



## Middle East Situation

### Lebanon – Flash Update #4

23 – 29 March 2026

UNHCR Representative in Lebanon, Karolina Lindholm Billing together with the Chinese Ambassador in Lebanon, H.E. Chen Chuandong, visited a public school turned into a collective shelter in Saida hosting displaced people. ©UNHCR

#### PEOPLE FORCED TO FLEE

**1,049,328**

Displaced people registered through Lebanon's government relief platform (Source: MoSA 16 March at 17:00)

**136,147**

Internally displaced people hosted in collective shelters (Source: DRM as of 29 March 2026 at 17:00)

**663**

Operational emergency collective shelters (Source: DRM as of 29 March 2026 at 17:00)

**175,134**

Syrians who have crossed back to Syria between 2-27 March (Source: Syria GAPC)

**27,343**

Lebanese have crossed to Syria between 2-27 March (Source: Syria GAPC)

#### OVERVIEW

- Escalation and access constraints**  
 Over the past week, hostilities intensified with continued strikes on civilian infrastructure, including the destruction of key bridges and transport roads in southern Lebanon, significantly restricting movement and humanitarian access. These disruptions are [cutting off parts of the south, affecting access to services and assistance for an estimated 150,000 people](#), and increasing isolation risks for communities under pressure.
- Economic impact and political developments**  
 In response to the targeting of bridges, President Aoun warned that parts of southern Lebanon are being deliberately isolated and called for international action, amid wider political debate following Israeli statements on establishing a buffer zone.
- Civilian casualties and attacks on essential services**  
 Civilian casualties continued to rise, with [1,238 killed including 51 first responders](#). Lebanese authorities have documented repeated attacks affecting health workers, emergency responders, and media professionals, raising serious concerns regarding the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law.
- Rising social tensions and diplomatic warnings**  
 Signs of rising social tensions have been observed across several regions, driven by a convergence of displacement pressures, access constraints, economic stress, and an increasingly polarized information environment. Growing host community fatigue, anti-IDP rhetoric, misinformation related to security developments, and localized clashes all risk further destabilizing already fragile social cohesions. Diplomatic efforts continue, but fears grow that Lebanon could become the biggest loser of a protracted regional war. [The UN Secretary-General warned that “the Gaza model must not be replicated in Lebanon,”](#) underscoring international alarm over the consequences of further escalation.



## COORDINATION

Under the leadership of the Minister of Social Affairs and within the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) framework, UNHCR Lebanon co-leads the Inter-Sector Coordination Group with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), OCHA, and UNDP. UNHCR also co-leads the Protection Sector with MoSA and Oxfam; the Shelter/Core Relief Items Sector with MoSA and the Norwegian Refugee Council, and co-chairs the Cash Working Group (CWG) alongside MoSA and World Vision International.

In situations of internal displacement, UNHCR plays a coordination and response role within the sectors it co-leads with the Government and NGOs, while maintaining overall responsibility for the refugee response in line with its mandate.

## SUPPORTING DISPLACED FAMILIES IN COLLECTIVE SHELTERS

As hostilities intensify and expand, triggering large-scale displacement of civilians from their homes, **collective shelters** activated by the Government have become a critical refuge for families not able to find accommodation with family and friends, or afford rentals. Under the leadership and advice of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), leading the Government’s emergency response, UNHCR’s immediate priority was to help ensure people arriving at these shelters had a safe space to sleep. In coordination with the authorities, UNHCR has so far supported more than **420 collective shelters** across the country with over **190,000 core relief items** such as mattresses, blankets, and sleeping mats, so families arriving with nothing were not forced to sleep on bare floors.

As the emergency evolves, UNHCR has begun improving living conditions inside selected shelters, including partitioning classrooms to give families greater privacy and dignity, and carrying out basic upgrades to shared facilities, including toilets and washing areas. These measures are especially important in overcrowded settings, helping reduce stress and protection risks for women and children, and making the facilities more accessible for older people and people with disabilities.

Once approvals were granted by MoSA, UNHCR and partner organisations rapidly started protection activities inside collective shelters. To date, protection services have been delivered inside nearly **600 collective shelters**, reaching almost **6,000 displaced people**. These include recreational activities for children, psychosocial support, and individual support and counselling for displaced people with specific needs – helping families cope with trauma, access services, and make informed decisions during displacement.



UNHCR delivers an awareness session for displaced refugees at a collective shelter in Beirut. ©UNHCR

During a recent visit to a collective shelter hosting more than 1,000 displaced in **Saida**, UNHCR’s Representative highlighted how MoSA representatives, the Saida City Council authorities, and humanitarian organisations like Caritas, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and Urda are working collaboratively with UNHCR to support displaced families both by meeting immediate needs and by helping restore a sense of agency, routine, and purpose for people uprooted by the conflict. [Watch the Representative’s visit to the collective shelter in Saida →](#)

## UNHCR RESPONSE

The escalation of violence is causing profound fear, anxiety, and psychological strain, especially among communities already exhausted by years of instability and repeated displacement. To meet the increasing humanitarian needs of displaced Lebanese and refugees, UNHCR and its partners are providing lifesaving protection services, shelter assistance, core relief items (CRIs), and cash support. Alongside the emergency response to internal displacement, UNHCR continues implementing its essential protection, including community-based protection, shelter, multi-

purpose cash assistance and durable solutions programmes for the refugee population, which are now more critical than ever as the refugees are also impacted in multiple ways by the escalation of hostilities.

