



WORLD PRESS PHOTO

2021 Photo Contest, Spot News, Stories, 1st Prize

Port Explosion in Beirut

Photographer

Lorenzo Tugnoli

Contrasto, for The Washington Post

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04 August, 2020

An area of Beirut, Lebanon, lies devastated, after a massive explosion in the port. The blast sent a shockwave through the city, damaging buildings and shattering windows.

At around 6pm on 4 August, a massive explosion, caused by more than 2,750 tons of high density ammonium nitrate, shook Lebanon's capital Beirut. The explosive compound was being stored in a warehouse in the port. Some 100,000 people lived within a kilometer of the warehouse. The explosion, which measured 3.3 on the Richter scale, damaged or destroyed around 8,000 buildings, killed at least 190 people, injured a further 6,000, and displaced as many as 300,000. The ammonium nitrate came from a ship that had been impounded in 2012 for failing to pay docking fees and other charges, and apparently abandoned by its owner. Customs officials wrote to the Lebanese courts at least six times between 2014 and 2017, asking how to dispose of the explosive. In the meantime, it was stored in the warehouse in an inappropriate climate. It is not clear what detonated the explosion, but contamination by other substances, either while in transport or in storage, appear the most likely cause. Many citizens saw the incident as symptomatic of the ongoing problems the country is facing, namely governmental failure, mishandling and corruption. In the days after the blast, tens of thousands of demonstrators filled the streets of central Beirut, some clashing with security forces and taking over government buildings, in protest against a political system they saw as unwilling to fix the country's problems.

About the photographer

Lorenzo Tugnoli

Lorenzo Tugnoli (1979) is a self-taught Italian photographer based in Lebanon who covers the Middle East and Central Asia. He worked extensively around the Middle East b...



Read the full biography →

Technical information

⚙️ **Shutter Speed**

1/160

📏 **Focal length**

35mm

⚙️ **F-Stop**

f/1.8

⚙️ **ISO**

800

📷 **Camera**

Sony ILCE-7RM3



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Proposta per mostra fotografica e tavola rotonda

Lorenzo Tugnoli <lorenzo.tugnoli@gmail.com>

28 settembre 2020 14:15

A: GianAngelo Pistoia <mailto:gianangelo.pistoia@gmail.com>

Cc: <barbara_cappello@yahoo.com>

Gentile signor Pistoia,

grazie mille per il suo messaggio e per il suo interesse nel mio lavoro. Sono molto onorato di questo invito.

Quest'anno è stato un pò lento dal punto di vista lavorativo per me, a causa della pandemia e delle restrizioni sui viaggi che ne sono comportate.

Nei mesi a venire ci saranno quindi una serie di impegni e viaggi. Non sono quindi in grado di poter organizzare una mostra. Inoltre vivo in Libano e vengo in Italia abbastanza di rado.

La ringrazio di nuovo e le faccio tanti auguri per le belle iniziative che sta organizzando.

Un caro saluto

Lorenzo Tugnoli