

Why are there protests in Lebanon?



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Lebanon is a country in the Middle East. Why is it in the news? The Lebanese have taken to the streets demanding better living conditions and a change in current political policies.

The protests started when the government introduced a plan to add a \$0.20 tax on all WhatsApp voice calls. Even though the government dismissed the plan within hours, the demonstrations have continued.

What are they protesting? The Lebanese are tired of living with daily electricity cuts, trash gathered along streets, fluctuating water supplies and high tax rates.

To make matters worse, the country's weak public services have been put under stress with the arrival of more than one million Syrian refugees. The citizens are tired of the widespread corruption that plagues the government and their financial mismanagement.



<https://news.sky.com/story/lebanon-protests-country-unites-against-government-corruption-11841691>

What is the current economic situation in Lebanon? It has one of the world's highest levels of public debt. This means it has borrowed money from businesses from outside the country and even other governments. The debt is pegged at \$86bn, which is many times more than the revenue that the country generates (GDP - Gross Domestic Product which is the total value of goods produced and services provided in the country during one year). The country is unable to repay the loans. One of the things that the government has done to bridge this deficit is to charge high tax rates. This hasn't gone well with the citizens.

How has the government responded? In reply to the protests, PM Saad Hariri and his government have introduced steps to cut Lebanon's huge deficit by cutting politicians' wages by half and giving monetary aid to families in poverty.