



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

PROTECTION BRIEF LEBANON

OCTOBER 2024



Operational Context & Analysis

Since 8 October 2023, daily exchange of fire between Israel and armed groups in Lebanon has significantly intensified, characterized by large-scale displacement and loss of civilian life and casualties, damage to infrastructure, destruction of agricultural land and livestock, and the disruption of basic services including healthcare centers, water facilities, and schools in Lebanon. While the scope of impact had previously centered on south Lebanon, the rapid and sustained escalation of multi-faceted attacks by Israel across Lebanon since mid-September 2024—including sustained airstrikes against densely populated urban areas in Lebanon’s capital Beirut—has displaced hundreds of thousands of Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinian refugees, refugees of other nationalities, and migrants in under one month. As of 21 October 2024—one year from the onset of hostilities—the UN estimates that over 809,000 people have been internally displaced in Lebanon in the past year, and over 425,000 Lebanese, Syrians, and other population groups have been displaced across the border into Syria since the mid-September 2024 escalation.

This deteriorating security situation compounds Lebanon’s ongoing socioeconomic and political crises, whereby limited state capacity to provide basic services has become further strained. Moreover, the crisis comes atop the protracted displacement of 1.5 million Syrian refugees (*per government estimates*), whereby many challenges faced by Syrians have been compounded by a constrained protection environment in recent years, including increased administrative measures impacting access to residency, livelihood, and shelter.

Key Trends & Figures

As of **21 October 2024**, a year of hostilities had resulted in*:

809,043

Internally displaced people
 (35% children, 34% women)
 (~700K since 17 September)
 – Gov. estimates >1 million

11,564

Injuries (**8,885** since 17 September), including **77** health personnel

2,083

Casualties (**1,151** since 17 September), including **95** health personnel

1,094

Collective shelters (901 full, with **191,900 est.** people accommodated)

106

Health facilities closed (100 primary healthcare centers; 6 hospitals)

28

Water facilities damaged (**364,000** people affected)

Sources: OCHA, IOM, Ministry of Public Health, Disaster Risk Management Unit (21 October 2024)

From the onset of hostilities on 8 October 2023 until August 2024, over **110,000** people (51% women and girls) had been displaced within Lebanon (*per IOM*), with 97% from the southern governorates of Bint Jbeil, Marjaayoun, and Tyre. As hostilities escalated countrywide in September 2024, nearly **700,000** additional people have been displaced within one month, with those from Tyre, Nabatiyeh, and Bint Jbeil accounting for 61% of the total. Over 90% of the displaced have relocated northward, including to Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and as far north as Akkar governorates.

In this context, refugees have been gravely impacted by the situation, compounded by restricted movement, concerns about legal status, and inequitable access to emergency and essential services. Since October 2023, an estimated **340,000** Syrians known to UNHCR are residing in areas most affected by hostilities, resulting in secondary displacement within Lebanon and return to Syria under adverse circumstances. Of those **425,000** who have crossed into Syria, an estimated 72% are Syrian.

Protection risks

Protection Risk I

Ongoing threats to physical safety, including access to emergency accommodation

As hostilities and civilian casualties increase, communities—notably in South, Bekaa, Baalbek, and Beirut—face dire insecurity in homes, public spaces, and roads, with limited perceived safe areas and regular airstrikes portending life threatening damage (including to dense urban residential infrastructure and healthcare facilities), alongside risks from unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war. As of 21 October 2024, over 11,500 people have been injured and over 2,000 killed as a result of such incidents, with the majority occurring since mid-September 2024, per the Ministry of Public Health.

In this context, lack of access to emergency shelter for hundreds of thousands of displaced has compounded safety risks, with growing numbers of families in several regions sleeping in the open amid limited collective shelter capacity. Areas considered relatively safe are congested with families and cars from all communities who have not yet found shelter.

Critically, displaced refugees and migrants across Lebanon face challenges of equal access to collective shelter, while some displaced Lebanese reportedly struggle to find rental space amid landowner fears of perceived affiliation, with associated risks of rising sectarian conflict if such practices continue. Syrian and other families, in turn, face continued and growing risk of eviction due to rental price increases and opportunistic exploitation of tenants. For homeless families, the situation is intensified by exposure to the elements in the impending rainy and snowy winter season and a reported rise in physical attacks and abuse.

