



Dear Madame Azoulay,

The solidarity campaign to protect the Beirut port silos seeks UNESCO's support in our efforts to protect the Silos of Beirut port.

The solidarity campaign to protect the Beirut port silos has previously announced both in the media and on the official pages of the Order of Engineers and Architects-Beirut-OEA and the campaign's page its clear position in rejecting the Lebanese government's decision to demolish the grain silos; What is required now is to finalize investigations into the crime, hold those responsible accountable and approve a study-vision for a comprehensive plan for the area.

The focus on the partial steps and detailed treatments, such as the containers terminal project, the project to demolish the silos, making promises to build a garden and a memorial, and finally ignoring the master plan, indicates complicity or insufficiency in understanding the scale of the disaster and consequently a failure in understanding the treatment of its effects. All these decisions have been taking place without the participation of the engineering and professional body of the country, its population, and the families of the Victims.

The silos are not a "Concrete block" as the authority has been dealing with them; rather the silos building is a symbol of several concepts engrained in our memory, it is the symbol of life when it stored wheat, it is the fort that protected part of the city from destruction, and finally it is a representation of the collective memory of the people and the city. The disaster that occurred is a tragic part of the country's modern history, therefore the site of the silos must remain a living witness in the memory of future generations ensuring that the tragedy will not be repeated.

Knowing that on March 18th, 2022, the Minister of Culture, issued a decision No. 49/2022 to include the grain silos building in the general inventory of heritage buildings, thus preventing any action that would alter its current condition except after the prior approval of the Minister of Culture. The statement considered that "the silos had become part of the heritage of humanity, a symbol embodying the image of a city aggrieved by the explosion, which necessitates preserving it and transmitting it to future generations."

Beirut as a locus for the collective memory instead of the collective amnesia cannot be achieved without turning to common landmarks and memories; The silos, a witness of the modern heritage, and all the heritage buildings that were affected by the blast will be the visual representation of the blast memory and will be tied to the Lebanese nation's history forever.

As such, the campaign affirms the following recommendations:

First - The reconstruction of Beirut Port begins with a comprehensive vision and a master plan for the entire waterfront, based on the port's economic and development role, ensuring its natural connection to the city through the surrounding neighborhoods and its relationship with the rest of the Lebanese seaports, in addition to reviving and developing maritime transport as well as consolidating and protecting the site of the silos to be part of this Guiding Master Plan.

Second - The Silos building and its surroundings are among the modern architectural heritage that must be classified, protected and preserved, especially after it acquired an additional significance that bears the memory of the event and the memory of the city as a whole. Its symbolic and cultural role as a witness to the event perpetuates the

memory of those who lost their lives and those who were injured, and its symbolism will not be matched by any other memorial.

Third - Not to repeat the adoption of the model for the reconstruction of Beirut's commercial center, which led to the isolation of the city from its center. Any reconstruction of the Port of Beirut must start from preserving the social and urban fabric of the neighborhoods surrounding the port.

Fourth - From the structural point of view, the emphasis is on the stability of the southern remaining part of the silos, which does not need to be strengthened, and thus the absence of any statements necessitating the demolition. This fact was confirmed by numerous structural engineering studies.

Fifth - It isn't possible to restore and reuse the silos in their primary function. Rather, it has become a symbol and witness to its moral and human value that is far more important than its material value.

At our behest, local and international heritage organizations have joined our call and issued statements or sent letters to the Lebanese officials. This includes Docomomo, Icomos, the Union of International Architects, ICCROM Sharjah, Our World Heritage, World Monuments Funds and Blue Shields - Lebanon.

We believe in the vital role of UNESCO in the protection of the Heritage in Lebanon, and of the sites holding collective memories. In addition, the major and unique role that was played by the UNESCO in Beirut following the blast to support the built heritage rescue mission is a unique lesson to learn from and a support that we, Lebanese will never forget.

We so believe that the UNESCO will support the concept of the non-demolition of the silos, and its conservation as a modern cultural heritage and mainly as a witness of the August 4th blast, a memorial and a carrier of the collective memory.

We would like to ask UNESCO to issue a clear statement in favor of preserving both silos and their immediate context. And we are attaching with our letter a report intending to mobilize the rescuing of the silos and their transformation into a world heritage memorial site.

We remain available to elaborate and to discuss further as deemed necessary.

With our very best regards,

The solidarity campaign to protect the Beirut port silos,

Beirut, February 1st, 2023

The campaign's coordinators

The Association of the Beirut port explosion victims' families
The families of the martyrs of the Beirut Fire Brigade
The Families of the Port Explosion victims and martyrs
The August 4th Collective
The Association of the residents of the area affected by the Beirut blast
The Order of Engineers and Architects Beirut
Urban Lab / AUB
Legal Agenda
Public works studio
Town Planning and Heritage Sites Development Studio
Group of 25 Lebanese Heritage Experts
LiveLoveBeirut
ACA Arab Center for Architecture
Beirut Urban Declaration
Madinati
The socio-economic justice initiative - MAAN