

Baalbeck stands up to COVID-19

Measures developed by cities
for migrants and refugees
during the COVID-19.

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As a Consultant in International Relations for several Lebanese municipalities, I work as an International Affairs Advisor to the municipality of Baalbeck. I am speaking to you today on behalf of the Mayor Mr. Fouad Ballouk , as well as the Municipal Council of the Baalbeck.

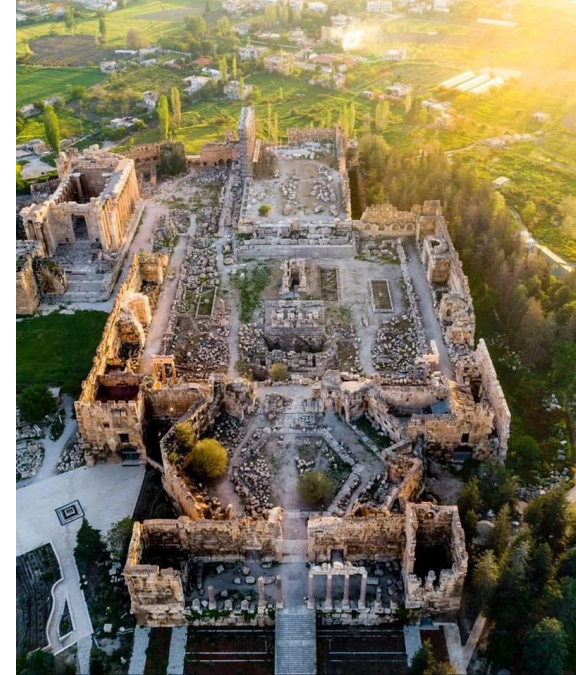
Quick Introduction



Photo Source: Google Images

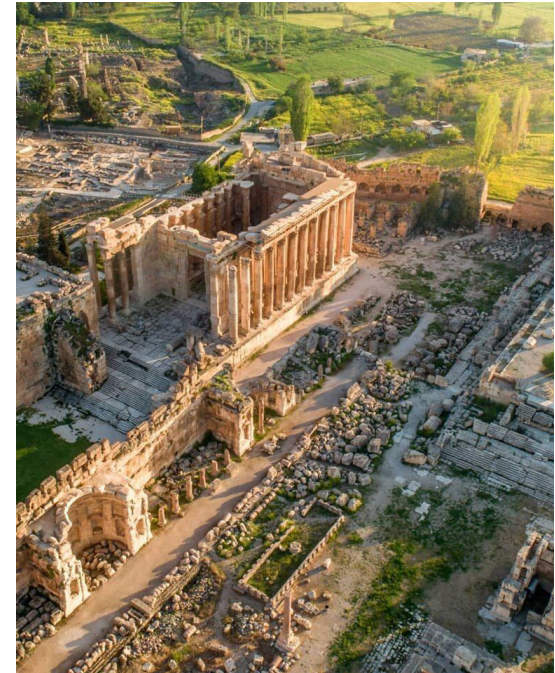
Baalbeck the City of the Sun

Baalbeck is a city located east of the Litani River in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley. Baalbeck is home to around 200 thousand residents which include 60 thousand Syrian refugees and some 10 thousand Palestinian refugees. Baalbeck is proudly a member of the UNESCO Global Network of learning Cities.



Baalbeck the City of the Sun

In Greek and Roman times Baalbek was also known as Heliopolis, the **City of the Sun**. It is home to the Baalbek temple complex which includes two of the largest and grandest Roman temple ruins: the Temple of Bacchus and the Temple of Jupiter. It was inscribed in 1984 as an UNESCO World Heritage site.



Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat

Similarly to any other country around the world, the Novel Coronavirus has been threatening Lebanon since mid-February 2020. As positive cases surfaced, the municipal authorities stepped up and showed a great sense of responsibility throughout the Lebanese territories. The municipalities did not hesitate to take the initiative and put in place the necessary measures aiming to limit the spread of the COVID-19.

