil, after not showing up for questioning.
	The Shiite duo ministers (Hezbollah and Amal Movement) called for the dismissal of Judge Bitar, either through cabinet or the Higher Judicial Council. They have threatened that if the Judge is not dismissed, they will dismantle the Cabinet.
	Protests took place in front of the Court of Justice, and others are scheduled to take place on October 14 th . Security measures are being taken around the vicinities of the Court of Justice.
14 October 2021	Court of Cassation rejected the request submitted by MPs Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter to dismiss Judge Bitar.
	A demonstration, called by Hezbollah and Amal Movement, was held in front of the Court of Justice calling for the removal of Judge Bitar from his duty as lead investigating judge. The demonstration escalated into gunfire in the vicinities of the Court of Justice, Tayounneh, and Ain el Remmeneh, after alleged snipers fired at the crowd. The Ministry of Health reported that 7 were killed and over 30 were wounded as a result of the hostilities.
15 October 2021	National Mourning Day following the Tayyouneh incident.
19 October 2021	Judge Bitar summoned two charged former ministers again, Nouhad Machnouk and Ghazi Zeaiter. Their interrogation is scheduled on the 29 th of October.
22 October 2021	Judge Bitar requested permission from the Higher Defense Council to interrogate head of State Security Major General Tony Saliba.
	The judge wrote the Court of Cassation's Public Prosecution Office to settle the dispute with Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi, over granting permission to prosecute Major General Abbas Ibrahim, after Bitar was denied his request on October 12, 2021.
25 October 2021	Cassation Prosecutor, Imad Kabalan, issued a decision dismissing the petition filed by former minister Fenianos against the dismissal of Judge Bitar.
	Justice Minister sends a letter to parliament affirming Judge Bitar's determination to continue with the investigation and prosecution of former ministers and current MPs.
26 October 2021	The Coalition for the Independence of the Judiciary condemned former ministers' continued evasion of the investigation.
27 October 2021	Former Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab filed a lawsuit against the Lebanese state over his prosecution by Judge Bitar, one day before a scheduled interrogation by the judge.
28 October 2021	Former minister Nohad Machnouk filed a lawsuit against the state to prevent Judge Bitar from interrogating him and to stall the investigation. Based on so, Judge Bitar must stop investigating Machnouk until the merits of the case are determined
	Former Ministers and MPs Ghazi Zeaiter and Ali Hassan Khalil filed a lawsuit for "grave mistakes" attributed to Judge Bitar.
29 October 2021	President Michel Aoun presented a formal request to Russia, via Ambassador Alexander Rudakov, for satellite images of the explosion.