In parallel, for affected Syrians, safety risks are coupled by a pre-existing context of increased administrative measures, evictions, and instructions by Lebanese authorities to vacate entire areas targeting those without legal residency, including in conflict zones. As a result, those without documentation (notably men) or who fear arrest or deportation have self-restricted movements in recent months. Others report an inability to relocate from unsafe areas due to lack of funds for transport, lack of options, or administrative barriers to accessing municipalities or shelter. Still others opt for family separation, with some family members pursuing safer areas while other members stay behind. Conversely, some families have begun to return home to conflict-affected areas due to exhausted resources.

Protection Risk II

Individual protection risks for the most vulnerable (gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, and persons with specific needs (PwSN))

Amid both protracted and new displacement, insecurity, financial vulnerability, and other strains, there is an elevated risk of abuse, exploitation, and violence against women,



An older woman and two young children sit in a school classroom in Beirut that has been converted into collective shelter space © UNHCR

children, and other vulnerable groups. Since the onset of hostilities in October 2023, this has included emotional violence against displaced women by hosting families and elevated reports and severity of intimate partner violence in both conflict-affected areas and within displaced families. For those in collective shelters since September 2024, lack of lighting, partitions, and privacy (including communal WASH facilities) elevate risks for women and girls, while those on the streets face risks of harassment and abuse. Family separation further increases risks to women and children. In this context, UNHCR partners raise the urgent need for menstrual hygiene products, noting such purchases may be deprioritized amid other household pressures, exposing women and girls to health concerns.

For children, risks of separation from family; risks of violence in the home, sexual harassment, and other abuses; and critical mental health needs are elevated. A lack of stable shelter and countrywide delays in the start of the academic year amid disruption of 77% of public schools (*per Ministry of Education and Higher Education*) threatens children's immediate safety and disrupts access to learning, healthcare, and other basic support. For those impacted by hostilities since October 2023, protection actors have also observed increased engagement in child labor, including its worst forms (hazardous agricultural and construction work). In parallel, protection actors report a rise in child marriage, sexual harassment, and abuse of children in overcrowded hosting homes.

Finally, persistent insecurity, infrequent or late-night/time-bound evacuation alerts issued by the Government of Israel, displacement, homelessness, and *ad hoc* shelter space pose particular risks to those with mobility issues and other constraints, notably older people and people with disabilities. Collective shelters—rapidly identified and established—often lack necessary accommodations for accessibility, while those displaced without shelter may struggle to access needed resources for support. Similarly, those with limited literacy and/or limited comfort with technology may struggle to access digital information or services, instead relying on in-person identification and referrals that are themselves impacted by access constraints.

Protection Risk III

Urgent mental health needs

In parallel, communities countrywide report dire mental health conditions due to instability, mounting airstrikes, frequent sonic booms, evacuation alerts, displacement, and

associated strain, notably among caregivers, children, and older people. Indicators of significant deterioration in mental health include panic attacks, disrupted sleep, substance abuse leading to risks of violence, child neglect, and child bedwetting, among others. GBV survivors since October 2023 have exhibited increased mental health needs, with reported substance abuse, lost sleep, aggressive behaviors, and depression. Similarly, high levels of distress have been reported among children, who urgently need tailored support.

Key elements of protection response

Recognizing the long-standing and extensive protection response architecture in Lebanon and its role within the humanitarian coordination system—including existing partners, community-based structures, and coordination mechanisms for planning and individual case referral—UNHCR’s Protection approach repurposes and upscales current systems to accommodate all population types with **flexible, area-based, and inclusive cross-population adaptations** for provision of services.

In line with this plan, UNHCR continues to prioritize objectives established in October 2023 when hostilities began:

- **Advocacy** for cross-population response, equitable access to emergency shelter and other services, and community-based approaches inclusive of refugees and other vulnerable groups.
- **Provision of child protection, GBV, and PwSN assistance inside and outside collective shelters** with an emphasis on high-risk cases, including provision of case management, Emergency Protection Cash Assistance, group and individual psychosocial support (PSS) and psychological first aid (PFA), specialized services, and complementary community-based support.
- **Accountability: Information provision and two-way feedback and response**, including life-saving information and referrals via diverse modalities (informational websites, social media, hotlines, digital messaging, information desks, in-person support, and community-based structures).
- **Community mobilization, engagement, and access to safe spaces**, including engaging existing community-based volunteer structures for identification and referral of urgent cases, information sharing, and organization of activities, as well as sustaining community centers as safe hubs for information and assistance, wifi/charging, psychosocial support and group activities, and child-friendly spaces.
- **Legal assistance**, including support with legal documentation and residency.
- **Mainstreaming protection**, including infusion of *Do No Harm* and core protection principles through coordination, cross-sectoral engagement, and capacity building.
- **Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)**, including reinforcing existing reporting and referral architecture, with renewed communication and cross-sectoral humanitarian actor capacity for complaint, feedback, and response.
- **Protection Monitoring**: Systematic analysis of cross-population protection risks, coping strategies, and needs in collaboration with other protection actors (via regular monitoring visits, surveys, participatory dialogue, and review of feedback through existing two-way feedback and response platforms).