Following the joint efforts of the Ministry of Health, represented by Minister Hassan Hamad, the Governor of Baalbeck – Hermel, Mr. Bashir Khodr, the Municipal Work Committee and the influential personalities; the Municipality of Baalbeck took safety measures specifically deployed to provide health security to all its residents **equally**, whether Lebanese or refugees.

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat

As the first few cases of COVID-19 surfaced and before the full lockdown was implemented, Baalbeck Municipality embarked on a journey of rigorous work aiming to:

- Raise awareness through a social media campaign inciting people to stay home and safe.
- Working hand in hand with governmental authorities to ensure safety directives are followed to the letter, including wearing masks and gloves, following sanitization procedures...
- The municipality also ensured that high-risk places such as coffee shops, restaurants and other businesses remained closed to ensure safety.

A special message was written by the Mayor of Baalbeck asking people to abide by the lockdown accompanied with a prayer for this threat to subside.



أهلنا الشرفاء في مدينة بعلبك
أتوجه إليكم بالشكر الجزيل والإمتنان
للتجاوب الذي أبدىتموه مع قرارات مجلس الوزراء
بالإقفال رغم الضائقة المالية والإقتصادية التي تعصف بالبلاد
والتزام البيوت كإجراء احترازي لمواجهة فيروس كورونا
والحوول دون انتشاره... حمى الله عائلاتكم من هذا الوباء
وبتضامننا نتجاوز هذه المحنة

أهلنا الكرام ، إن الواقع الصعب والمستجد زاد
من معاناة الكثيرين من أهلنا ، لاسيما العمال والمياومون
وهؤلاء بحاجة إلى تكاتف جهودنا للوقوف إلى جانبهم
في هذه الشدة ،
والنبي الاكرم ص قال : ما أمن بي من بات شعباناً وجاره جانح .
فليساعد المسور المحتاج ، وليرحم صاحب الملك المستأجر
الذي لا مورد له ولنرحم بعضنا البعض في هذه الظروف الصعبة

أهلنا الاعزاء في مدينتنا الحبيبة بعلبك
يا أهل النخوة والكرامة والعنفوان والجدود والاباء
فلنكن جميعا العون والسند للفقراء
والايتام والمحتاجين والمساكين
ونتضرع الى الله العليّ القدير أن يمن علينا برحمته
ويحمي البلاد والعباد من الاوبئة والامراض ومن كل شر
وأن يحل في مدينتنا الامن والامان

رئيس بلدية بعلبك
فؤاد بلوق

بعلبك 20.3.2020

A special campaign to urge people to be safe and stay physically distant in their homes.

بلدية بعلبك

فايروس كورونا

يمكنك حماية نفسك والآخرين من فيروس كورونا

خليك بالبيت

بتحمي حالك .. وبتحمي الكل



#خليك_بالبيت



BAALBECK MUNICIPALITY

www.facebook.com/baalbeck-municipality

www.baalbak.org

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat

In addition to what was previously mentioned, Municipalities undertook regular sanitization of public spaces such as the roads, the streets, the shops...

To illustrate this, in the following you can see some pictures of the endeavors undertaken by the Municipality of Baalbeck in collaboration with the Islamic Health Society and the Civil Defense.

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat



Photo source:
Social Media

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat



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Social Media

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat



Photo source:
Social Media

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat



Mayor of Baalbeck, Mr. Fouad Ballouk, and Vice-Mayor Mostafa Chal during a field visit

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat



Photo source:
Social Media

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat



Photo source:
Social Media

Municipal Responsibility amid the COVID-19 Threat

By mid-March, the Lebanese Government took the decision of putting the entire country in lockdown and declaring a state of health emergency.

The municipalities, including the municipality of Baalbeck, took it upon themselves to aid the Lebanese Government in implementing the lockdown, ensuring safety measures are followed, and curfew hours are observed.