4 November 2021	<p>The families of the port explosion victims organized a stand-in facing the immigrant statue at the port, to commemorate fifteen months since the explosion. They reiterated their trust and support of Judge Bitar and him being the only legitimate authority to prosecute suspects. The families also warned Judge Habib Mezher, who is looking into the request of Judge Bitar’s removal. They also called on the Public Prosecution Office, the Higher Defense Council, and the Interior Ministry to implement the arrest warrants and summons issued by Bitar</p> <p>Cassation Attorney General, Imad Kabalan notified all security forces of the arrest warrant issued by Judge Bitar against former minister Ali Hassan Khalil.</p> <p>Head of the Court of Appeals in Beirut, Judge Habib Mezher, issued a decision to temporarily stop Judge Tarek Bitar’s work on the investigation, until the Court decides on the request to remove him, submitted by former Minister Youssef Fenianos. Judge Mezher combined two recusal requests into one file in order to have authority to rule on Judge Bitar’s removal.</p> <p>Judge Bitar has been suspended from the investigations following a lawsuit filed by former minister Youssef Fenianos.</p>
5 November 2021	<p>The Court of Appeals confirmed that Judge Habib Mezher does not have the authority to rule on the request for Judge Bitar’s recusal, after Judge Mezher decided on his own to examine it. The court's ruling came after the lawyers of foreign victims of the Beirut explosion revealed Judge Mezher's efforts to bypass the law, in an attempt to undermine Judge Bitar and stop the port investigation. According to the lawyers, Judge Mezher’s authority is limited to examining the request to recuse Judge Nassib Elia, who was in turn in charge of ruling on the request for Bitar’s recusal. Based on so, the lawyers submitted a request to separate the two requests and return Judge Bitar’s case to the relevant authority.</p> <p>Former Minister Youssef Fenianos’s lawyer said that Judge Bitar is “psychologically unfit” to investigate the explosion considering that the Judge’s frequent meetings with the families made him emotionally affected by their cause.</p>
8 November 2021	<p>Former MPs Zeaiter and Khalil’s lawyer filed a lawsuit against the state before the Civil Court of Cassation asking to repeal a number of decisions among which are decisions issued by Judge Naji Eid, Counsellor Rosine Ghantous, Judge Janet Hanna and others.</p> <p>Three legal bodies took action against Judge Mezher: Lawyers of foreign victims filed two complaints before the Judicial Inspection Authority and the Higher Judicial Council citing legal violations in his decision to remove Judge Bitar. The group “people want to reform the system” filed a disciplinary complaint before the Judicial Inspection Authority to stop his work and suspend his membership to the Higher Judicial Council. They also asked the Public Prosecution Office to investigate him for moral fraud and attempt to breach the confidentiality of the investigation. The Bar Association submitted two reviews to the first president of the Courts of Appeal to protest Judge Mezher taking over Judge Bitar’s file and illegally appointing himself the sole decision maker.</p> <p>Head of Internal Security Forces, Major General Imad Osman refused to execute the in-absentia arrest warrant against former minister and MP Ali Hassan Khalil in the explosion case. He justified his decision based on him sending a request for clarification to the Judicial Council’s Attorney General for Article 40 of the Constitution, which stipulates that an MP cannot be arrested while Parliament is in session without its approval.</p> <p>Amal Movement’s Political Bureau held Judge Bitar responsible for distorting lawsuits in the port explosion file and claimed that they have martyrs’ blood on his hands (in reference to the Tayyouneh incident). The Bureau condemned the campaign against Judge Mezher. Amal Movement MP Ali Bazzi also criticized the campaign to be unjust.</p> <p>Former Minister Youssef Fenianos’s lawyer, Tony Frangieh, lost his cool when a number of lawyers asked to make copies of the two removal requests filed against Judge Bitar and Judge Elia. It was reported that he said, “I rule the Justice Palace with my shoe”. He claims to be upset of those lawyers’ claims and the court’s approval of this request</p> <p>The Coalition for an independent Judiciary demanded that Judge Mezher be referred to the disciplinary board considering that he has committed a “flagrant infringement on the jurisdiction of other judges”.</p>

9 November 2021	Former minister Youssef Fenianos filed a third removal request against Judge Rosine Hujaili a counsellor at the Beirut Court of Appeals who is looking into the claims against Bitar. Judge Mezher was informed that he will be removed from Judge Bitar’s case by the Head of the Court of Appeals.
10 November 2021	MPs Zeaiter and Khalil file a case against the state for “serious faults” committed by Beirut Appeals Court Judge Nassib Elia and two courts advisers.
22 November 2021	Russia sent satellite images to Lebanon from the day of the Beirut port explosion. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also expressed Russian companies’ interest in participating in rebuilding the infrastructure destroyed in the blast. Foreign Affairs Minister Abdallah Bou Habib received the satellite images and decided to have them over to the President.
23 November 2021	The Court of Appeals separated the two case files of Judge Nassib Elia and Judge Tarek Bitar while giving Judge Nassib Elia the sole authority to look into Judge Bitar’s removal request. The two case files were merged by Judge Mezher according to his own discretion by overstepping his authority.
25 November 2021	The Court of Cassation issued rulings on a number of lawsuits that halted the process of the investigations by dropping the legitimate suspicion charge filed against Judge Bitar by former minister Fenianos and offered a formal rejection of the lawsuits against the state filed by former PM Hassan Diab and MP Nohad Machnouk. It also removed Judge Ghassan Khoury, Judge Ghassan Oueidat's assistant, from the case, after the Beirut Bar Association, a plaintiff in the case, filed a lawsuit of legitimate suspicion against Khoury in early September
26 November 2021	Hezbollah’s leader Nasrallah lashed out at Judge Tarek Bitar’s investigation into the explosion, contending that it “will not reach the truth”. He also accused Judge Bitar of being biased and politicized
7 December 2021	Judge Bitar was informed of the Beirut Court of Appeals decision allowing to continue investigating the explosion.
10 December 2021	Several suspects who are detained in the Beirut explosion case filed a complaint to the UN on the grounds that the Lebanese government had detained them arbitrarily and illegally. The complaint is a protest for their detention since August 5, 2020 “without any reason other than that they occupy their current or previous positions”. The complaint was filed by Head of Customs Badri Daher, former Head of Customs Chafic Merhi, port Director-General Hassan Koraytem, customs authority director Hanna Fares, all of whom knew about the presence of the ammonium nitrate in the Beirut port before the explosion. Judge Bitar issued an arrest warrant against former minister Ali Hassan Khalil to the Public Prosecution Office and requested its immediate execution by relevant security authorities A new removal request was filed by the “Founding Committee of the Families of the Martyrs and Injured in the Beirut Explosion”.
14 December 2021	The Public Prosecution’s memo the ISF asked for the warrant against MP Ali Hassan Khalil to be implemented outside the Parliament’s regular session since the Parliament was in session that day.
17 December 2021	Judge Ghassan Khoury, Judge Ghassan Oueidat’s assistant, filed a claim before the Court of Cassation’s General Assembly against Judge Randa Kfoury and the advisers of the Sixth Chamber of the Court of Cassation “to correct the grave mistakes they committed”. Khoury considered that his removal obstructs the work of the public prosecution and subjects any judge to removal “for giving their opinion”.
20 December 2021	On the 2 nd day of the UN SG’s visit to Lebanon, he visited the port where he laid a wreath at the memorial for the victims of the explosion as a tribute. He also stresses that “ an impartial and transparent investigation into this tragic event is crucial to ensure justice” and that “the Lebanese people deserve to know the truth”. The SG described his visit to the port to be a very emotional moment. He also noted that he had been receiving messages from many victims demanding “the need for truth to be established, for the need for an independent investigation, that is able to produce that truth”. He said he fully understands their concerns and hoped that the country’s institutions will be able to guarantee that the truth will come to light.