UNHCR Lebanon Accountability Infrastructure for Scaled Response



HELP Lebanon
help.unhcr.org/lebanon



National Call
 Center



HELP Online
 Contact Form



WhatsApp
 Channel & SMS



1,000 Community
 Volunteers



31 Community
 Centers



Frontline staff
 & partners

Challenges & Opportunities

The most urgent needs across communities are access to safe shelter, core relief items (mattresses, blankets, clothing), healthcare and medicine, food, cash assistance, and protection services. Yet, the latest displacement has largely overwhelmed the response capacities of all actors. Displaced families rendered homeless have settled in streets, parks, informal settlements, or continue to travel to areas perceived to be safer near family or to cross into Syria—including via unofficial routes with associated risks of landmines and exploitation. In parallel, the response is hindered by the displacement of humanitarian staff and movement limitations due to the security situation, particularly in the South and Bekaa.

Restricted community movement impacting access to safety and services

As fears grow, communities in affected areas increasingly report an unwillingness to move to other shelters or to access services or assistance due to risks on roadways, thereby diminishing identification, referral, and access of the most vulnerable.

For those willing and able to move, some have reported that local authorities apply administrative measures, such as restricting daytime movement, for security reasons. For Syrians, there is a pre-existing fear that restrictions will be augmented by raids, arrests, and deportation for those without legal residency. Moreover, amid the recent increase in residency fees, some Syrian families have prioritized male members for renewal of permits in recent months, limiting safe movement for others and thus access to services.

Unsafe operating environment

In parallel, protection partners have limited access to the most affected areas due to safety and security considerations. This has been coupled by supply chain disruptions to conflict-affected areas in some cases. In this context, the role of localized trained community volunteers is critical, including for provision of information, PFA, and referrals. As feasible, multi-sectoral interventions can serve a critical function in maximizing reach.

Key messages/key asks

Protection of civilians

As hostilities persist, protection of civilians including humanitarian workers in line with international humanitarian law must be ensured. Such protection is critical to facilitate community access to urgently needed protection and assistance services, relocation to safer areas, and outreach to communities by humanitarian actors providing interventions.

Equal access to emergency response and services

The humanitarian community is committed to support the Government of Lebanon to address the significant challenges and displacement facing the country, recognizing that such response should ensure that all affected people regardless of nationality, legal status, age, gender, or other diversity have equal access to services and safety, including shelter.

Protection priorities

Amid ongoing large-scale displacement, all communities face urgent protection needs, including threats to physical safety and risks of homelessness; individual risks against the most vulnerable (including those related to GBV, child protection, and specific needs); and critical mental health needs. Similarly, access to relevant, accurate, and timely information and mechanisms for two-way communication remain critical, including for those considering crossing the border into Syria, seeking urgent assistance, restricted to inaccessible areas, or otherwise engaged in rapid decision making amid the deteriorating security situation.

Centrality of protection

Concurrent with response for urgent shelter, basic assistance, and healthcare needs, the centrality of protection for community and individual response should be sustained and strengthened. This includes age, gender, and diversity considerations for inclusion of the most vulnerable, the prioritized role of communities at the center of response planning and programming, and ensuring accountability to all affected communities.

Funding and resource needs

In support of the Government-led emergency response, the humanitarian community launched a Flash Appeal to enable partners to rapidly deliver humanitarian assistance. The appeal seeks \$425.7 million to assist 1 million people affected by the crisis over the next three months. As part of this Interagency response, UNHCR released an Emergency Appeal for Lebanon, urgently seeking \$111 million to scale up its response and cover immediate needs across all vulnerable communities, including Lebanese and refugees.

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