Below are a few pictures to illustrate the measures taken to ensure the safety of all the residents of Baalbeck equally whether local or refugee.

Checkpoints were established at the entrances of the city, where health personnel ensured that all visitors who enter the city are both healthy and not showing symptoms.

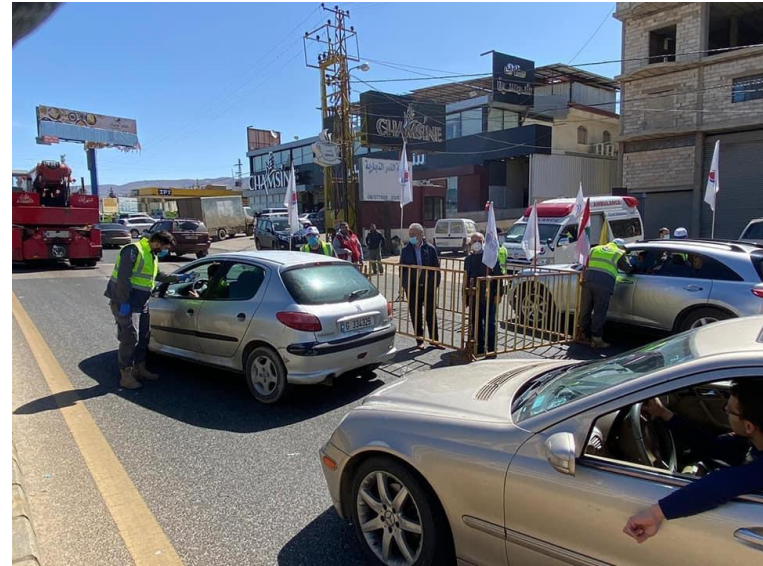


Photo source:
Social Media

Baalbeck Municipalities Union, in collaboration with the official authorities and the NGOs within the region established a Health Committee, tasked with visiting the Syrian refugee camps and implement safety measures.



Photo source: Social Media

Sanitization of tents in Syrian refugee camps



Educational Measures for Refugees and Migrants

As the COVID-19 threat emerged, the first sector to be put in lockdown was the educational sector. So currently, all schools in Lebanon are closed for the safety of the children. At this stage, education is limited to online teaching or broadcasting of the curriculum on the national TV.

Before the lockdown, the UNHCR in collaboration with local educational authorities were working hand in hand to provide proper education to all the residents in Lebanon equally. The main approach used was to open classrooms in the afternoon for the Syrian curriculum to be taught.

Economic Challenges

The COVID-19 was not only challenging on the level of public health, but also on the economic level. As the country went into lockdown, many people who live on daily wages lost their livelihoods; namely the Lebanese who do not receive regular financial aid as well as food and fuel donations from UN agencies such as the UNHCR similarly to the refugees in the region.

The UNHCR has played a pivotal role in ensuring safety and security to the refugees by providing financial aid, food, medical attention, educational enrollment and much more to the refugees especially in the Bekaa area.

Economic Challenges

This left the Lebanese residents to fend for themselves as there still isn't a clear plan to dispatch aid to the most needy families.

The municipality as well as local organizations stepped up to provide food and basic necessities to the most needy, however, as municipalities lack funding and the economic situation in Lebanon worsens; these endeavors are not nearly enough to cater for a small portion of the needy throughout the country whether residents or refugees.

Economic Challenges

On this note I would like to highlight a few key figures about Lebanon:

- Around **40%** of the population lives **below poverty lines**
- **Unemployment rate** are expected to hit **50%** due to the economic situation
- The **purchase power** of the Lebanese has recently been **cut in half** due to the falling of the Lebanese Currency.

The picture after the Coronavirus threat subsides is quite grim, we count on the help of the International Community to persist as a country who never failed to step up and help when help was needed.

Thank you
for your attention!