23 December 2021	Judge Bitar has been suspended for the fourth time. The suspension comes after MPs Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter submitted a request for recusal before the Civil Court of Cassation, headed by Judge Naji Eid.
4 January 2022	Families of the victims commemorated the anniversary of the explosion under the slogan “Implement the Law” during a sit-in facing the port.
13 January 2022	The General Commission of the Court of Cassation is the relevant authority to look into the case against Judge Bitar which lead to his current suspension. With one of the members going on retirement, the Commission has lost legal quorum to continue its duties. The Commission can only resume its duties once a new member is appointed to the Commission. This means that the case against Judge Bitar cannot be looked into unless the Commission regains quorum.
15 January 2022	Members of the “Constituent Assembly of the Families of the Martyrs, Wounded, and Victims of the Beirut Port Explosion” called for the removal of Judge Bitar after their meeting with the head of the Supreme Judicial Council.
19 January 2022	The International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) reiterated its call for “justice and accountability through a transparent and independent investigation” and for “the respect of the independence of the judiciary.” The ISG also emphasized that it “continues to stand by Lebanon and its people.”
4 February 2022	Member of the UN Security Council called once again for “a swift, independent, impartial, thorough and transparent investigation” into the devastating explosion at Beirut port on Aug. 4, 2020, which destroyed or damaged large parts of the city Families of the victims of the Explosion protested outside the port on Friday to decry the lack of progress over the blast investigation, 18 months after the deadly incident.
15 February 2022	The Minister of Economy is promoting the idea of demolishing the silos while overlooking recommendations to restore or preserve the scene of an unfinished crime Judge Rola Masri, President of the Second Chamber of the Court of Cassation, denied the request for the recusal of the President of the Court of Cassation’s First Chamber Judge Naji Eid, and Counselor Rosine Ghantous.
17 February 2022	Lebanon has awarded France's CMA CGM a contract to develop and operate the container terminal in Beirut port for 10 years, including plans to rebuild and expand infrastructure damaged in the explosion.
21 February 2022	MPs Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter filed a lawsuit against the state and the president of the Cassation Court’s First Chamber Judge Naji Eid, who is looking into Judge Bitar’s removal request.
24 February 2022	Strong Republic bloc MP Majed Abi Lamaa and Head of the Change Movement Elie Mahfoud submitted a memorandum to judicial investigator Judge Bitar, containing new documents and information relevant to the explosion.
1 March 2022	The Committee of the martyrs of the Beirut port explosion presented to the Court of Cassation another request to remove Judge Bitar from the investigation.
4 March 2022	During their monthly stand in front of the immigrant statue to commemorate the Blast, the families of victims warned against continuing to hinder the investigation, by not appointing judges to the Plenary Assembly of the Court of Cassation. The families stated that they will soon be “under the homes” of those who obstruct the investigation, and that the latter should consider themselves warned. They also spoke out against demolishing the silos, calling for building new ones elsewhere.
10 March 2022	The Council of Ministers reappointed Major-General Tony Saliba, Director-General of State Security, although he is a defendant in the Beirut Port Explosion Case. Judge Bitar repeatedly asked for permission to protect Saliba, but the Higher Defense Council refused to respond to Bitar's request before the Council of Ministers rewarded Saliba by reappointing him. The Order of Engineers and Architects rejected the decision to demolish the silos, settling the debate created by ministers to justify their destruction. The Order confirmed that the silos can be restored and reinforced and called for adopting a participatory approach to restoration and reconstruction, based upon people’s right to decide the silos’ fate, as the building has become public property and a part of the city and people’s collective memory, and “one of the main landmarks of the largest explosion.

