

STATEMENT ON THE INQUIRY CONDUCTED BY THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT INTO THE BEIRUT EXPLOSION

Constant leaking of information is undermining the inquiry

The Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA), supported by Transparency International, reiterates its position on the importance of conducting an open and transparent inquiry with far-reaching powers able to establish legal, administrative and criminal responsibilities.

We reiterate our serious concerns that the inquiry is being conducted by an “Exceptional Court” which does not guarantee a fair trial. The LTA also calls on the Lebanese government to guarantee international standards of openness and transparency throughout the inquiry and to refrain from “leaking” information that undermines the efficiency and credibility of the inquiry.

Leaking selective information distorts the work of the inquiry and damages its integrity, further undermining public trust in both the process and ultimately the results of the investigation as a whole.

The LTA calls for the inquiry to be conducted with openness and transparency, which are the opposite of leaking information, and that the competent authorities conducting the inquiry must abide by international standards through:

- appointing a spokesperson to the inquiry that informs the public of the day to day developments of the investigation without undermining it;
- being explicit about which laws and regulations apply;
- applying the “need to know” rule by weighing public interest versus privacy rights.

Weighing public interest versus privacy rights is not a justification to withholding information. The highly damaging impact of the Beirut Explosion means that privacy rights should only override the public interest in exceptional cases. This is especially true where negligence and corruption amongst high-level public officials have been established.

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