

Anti-government protests sweep Lebanon after government tries to tax WhatsApp

It was the straw that broke the camel's back. After years of corruption and economic mismanagement brought Lebanon to the brink of financial collapse, the government came up with a novel way to repair the damage: a tax on the popular messaging service WhatsApp.

The reaction to the tax was quick and furious. Spontaneous protests erupted late on Thursday, not just in Beirut but across the country. Demonstrators blocked roads, burned tyres and clashed with security forces throughout the night and into the morning.

The government quickly reversed course and abandoned the tax, but it was too late. The protests quickly transformed into an outpouring of rage against corruption, economic crisis and Lebanon's entire political class.

"Our politicians are killing us," said Khaled Dokmak, 23, as he marched towards the parliament building in downtown Beirut on Friday. "Everything is overpriced. There is no work, no money, nothing."

The fires from the previous night in downtown Beirut had still not gone out on Friday morning as new ones were lit. Thousands flocked towards the country's parliament while the government ordered all banks and schools to close. (source [INDEPENDENT](#))

Protests of fires seen from space in Beirut (Lebanon)

[2D layer stack](#)

Sentinel-2 HR optical

Fig.1: Lebanese protest in Beirut on 17 October against their government's decision to tax calls.... © ANWAR AMRO Source: AFP



Fig.2: Sentinel-2 acquired on 18 October 2019 08:19 GMT (11:19 local time).

[2D view](#) [3D view](#) [2D animation](#)