18 March 2022	Minister of Culture cancels the decision to destroy the silos considering them a symbol of the city and must be preserved.
19 March 2022	Minister of Justice summons two individuals who have lost their brothers in the explosion for questioning after their protest in front of his house.
22 March 2022	Lawyers for several victims and survivors of the explosion file a lawsuit before the Civil Court of First Instance against former ministers Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter for abusing their right of defense and obstructing the investigation.
23 March 2022	The Higher Judicial Council appoints judges to preside over the Cassation Court Chambers which means that its quorum is now complete.
25 March 2022	Culture Minister Mohammad Mortada issued a decision paving the way for the demolition of the port silos and removing them from the general inventory of historical buildings, a week after issuing a decision to preserve the silos.
26 March 2022	Rita Hardini, the latest victim of the explosion, passed away after over 18 months on life support. Julia Audi, the latest victim of the explosion, passed away after suffering complications from her august 4 2020 injuries.
29 March 2022	Mustafa Baghdadi, defendant in the port explosion, passed away. He was charged for his role as the shipping agent of Rhosus, which brought the ammonium nitrate to the port of Beirut.
31 March 2022	Three individuals prosecuted in the investigation into the explosion have filed, via their lawyer Fadi Haddad, a complaint at the Court of Cassation against the lead investigator in the case, Judge Tarek Bitar. The current complaint was filed by Salim Georges Chebli, the contractor who carried out the repair works in warehouse 12, where the tons of ammonium nitrate that exploded were stored, and two employees in the Chebli company, Khodr Ali al-Ahmad and Ahmad Omar al-Rajab.
4 April 2022	20 months after the port explosion, the families of victims held a demonstration and expressed frustration at the judicial investigation that has been suspended for three months.
14 April 2022	The Lebanese Council of Ministers approved the demolition of the Beirut Port silos.
19 April 2022	Rami Fawaz, aged 48, died after suffering for over 20 months from his injuries caused by the Explosion.
20 April 2022	Police in Chile arrested a Portuguese man named G.M wanted by Interpol in connection with the Explosion and detained him as per the Interpol's request. The Lebanese Minister of Justice Henry Khoury did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether Lebanon would seek the man's extradition.
27 April 2022	Families of victims held a press conference and accused the Minister of Finance for obstructing the investigation by refraining from signing the decree of the Court of Cassation appointments.
29 April 2022	President Aoun met with a delegation of families of the detainees regarding the Explosion's case. He expressed his keenness on the independence of the judiciary in prosecution, investigation, and judgment as well as on the principles that support the work of the judicial authority.
4 May 2022	Families of the victims organized a march to commemorate 21 months since the explosion.
16 May 2022	Suspects in the Explosion's ongoing domestic investigation, Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter were elected as new Members of Parliament.
23 May 2022	George Haddad passed away due to medical ramifications from injuries resulted from the explosion.
24 May 2022	After Finance Minister Youssef Khalil stalled signing the judicial appointments decree for two months, the Minister of Justice sent him the Higher Judicial Council's proposed appointments once more, asking him to sign, then forward the decree to President Michel Aoun and PM Najib Mikati.
3 June 2022	The families of the Explosion held a press conference detailing the obstruction, delays, pressure, and suffering they have gone through since the explosion. They compiled their path to justice in a booklet which was distributed to the audience.
4 June 2022	Families of the victims organized a stand and read out a statement that says, "Nearly two years have passed since the third largest explosion in the world occurred, while we still remain in same place because of the injustice and corruption of the ruling system that has destroyed our children with its criminality and is still continuing to abuse and criminalize those who survived." They

