



communiqué

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CLOSING OF CANADIAN EMBASSY - BEIRUT

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, announced today that, on his instructions, the Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon has closed the embassy office in West Beirut and moved the remaining six Canada-based staff members to Jounieh fifteen kilometers north of the capital. Dependents and non-essential Canadian staff have been in Jounieh, a coastal town, since the early days of the crisis.

Although a cease-fire prevails at the moment and the area around the chancery has been relatively free from attacks so far, conditions in the city have deteriorated substantially over the past week. The increased danger along with difficult living conditions and increasing interruptions in communications prompted the decision which was taken on the basis of reports from the Ambassador and elsewhere.

The closing is only temporary and the embassy can and will re-open as soon as conditions improve. In the meantime, embassy personnel will be able to provide some services in Jounieh.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs praised the work of the Ambassador and his staff during eight dangerous and difficult weeks of the Beirut crisis and expressed the hope that the tragedy unfolding in Beirut would soon be brought to an end.