

Dear USJ community,

You are part of a university that is well-known for its endless support for its students and its infinite generosity when it comes to motivation in a country where many have lost faith.

Nobody wants to stay in Lebanon. It's a miserable life...that's what every foreign article says about this country. It's true that we've been going through devastating times these past couple of years, every news channel and every newspaper headline can confirm this. However, the Lebanese population is refusing to succumb to this unfairness. As a result, we have been repeatedly called resilient. A resilient person is someone who is able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions, which is something we've proven to be true. These past two years have thrust Lebanon into its worst economic crisis in decades, with its currency collapsing, businesses closing, prices of basic goods skyrocketing, hunger threatening the poorest, the dreadful corona virus spreading, and lastly, the horrifying Beirut explosion.

It all started back on October 17, 2019, when tens of thousands of peaceful protestors took to the streets across the country calling for their social and economic rights, for accountability and to put an end to corruption. Meanwhile, the dollar rate in Lebanon was soaring for the first time since 1997, and it has become almost impossible to withdraw dollars from ATMs or to convert large sums from Lebanese pounds to US dollars in banks. Due to Lebanon's inflation rate rising to an all-time high, food prices escalated along with the cost of transportation, clothing and almost everything else. Moreover, many companies, such as Coca-Cola, American Eagle, Adidas and many more have shut down their branches in Lebanon. Yet, this wasn't the worst that the Lebanese had to face as coronavirus rates were going through the roof with innumerable cases emerging daily. Later on, the endgame for the Lebanese's hopes and dreams was the double blast of the Beirut port; or maybe that's what everyone else thought. You see, we are very hopeful, incredibly compassionate, extraordinarily persistent, fully ambitious and phenomenally perseverant. It is in our nature to emerge like a Phoenix from the ashes. We have endurance surging through our veins, and we learned to be tough and adaptable, especially in times like these. We are a people who always looks at the bright side of things, a people who finds light in the darkness, a people who sweetens the bitter pill and a people who keeps going no matter what. Looking back at all the challenging times, you could clearly see how we made the best out of the worst situations. Adults, teenagers and even children sang and danced in all the riots, and made it seem like a celebration rather than a protest. We learned to appreciate quality time with our family in times of social distancing. After the 4th of August's explosion, we did not hide or flee the country, we stood our grounds and faced the issue together. We stood hand in hand, helped each other and immediately hurried to restore our beautiful Beirut. We cleaned the streets and repaired the ruins, because that's what heroes do. We were our own helping hands, and yes, we're still facing conflicts, but we can make this through, together, like we always have.

We've been through so much, and I think that's why we're so tight and close together. We're all one big family and we will continue to face the hardships together, as we should. So keep your chin up, better days are yet to come, and remember, every cloud has a silver lining!