	also repeated calls to the Minister of Finance to expedite the signing of the judicial formations decree.
7 June 2022	<p>Attorney Rima Suleiman, legal representative of Badri Daher, the Director General of Customs, submitted a request to remove the judicial investigator on the port explosion crime, Judge Tarek Bitar. The request to recuse Bitar is now added to the pending judicial formations and the request to remove Judge Naji Eid.</p> <p>Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zeaiter, two newly elected MPs and suspects in the explosion, got elected as members of the parliamentary Committee for Administration and Justice.</p>
15 June 2022	Three lawsuits were filed in the State Shura Council to halt the decision which tasked the Council for Development and Reconstruction with overseeing the demolition of the Port silos. The first case was filed by Legal Agenda and Ms. Joumana Honein, widow of victim Jean Nehme. The second was filed by the Public Prosecution Office of the Beirut Bar Association. The third was filed by lawyer Cecile Roukouz, sister of victim Joseph Roukoz, Graziella Karam, widow of Joseph Roukoz, Elie Hasrouty, son of Ghassan Hasrouty, and Mireille Bazergy, mother of Elias Khoury.
24 June 2022	The prosecution office at the Beirut Bar Association announced its receipt of a British judicial order compelling Savaro to disclose the identity of the company's owner, in a decision issued on June 16th by the High Court of Justice in London. The Court gave Savaro until October to comply. The decision also allows the disclosure of basic information about the ammonium nitrate shipment and those responsible for it.
27 June 2022	The Association of the families of the explosion was informed that Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri was ready to meet with them to clarify several issues regarding his positions on the explosion. The families responded on 28 June that any meeting with Berri is conditional on the speaker giving the green light to the Finance Minister to sign judicial formations, obstructing the investigation. In turn, the Finance Minister urges the families to meet Berri and Aoun. Last week, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Elias Bou Saab informed the families during a meeting with them that defendant and former minister Ali Hassan Khalil is ready to meet with them and explain his responsibility in the case. This offer was rejected by the families.
30 June 2022	William Noun, brother of fire brigade martyr, presented leaked documents which reveal that the army did not disclose that it had inspected the Rhosus ship and the ammonium nitrate shipment that caused the explosion. According to the document, Judicial Investigator Judge Bitar wrote a letter to UNIFIL on May 17, 2021, asking for help in the investigation. Major General Stefano Del Col, who was the head of the UNIFIL mission at the time, answered Bitar's request. These documents raise additional questions about the army's cover-up of the nitrate file between 2013 and 2020. They also refute political forces' accusations against Bitar and their claims that the latter ignored UNIFIL and the army's role in the case, especially that he had previously pressed charges against former military leaders.
1 July 2022	Head of the Judicial Inspection Authority Bourkan Saad was referred to retirement after reaching the legal age for retirement.
11 July 2022	A fire broke out in the Beirut Port Silos resulting from the fermentation emissions of the materials present as a result of the explosion.
13 July 2022	A lawsuit was filed by a group of victims and survivors of the Explosion in the US against TGS, a US based firm, for \$250m in damages through the help of Accountability Now
16 July 2022	The Beirut Bar Association announced the extension of the freeze on the liquidation of Savaro Ltd as per the issued decision by UK Corporate Registry Companies House last Wednesday and valid until January 11, 2023.
21 July 2022	A group of MPs proposed an expedited law draft with a single clause "the wheat silos building in the Beirut Port is a landmark of national human heritage that commemorates the tragic memory of the Explosion [...] and it is necessary to strengthen the building and maintain it..."
26 July 2022	<p>Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri dropped the emergency status from the two draft laws submitted to protect the Beirut Port Silos.</p> <p>Families of victims organized a sit-in in front of Parliament during the legislative session to protest against reviving the Supreme Council for Prosecuting Presidents and Ministers and in support of adopting a law to prevent the Beirut Port Silos' demolition.</p>

