

“Because we left our families... Because we paid the highest price...”

Torontonians join global demonstrations against the Lebanese government



Proud demonstrators in heart of Toronto showcasing their solidarity in overhauling the world's third most indebted country's sectarian government in favour of civil governance.

“Lebanese people don’t need sex when the government screws them everyday,” said an anonymous Canadian-Lebanese protestor’s banner on Sunday. Known for their wit and outspokenness, hundreds of Lebanese Torontonians participated in a demonstration at Yonge-Dundas Square as a gesture of solidarity and support for the people in Lebanon currently protesting for basic rights – such as electricity and clean drinking water – and an overhaul of the Lebanese government and its historically repressive measures that gave multiple generations no choice but to leave their homeland behind.

The Toronto demonstration allowed locals to showcase their pride in Lebanon’s unprecedented displays of national unity in demanding the sectarian Lebanese government to step down, especially after watching the majority of their forests burn down thanks to the government’s complete neglect of natural resources. Protestors in Lebanon are currently forming a human chain by joining hands across the country to show their solidarity, as well as blocking main roads such as the Beirut highway, which links the capital to other cities, to stop the government from functioning properly to force them to take their demands seriously.

Sarah El-Bakri (301086632)
Major Assignment #1: Newsworthy activity

“We wanted to show our families in Lebanon that although we’re unable to fight for basic human rights in the streets of Lebanon right now, we would have joined the protest had we been able to, and we will continue to support them in the fight against the government’s highly privatized and corrupted system,” says Yasmina Chami, a Canadian-Lebanese demonstrator.

Prideful locals spent two hours peacefully displaying their support for the ongoing protests in Lebanon by collectively singing patriotic songs, as well as drumming and performing *dabke*, a native Levantine dance performed in a group usually on joyous occasions.

Despite speakers not being allowed during protests, “Toronto police allowed us to use a speaker for *dabke* while watching us display our patriotism. This allowed a fun and safe environment to show our support for our families back home and to raise awareness on what ignited global protests against the entire Lebanese government,” says Nour Yassine, a Canadian-Lebanese demonstrator whose parents fled the Lebanese civil war in the 90s.

The Lebanese protest, nicknamed the WhatsApp Revolution, sparked global attention after tension mounted between security forces and protesters in Lebanon. The protest was ignited after the Lebanese government proposed a series of austerity policies, such as a new tax regulation on WhatsApp calls, to fight national debt and ridiculously high cost of living, where a third of the country’s population lives under the poverty line.

Many Torontonians expressed on Sunday how difficult it was to leave their deteriorating homeland, which has been suffering from economic devastation and poor living conditions for over three decades, in hopes of building a brighter future for themselves and future generations.

For decades now, Lebanon’s socioeconomic and sectarian division has left Lebanese people feeling hopeless and unmotivated to speak up, with finding any way out of the country as being the only solution to reach decent quality of life. Today, the WhatsApp Revolution displays imams holding hands with pastors while marching in the streets of Lebanon, a first amongst many united fronts in the Middle East.

Despite offering protestors economic reforms and a reshuffled government, Lebanon’s political elite has been left dazed by the global anger against the government’s never-ending dysfunction and clear demands for a complete economic and political reconstruction.