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Will we ever forget?  
Will we ever forgive?  
Will we ever move on from the pain and the heartache?

Dear USJ community,

When at 6:07 PM, on the 4th of August 2020, the life of every Lebanese changed forever in the rush of a second, we all thought we wouldn't get back up on our feet this time. That this, was our cue to leave and not look back. Some of our first thoughts, were to step on board and never come back home again. Home? That's insensitive of me to say. Our homes were destroyed, shattered into one million pieces. If you asked me, all I can recall, of this, to say the least, disastrous moment, was the sound of glass windows exploding, the feeling of some debris graze my skin, the fear in some stranger's eyes and the screams. The screams. I still get goosebumps every time I remember these petrified voices, these uncontrollable tears running down ashy faces all the way to the ground, the ground of my country, that once again, hosted unexpectedly a red carpet event, we weren't aware of, but definitely invited to.

That night, unlike most of us, I dreamt of so many rejoicing times I had the chance to live in this country: I dreamt of Christmas markets, the alley of wooden tents filled up with some homemade treats, the shiny ornaments lighting up every street, the sound of festivities in people's voices as well as the magical spark in their eyes. I dreamt of summer vacation spent in the Bekaa Valley. On a Sunday afternoon, sitting next to the Berdawni lake, sipping up a glass of Arak, mellowing out cheerfully to Fairuz's "Kan el zaman". And there, in the corner of my mind, was my father playing with our neighbor a round of "Tawlé", sometimes getting mad for missing an obvious winning move. But these my friends, are stories that seem long gone. For a brief moment, life appeared good and healthy, as if the storm had passed. A world, where blasts are only in action movies and despair is some kind of imaginary tale. What a drowning feeling to know, when still alive, the one of the memory of a good life.

Here is where it all hit me. We've been through an entire journey of suffering from the pain we do not deserve. However, and most surprisingly, we never stopped holding on to this last breath of hope. We're still standing on the land of this nation because we won't surrender to the life they've imposed to us. We will keep fighting for the rights of being Lebanese. A Lebanese with his head held high, roots so deep into the ground, there is no reason for him to fear the storm. Our houses might've been torn to the ground but there, is not where our homes are. Our home, as proud Lebanese, is every square meter of the 10,452. Together, we're every outcast's shelter, every non-believer's reliance, every lost one's destination. Together, we're no USJ community: we are brothers and sisters holding on tightly to each other, always believing that rising again will never be a mission impossible and blooming, was and forever will be, written on the pages of our destiny.

So, do not cry for us, and,  
do not pity us because Lebanon has withstood the toll of time for hundreds of years.  
Unbroken through wars, unhinged in the face of conflict.  
As long as we stand firm on its ground, we'll be looking at these past years, waving at us goodbye, in our rearview mirror, with infinite hope in our hearts.