	<p>The Lebanese Parliament elected 7 MPs as members of the Supreme Council for Prosecuting Presidents and Ministers. The members include Jamil el Sayed (linked to Hezbollah), Abdel Karim Kabbara (independent), Faisal al Sayegh (PSP), Hagop Pakradounian (Tashnag), George Attalah (FPM), Imad el Hout (Islamic Group), and Tony Frangieh (Marada Movement).</p>
	<p>MP Faysal el Sayegh submitted his resignation from the Supreme Council for Prosecuting Presidents and Ministers few hours after the members were elected. His resignation is in protest of elections by acclamation, and because the Democratic Gathering bloc was not convinced “of the Council’s work and ability to play any role because its constitutional structure is not viable, so it will be unable to take decisions.” One of the alternate members, elected by acclamation, would then replace him.</p>
<p>27 July 2022</p>	<p>The Lebanese Forces Parliamentary Bloc signed a letter to the UN HRC requesting the establishment of a UN fact Finding Mission for the Beirut Port Explosion which would support the Lebanese domestic investigation. They also call upon other parliamentary blocs to join them in signing the letter before sending it to the UN HRC.</p> <p>The northern part of the post silos is tilting at an accelerated rate as reported by the Ministry for the Environment, amid the ongoing fire which has not been put out for over two weeks. This puts the silos at risk of collapse.</p>

ANNEX II – Letter to the UN Secretary General on behalf of UN staff who were affected by the explosion

H.E. Secretary-General António Guterres
United Nations Secretary General
United Nations Secretariat
42nd Street
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

17 December 2021

RE: Request for the establishment of a Board of Inquiry and/or a UN investigative mechanism under the authority of the United Nations Office of the Secretary General, into the death, injury, destruction and damage to UN personnel and their property caused by the 4 August 2020 Beirut Port Explosion

Your Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres,

We, the undersigned personnel of the United Nations (UN) write to request your critical support in our pursuit of truth and justice for the physical, mental, and material damages sustained to us as a result of the Beirut Port Explosion of the 4th of August 2020 and subsequently.

We write to you as individuals, family members, and colleagues who lost children and loved ones, who suffered injuries and long-term psychological trauma, who lost homes and property, and who continue to struggle with the aftermath of the explosion. We write to you as victims of a negligible criminal act who deserve recognition and justice.

As members of the UN family, we work every day to promote human rights and values of accountability and justice in Lebanon and all over the world. We look to the UN to lead the way in upholding those rights and safeguarding those values. We write to you now because sixteen months after the explosion, we see no serious indication of the pursuit of justice for all those impacted.

For many of us in the UN, our personal and professional lives and those of our families were cruelly and criminally shattered on the 4th of August. The report attached summarizes the multiple ways we have sustained physical and psychological harm, as well as an indicative summary of the destruction and damage to our homes and property.

While the report may present an account of the numbers killed or critically injured, and a typology of injuries and trauma suffered, we believe the psychological cost will be difficult to quantify, and its implications will mark our lives well into the future. The inaction on the part of states and institutions, including the UN, only amplifies that cost and adds insult to injury.

It is with the utmost respect that we request your support, through the exercise of your authority and power as UN Secretary General, to establish a Board of Inquiry or a UN investigative mechanism to undertake a fact finding investigation identify the causes behind the explosion and those most responsible, as well as to obtain and record all factual evidence related to the damages caused to UN personnel, their families, and to UN property as a result of the Beirut Port Explosion. We also request that the report would be made public through publishing a summary of the inquiry findings in line with article 108 of the Board of Inquiry Standard Operating Procedures.

We are further available to provide a briefing on our experiences at your convenience

As you know, the Beirut Port Explosion killed more than 200 people, including children. 7,000 people were injured, 150 people were left disabled, 77,000 apartments were damaged, and more than 300,000 people were displaced.

The domestic investigation was established under the authority of the Judicial Council investigation on 13 August 2020. The Council was expected to release its report in November 2020, but over a year later, we have yet to see any findings.

Ongoing challenges and systemic flaws in the domestic investigation, which have been widely reported by leading human rights agencies including [Legal Action Worldwide](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Legal Agenda](#), and the [International Commission of Jurists](#), make ever getting the truth and securing justice and accountability for victims and survivors of the Beirut Port Explosion more and more unlikely.

The demonstrable absence of political will to investigate the Beirut Port Explosion is yet another example of the corruption that prevails in Lebanon, which has brought the country to the precipice of collapse. The bloodshed resulting from the Beirut Port Explosion did not seem to be enough. On the 14th of October 2021, seven people were killed and over 30 individuals were injured after armed clashes erupted on the streets of Beirut during protests calling for the removal of the lead investigating judge. Yet again, the government is letting its people down. It is also denying non-Lebanese citizens, and us, your own personnel, justice.

