# Greenpeace: Lebanon pollution linked death rate highest in MENA

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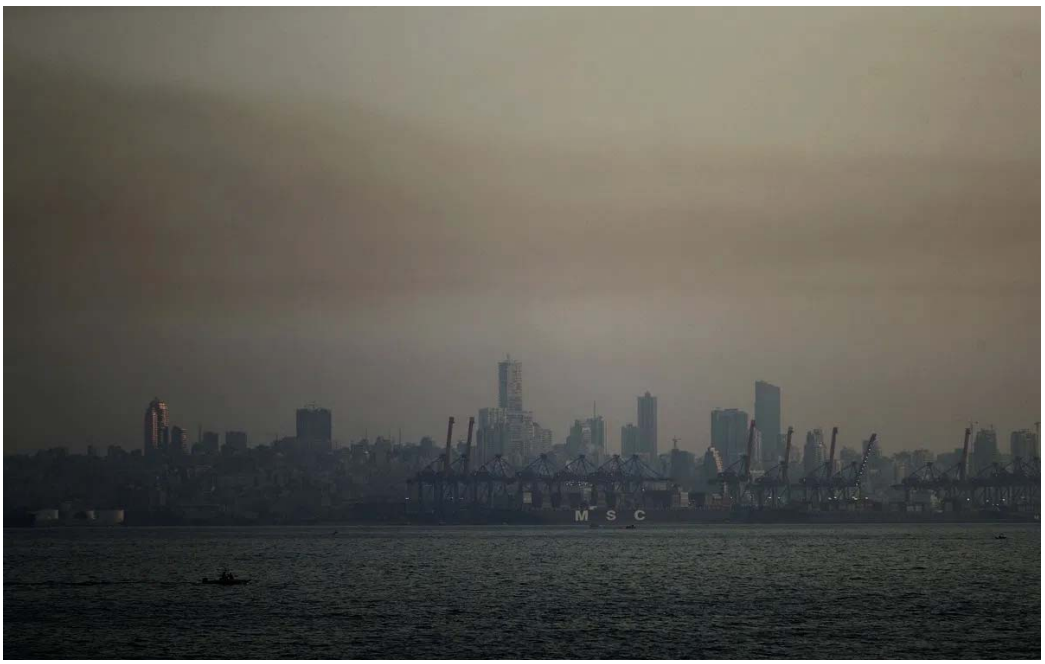


Skyline of the Lebanese capital Beirut covered in smog on 7 June 2019 [JOSEPH EID/AFP/Getty Images]

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Lebanon has the highest pollution linked death rate in the Middle East, a Greenpeace report published yesterday has revealed.

According to the study, entitled "*Toxic Air: The Price of Fossil Fuels*", the estimated number of deaths in Lebanon attributable to fossil fuels was 2,700 in 2018 – a rate of four deaths per 10,000 people.

The rate is one of the highest in the Middle East, alongside Egypt, which has a rate of three deaths per 10,000 people.

The report, which is part of a campaign for the introduction of more renewable energy sources in the region, is particularly timely for highlighting the effect fossil fuel pollution has causing heart and lung diseases, and making residents more vulnerable to respiratory system viruses, such as coronavirus.

"These frightening numbers reveal a hidden and unknown health crisis and sound the alarm about the high levels of air pollution in Lebanon, which put the health and life of every Lebanese citizen at risk," Julien Jreissati, Greenpeace's MENA programme manager, said.

Adding, "Air pollution exposes our societies to chronic diseases, such as heart disease,

diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer, thereby making us more vulnerable to respiratory system viruses, such as COVID-19."

Meanwhile, data from the report shows, fossil fuel-related pollution in Lebanon results in an extra 1.3 million days off work per year. While, economically, the effects of fossil fuel pollution reportedly swallow about two per cent of annual GDP, totalling approximately $1.4 billion per year.

Lebanon is already in the midst of a debilitating economic crisis that has spiralled out of control since anti-government protests started in October last year. The country is facing a severe dollar shortage and is seeking a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the release of large international aid pledges to halt its economic collapse.

According to Jreissati, "in a country that is on the brink of an economic collapse, this cost [the $1.4 billion] puts additional pressure on the finances of Lebanese citizens and their government and reveals an entirely new aspect of our economic crisis."

Greenpeace and Lebanese activists have long been calling for an overhaul of the country's energy sector, which has failed to provide 24-hour electricity anywhere in the country since the end of the civil war in 1990.

Now, Jreissati says, Greenpeace "[calls] upon the Lebanese government, particularly the Minister of Energy, to develop, adopt and implement an ambitious renewable energy plan as a fundamental step towards reducing the primary sources of air pollution and to save the country!"