

# 'Nuclear like explosion'

Social media yesterday went awash with claims of “nuclear explosion” in Beirut soon after a deadly blast rocked its main port sending out a mushroom-shaped cloud. While the rumour-mill continued to churn out stories, Lebanon PM Hassan Diab on his twitter handle wrote, “We will reveal facts regarding this dangerous warehouse that has been there since 2014.” Below is a look at the way social media reacted to yesterday’s blast



The aftermath of the explosion in Beirut. Picture shared by @Iam\_Mian. Inset, picture of the port before the blast. (Courtesy to @iightishamm)

**TDT** | agencies, social media

The massive explosion in Lebanon which shot huge plumes of darkish-orange cloud and debris into the air producing a distinctive mushroom-shaped cloud made yesterday several to believe that it was indeed a “nuclear blast.”

With the world also nearing the impossible to forget memories of Aug 6, 1945, many were quick to draw similarities.

## “Disaster akin to Hiroshima”

Marwan Abboud, the Governor of Beirut, reportedly called the explosion a “national disaster akin to Hiroshima.”

Within minutes, social media went awash with scary footages, pictures, and concerns shared by people who witnessed from near and far the shocking moments which flattened much of the port and caused several buildings to collapse. The cyclical nature of the internet soon took things to its hands with tweets after tweets claiming a “nuclear blast” in Beirut.

## “That’s atomic”

“Good Lord. Lebanese media says it was a fireworks factory. Nope. That’s a mushroom cloud. That’s atomic,” Leslie Odom-biographer Chris Palmer tweeted out. Palmer then followed this with “The mushroom cloud forms outside of the factory. There is no question that was an atomic bomb. That is a controlled detonation. If every firework went off at the same time

it wouldn’t do that. A fireworks factory exploding wouldn’t blow out windows 10 miles away.”

He, however, deleted the tweet later without explanation.

Meanwhile, footages continued to pour in through twitter handles of the blast showing a column of smoke rising with many rushing to claim the cloud as a “mushroom” and an atomic bomb.

## “Looked like a nuclear blast”

“Never seen an explosion like that unless it was a Bomb, it looked like a Nuclear Blast,” one Twitter user wrote sharing a video of the blast.

## “Are that Israelis?”

Another saw the possibility of Israel dropping a nuclear bomb in Beirut. “Possibility of tactical nuclear weapon/bomb used by the Israelites. Dropped from a very high altitude,” wrote @ Bhutta\_Hammad.

“Looks like the aftermath of a nuclear explosion,” @TruthRaiderHQ wrote on his handle. The user also called for “Contribute blood immediately at local hospitals. All blood types needed.”

Another described the blast as “far larger than you can ever imagine.” The city seems like it has been hit by a small scale nuclear weapon,” wrote @simhkn\_egn.

## Orange grey cloud

“My town in Lebanon is literally 2 hrs away from Beirut and in the sky there’s like an

orange grey cloud like this is a f\*\*\*\*\* nuclear bomb,” wrote another startled citizen.

“Reports said all the windows 15miles from the hit area has blown out and atleast 400 people are dead after something like nuclear hit the city,” wrote @ ALameen\_Yabo.

## Don’t spread “rumours”

Meanwhile, several users rejected the ‘nuclear bomb’ claims asking not to spread “scare and rumours.”

“Dear people of #Lebanon, Port Bomb wasn’t nuclear, or Beirut would’ve been incinerated, not chemical, or people would’ve been choking, foaming at the mouth. It was unusual explosion/bomb, maybe dirty, but not mass destruction,” urged @ hahussain.

“I’m heartbroken, you don’t deserve this, nobody deserves this. I wish our prayers will do something but I doubt. My thoughts and prayers with everyone in #Beirut, Lebanon. It’s looking like nuclear explosion. No idea of exactly what caused the #Lebanon explosion,” wrote @U\_3322.

“This is just clearly wrong. Mushroom clouds form in all explosions — they just stick around a lot longer for big ones. You can tell from the colour of the explosion (deep red/orange) that it is not hot enough to be nuclear (which always starts white/yellow, even small nukes),” said Alex Wellerstein, historian of science at Stevens Institute of Technology to *Forbes*.



Smoke rises after an explosion in Beirut in this picture obtained from a social media video.



A picture shared by social media user @Guldenay007 shows a scene following the blast

## Mushroom is not nuclear

*Forbes* also quoted David Dearborn, a physicist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, as saying, “Contrary to a common misconception, the shape of the mushroom cloud does not depend on the nuclear or thermonuclear component; as you note, a massive detonation of chemical explosives would produce the same effect.”

Dearborn continued: “A mushroom cloud forms when an explosion creates a very hot bubble of gas. In the case of a nuclear detonation, the bomb emits a blast of x-rays, which ionize and heat the surrounding air; that hot bubble of gas is known as a fireball. The hot air is buoyant, so it quickly rises and expands. The rising cloud creates a powerful updraft which picks up dust, forming the stem of the mushroom cloud.”

## 600 to 800 injured

At the time of writing this article reports started claiming that more than 70 died and around 600-800 people were injured.

*MTV Lebanon channel* said the explosion appeared to have been caused by “huge quantities of ammonium nitrate” stored at the port.

So, since that is cleared, for now, we might take some time to know exactly what might have actually caused the disaster in Beirut yesterday.

However, as of now, we can rule out the possibility of “nuclear origin”.