We urge you to exercise your mandated authority and powers to establish a Board of Inquiry and/or a UN investigative mechanism to undertake a fact finding investigation and to identify the causes behind the Beirut Port Explosion and identify those most responsible. We trust your judgment in determining the appropriate avenue which is deemed most fit to the Lebanese context. We understand that you have received similar requests from other families of victims and survivors but chose to remain silent. Today we ask you to stand by us.

On 10 August 2020, a few days after the tragedy, you called for a [“credible and transparent investigation”](#) to determine the exact cause of the explosion and bring about the accountability “demanded by the Lebanese people.” In October 2021, you reiterated the need for [“an impartial, thorough, and transparent investigation into the Beirut Port Explosion.”](#)

This “credible and transparent investigation” cannot, and will not happen, with political and judicial elites challenging the domestic inquiry every step of the way.

We - UN personnel who had loved ones killed, suffered injuries, experienced significant property damage, and endured extreme trauma - deserve that those responsible for the explosion be identified. Every single victim. Every survivor. Every member of the families affected deserves the truth.

As our hopes of finding truth and justice for our loved ones fade in light of the dismal domestic inquiry, we urge you to please consider our request.

Yours sincerely, the undersigned

Names are confidential.

Annex I - Testimonies

– M.K.

“My name is [REDACTED] On August 4th 2020, I was at home with my 20-year old daughter and 15-year old son situated 500m from the Beirut port, abiding by the COVID lockdown measures.

On that day, my house was totally destroyed. The walls and windows fell all over us. The walls of my son's room fell on his head and his body. My daughter had injuries on her arms, hands, face, and part of her eyelid. She lost the functioning of one of her fingers. My back was badly injured with fractures in addition to other injuries. My son was transferred with my husband to the hospital in a civilian car while my daughter and I on two different motor bikes. Each one of us was transferred to a different hospital. The journey to the hospital in itself was traumatic and beyond expression.

My son survived 14 days in the ICU before he surrendered and left this unfair world. I still believe that if he was appropriately transferred to a hospital in an ambulance and had received immediate care, he would have survived. I stayed for 13 days in a different hospital without knowing the severity of my son's case. I did not have the chance to stay beside him during his worst days.

I still wake up every night wondering if this had really happened or was it just a nightmare. My daughter has gone through many surgeries and still requires more, since some of them have to be repeated. I wonder how I can continue living without my son. He is so loving and caring with an angelic smile and character, full of dreams and talents. He was getting prepared for university and planning to become an architect. He already composed two rap songs with his friend (Valid and Space which are on YouTube). I am a dead person living just because I am stuck in life, and I have to continue for my daughter's sake who is also a shattered young girl trying to reason with the severity of what has happened.

We still do not know the truth and we have no clue that justice will ever be served, based on what has happened so far and based on the track record whereby no case of such a scale has ever been resolved in Lebanon. I plea for an international impartial investigation, for justice and that those who are responsible are held accountable. Finally, I want to express my gratitude for the support received from the management of UNICEF.”

– S.C.

“On the 4th of August 2020 I was at home in Beirut with my two-year-old son [REDACTED] and husband [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was sitting in his highchair eating dinner when the explosion hit. I was thrown to the ground and [REDACTED]'s highchair was flung across the room and he was struck in the chest with a shard of glass. My husband and I raced to get help and a good Samaritan who we flagged down drove us to the hospital. [REDACTED] died a few hours later. The glass had pierced his heart and lungs and he died of cardiac arrest and massive internal bleeding.

I was pregnant at the time of the explosion and was also injured – I had glass embedded all over my body, including my face, and needed stitches in five different locations. I spent three nights in hospital as the doctors had grave fears for my unborn baby and he needed constant monitoring.

In addition, our home was completely destroyed, as were most of our possessions. In the early days after the blast, we relied on donations of clothes and other essentials from friends and colleagues. The carnage that my husband and I witnessed that night – in the streets and at the hospital – stays with us. We saw unimaginable

destruction, people with horrific injuries, and dead bodies in the street. The hospital was filled with blood curdling screams that we can still hear in our heads. I suffer flashbacks and ongoing anxiety.

We will never get over the trauma and grief of losing [REDACTED]. The pain of losing a child is unimaginable until you have experienced it and to know he suffered a painful death compounds our pain tenfold. I committed my career to the principles of the UN – the promotion of human rights, accountability, and justice. I always knew that dedicating my career to the UN and striving for these principles would involve sacrifices, but I never imagined it would lead to the loss of my son. I now respectfully ask the Secretary-General and the UN to stand by [REDACTED] – and all the victims of the blast – to strive for the truth, justice and accountability on their behalf.”

