



## AS IT IS

# Beirut Looks to Christmas After a Year Marked by Trouble

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A **charity** is bringing Christmas spirit to Beirut, a city that has faced several crises recently.

The Solidarity Christmas Village, near Beirut's damaged port, has bright lights and colorful trees. It has been offering visitors free entry to watch music shows and pick up drinks and food. The idea is to help families who cannot pay for seasonal goods. Beirut has suffered some difficult events this year.

A huge explosion took place at its port, coronavirus infections have increased and it has had an economic crisis, the country's worst since Lebanon's civil war from 1975 to 1990. But at the Solidarity Christmas Village, people dress like polar bears and Santa Claus. "We need to make our children happy...even if we are tired," said Toni Hossainy, who had brought her son.

The Christmas village has been set up in a temporary building near the port, which was destroyed by the deadly explosion on August 4.

Near the port's entrance, an artist put up a large Christmas tree. The tree is **decorated** with protective clothing and hard hats that were worn by firefighters who had battled the resulting fire at the port. The explosion left tens of thousands of people homeless in a nation already struggling with debt problems.

Opera singer Elias Francis gave a **concert** to open the Christmas village. He brought his own equipment to protect against the coronavirus. "No matter how **negative** things are around us, like the blast, like the coronavirus, like the economic situation which is very bad, there is still a glimmer of hope," he said. Glimmer is a term that means a small amount or sign of something.

In a mainly Christian area of Beirut, a woman named Nina said her shop that sells Christmas goods had been crowded in years past. But this year, the shop closes early because no one comes.

Georgette Suleiman, age 63, almost began to cry when she thought about the problems of 2020. "God willing, this Christmas will bring us joy and hope, and Lebanon will return to how it was," she said.

I'm John Russell.

*Edmund Blair reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.* \_\_\_\_\_

## Words in This Story

**charity** - n. an organization that helps people who are poor, sick, etc.

**decorate** - v. to make (something) more attractive usually by putting something on it

**concert** - n. a public performance of music

**negative** - *adj.* harmful or bad : not wanted