

Lebanon Solidarity Fund launched to help save arts community affected by Beirut blast



Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) and Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) have joined forces to launch the Lebanon Solidarity Fund, an international fundraising campaign specifically aimed at the city's arts and culture community. Carmen Yahchouchi

After the deadly blast in Beirut that claimed more than 170 lives and caused widespread injury and damage, donations have been pouring in from around the world to help Lebanon with its recovery.

The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) and Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) have joined forces to bolster these efforts with the launch of the Lebanon Solidarity Fund, an international fundraising campaign specifically aimed at the city's arts and culture community.

Beirut's art scene has been heavily affected by the blast, with museums and galleries dealing with damage to their spaces, artworks and

artefacts. There have also been tragic losses, including the death of architect Jean-Marc Bonfils and art handler Firas Dahwish, who worked at Saleh Barakat Gallery.

The fund will target organisations that urgently need reconstruction and protection of invaluable collections.

In assessing the distribution of funds for art spaces, the two institutions will look at reconstruction needs, such as the safety of the premises or the need for temporary relocation; the protection of items such as images, films and musical archives; the rehabilitation of the premises, including electrical networks and furnishings; and the repair or replacement of equipment, such as computers.

The Lebanon Solidarity Fund will also support artists who have lost homes or those who have lost instruments or equipment related to their profession. The initiative will help relocate artists to new homes or spaces in order for them to continue their work.

AFAC and Culture Resource will contribute seed capital to the fund. They will also handle the management and distribution of donations to the institutions and individuals affected.

In a joint statement, AFAC and Culture Resource said: "The survival and sustainability of the once vibrant creative field is now in a critical condition. Recovering from the shock will require time, as will the reconvening as a community to identify priorities, articulate visions and bolster the myriad ways in which people will rebuild their lives from the ruins of devastation."

The institutions called on partners to build on their expressions of support with monetary donations. "We need the solidarity of these partners and friends, and we therefore call for their contributions," they stated.

AFAC and Culture Resource also emphasised the need for an “immediate response” and an “early recovery” for the arts and culture community to ensure its sustainability.

The campaign builds on AFAC and Culture Resource’s previous initiative, the Solidarity Fund to Arts and Culture Structures in Lebanon, created as a response to the economic collapse facing the country even before the explosion.

A number of other relief efforts have sprung up for the Beirut art scene since August 4.

Mophradat, an arts non-profit in Brussels, has established an emergency fund for artists and institutions in Beirut. Led by curator Mai Abu ElDahab and artist Walid Raad, the non-profit says it will prioritise art spaces that have been most “disadvantaged” when it comes to distributing funds.

Artists are also contributing by selling their works. For example, online platform Art Relief for Beirut, which was started by artist Mohamad Kanaan, is offering proceeds from artwork sales to Impact Lebanon and the Lebanese Red Cross. As of Tuesday, it has raised \$77,000 (Dh282,836) for the charities.

In the UAE, [Gulf Photo Plus](#) is running a print sale with proceeds going to the Lebanese Red Cross, while Alserkal Avenue is hosting [fundraising day](#) on Saturday, August 15, with donations handled by the Emirates Red Crescent.

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