– C.P.

“I was severely injured in the 4 August explosion in Beirut. As my entire apartment collapsed, I lost a piece of my forehead, and I am still suffering from a brain injury and other effects. In the aftermath of the explosion, I did not receive support from UNDSS, and I had to rely fully on my own networks to stay alive. Had it not been for these networks, I would have never made it to a hospital in time or found a surgeon to operate me. I returned to work after some months, but the organization has not followed up upon my wellbeing, which has made the experience psychologically even more difficult. In order for the UN to be a credible organization in fragile contexts, it is important to care for the wellbeing of its personnel and to do its utmost to ensure accountability for both the deadly explosion and lack of internal UN response mechanisms.”

Annex II – Precedent

Please find below examples where your office has exercised its powers to investigate incidents involving UN personnel, premises, and operations:

- 13 September 2019, Board of Inquiry to investigate events in North-West Syria, in particular the destruction and damage on the deconfliction list and UN-supported Facilities in the area.
- 12 March 2017, Board of Inquiry to investigate the killing of two UN personnel, Michel Sharp and Zaida Catalan, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- 19 of September 2016, Board of Inquiry to investigate an incident involving a UN Syrian Arab Red Crescent relief operation to Urum al-Kubra, Syria.
- 10 November 2014, Board of Inquiry to investigate incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel between the 8 July 2014 to the 26 August 2014.

Annex III – Reports

Kindly refer to the attached “*Report on Behalf of Victims of the Beirut Explosion of 4 August 2020 (Victims of the Beirut August Massacre)*” and “*4 August 2020 Beirut Port Explosion: The Lebanese Legal System Continues to Fail Victims a Year Later*”; both written and published by Legal Action Worldwide. The reports set out in stark detail the available facts and information around the explosion, the progress of the Lebanese investigations, and the severe restrictions on access to justice in Lebanon. It is clear that the human tragedy could have been avoided had key individuals and institutions taken action.

ANNEX III – Letter to the High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of victims, survivors, and their families

High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais Wilson
Quai Wilson 47
1201 Geneva
Switzerland

14 March 2022

RE: Request to dispatch investigators under the authority of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, into the Beirut Port Explosion and related harms

Dear Madam High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet

We, the undersigned victims, survivors and families of those injured and killed by the Beirut Port Explosion of 4 August 2020 (the Beirut Port Explosion), supported by Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), write to request your support to dispatch investigators under the authority of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to probe human rights violations related to the Beirut Port Explosion, in particular the violation of the fundamental right to life, and obstruction of justice that has ensued since the explosion.

As you know, the Beirut Port Explosion killed more than 200 people, including children. 7,000 people were injured, 150 people were left disabled.

The domestic investigation was established under the authority of the Judicial Council investigation on 13 August 2020. The Council was expected to release its report in November 2020, but a year later, we have yet to see any findings.

Ongoing challenges and systemic flaws interfering with the domestic investigation, which have been widely reported by leading human rights agencies including [Legal Action Worldwide](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Legal Agenda](#), and the [International Commission of Jurists](#), make ever getting the truth and securing justice and accountability for victims and survivors of the Beirut Port Explosion more and more unlikely.

The demonstrable absence of political will to investigate the Beirut Port Explosion is yet another example of the corruption that prevails in Lebanon, which has brought the country to the precipice of collapse. The bloodshed resulting from the Beirut Port Explosion did not seem to be enough. On the 14th of October 2021, seven people were killed and over 30 individuals were injured after armed clashes erupted on the streets of Beirut during protests calling for the removal of the lead investigating judge. Yet again, the government is letting its people down. It is also denying non-Lebanese citizens justice.

We, and our loved ones that were killed and injured in the explosion, deserve that those responsible be identified and punished. Every single victim. Every survivor. Every member of the families affected deserves the truth. Only an independent and international investigation will identify those most responsible and will deliver the truth as a contributing step towards achieving accountability.

Our voices are not being heard by the government of Lebanon, and as our hopes of finding truth and justice for our loved ones fade in light of the dismal domestic inquiry, we urge you to please consider our request, and meet with us to hear about the losses we have suffered and discuss the role we hope you can play in securing truth and justice for the victims and survivors of the Beirut port explosion.

Yours sincerely, the undersigned,

~ 120 signatures from the victims and survivors of the Beirut Port Explosion, along with their families, including the families of the firefighters