## PROTECTION

Families forced to flee are arriving with very little, often after multiple displacements. Many face difficulties accessing shelter, services, and information, especially where movement is restricted. Children are showing signs of distress and disrupted routines; women and girls face heightened risks of harassment and violence in overcrowded shelters and improvised accommodation. People with serious medical conditions struggle to access treatment in new locations. Displaced refugees are particularly exposed, as most lack valid legal residency and regular incomes, and face greater challenges accessing shelter in areas of displacement.

### How UNHCR is responding

UNHCR and its partners are scaling up protection assistance for displaced Lebanese and refugees, with a focus on those most at risk. More than 47,700 displaced people have been reached by protection sector partners with child protection and GBV services, psychosocial support, information on available services, dignity assistance, and individualized support including case management for people with specific needs, both inside and outside collective shelters.

- **Supporting refugees returning under force majeure conditions**

Since 2 March, increasing numbers of refugees have crossed back into Syria, with almost 172,000 Syrians returning in the past four weeks. These movements are largely driven by the current insecurity and difficult conditions in Lebanon, with some families accelerating planned returns and others leaving in search of security.

In response, UNHCR Lebanon has introduced an exceptional approach to support returns under force majeure, focused on ensuring refugees can access timely, practical assistance while maintaining essential protection safeguards. This includes counselling, protection screening, and a one-off cash grant to help cover immediate return needs.

This approach reflects the need to remain responsive to rapidly evolving circumstances, recognising that returns are taking place regardless, and that support is critical to reducing risks associated with unassisted movements. The regular voluntary repatriation programme has been postponed due to the urgent emergency response.

- **Tracking refugee displacement and prioritizing those most at risk**

More than 2,000 displaced refugee families have been identified through UNHCR's refugee displacement tracking tool as of 29 March. Around a fifth of those identified have serious medical conditions. Based on these assessments, more than 2,300 referrals have been made to protection services, emergency cash and shelter support.

- **Community Development Centres (CDCs)**

UNHCR supports 16 operational CDCs across Lebanon, which continue to serve as one-stop hubs for displaced Lebanese and refugees. Since early March, CDCs have assisted over 8,000 people, two-thirds of whom are women and girls, with information on available services and assistance, psychosocial support, counselling, and referrals, including to shelter options and emergency assistance. CDC staff are also deployed to collective shelters, where they support outreach, awareness-raising, and recreational activities, strengthening community-based protection and trust at a time of heightened displacement.

- **Emergency protection cash to address acute risks**

UNHCR is providing Emergency Protection Cash Assistance (EPCA) to the most vulnerable displaced refugee families so that they can pay for immediate protection needs such as safe transport away from high-risk areas, temporary accommodation, or urgent medical care. Since the start of the escalation, 738 EPCA grants have been issued, reaching 3,611 vulnerable displaced refugees. Training has been rolled out to partner staff to speed up the identification and support of high-risk cases.



Over one million people are registered as displaced in Lebanon due to the Israeli strikes and repeated evacuation warnings. A few hundred displaced families have found refuge on Beirut's waterfront, sleeping in tents or in their cars. ©UNHCR

- **Accountability to Affected People (AAP)**

UNHCR continues to engage displaced communities through multiple AAP platforms to ensure timely access to information and feedback channels despite access and connectivity constraints. Since early March, UNHCR has processed 2,700+ calls and online messages related to displacement, while the emergency HELP webpage recorded nearly 10,000 views. UNHCR's WhatsApp channel now reaches over 73,000 subscribers, significantly expanding access to verified information. The most common queries relate to shelter availability, access to assistance, documentation, and safety, enabling UNHCR and partners to adapt response priorities based on real-time community concerns.

### Fleeing the night to find security

Hind fled from Nabatiyeh with her son and sick daughter to find shelter in Tripoli. They are 4 families staying in 1 classroom in this collective shelter.

*"We came from the south because of the war. We woke up around 2 a.m. to the sound of explosions. I hitchhiked with my daughter and my son. We kept moving from one vehicle to another for 48 hours until we managed to get here." – Hind Naser El Din, Syrian refugee*

©UNHCR



## SHELTER AND CORE-RELIEF ITEMS

With over one million people forced to flee in a matter of weeks, demand for safe shelter has outpaced available space. Many collective shelters are public buildings, mainly schools, that were never designed to host large numbers of people overnight. They require partitioning to give families privacy, as well as repairs and adaptations to make bathrooms accessible and safe, particularly for older people and those with limited mobility.

Access to safe shelter is especially constrained for refugees and other non-Lebanese. While the Government has reaffirmed an inclusive approach, the actual accessibility of shelters for refugees has been uneven, leaving families to rely on overcrowded apartments, unfinished buildings, or even cars and streets. Families who arrive with nothing also need basic items to cope in unfamiliar settings and difficult weather conditions.

### How UNHCR is responding

UNHCR and its partners are working in close coordination with MoSA and the DRM and DRR units to ensure that people forced to flee areas under attack and evacuation have access to safe shelters and core-relief items (CRIs) as quickly as possible on arrival to safer areas of Lebanon:

- **Providing essential supplies so families are not sleeping on bare floors**

Since 2 March, UNHCR has assisted more than 73,879 displaced people in 442 collective shelters across all governorates, distributing close to 200,000 essential items – blankets, mattresses, sleeping mats, solar lamps, jerrycans and sleeping bags. This has helped families arriving with nothing to stay warm and store and carry water safely.

- **Making collective shelters more dignified and accessible**

UNHCR and partners are carrying out minor works in selected collective shelters to improve the dignity of the living conditions. Partitions have been installed in 206 classrooms hosting 423 displaced families in the Bekaa and northern Lebanon to improve privacy. Additionally, repair works on collective shelters in the Bekaa – including improvements to water and sanitation facilities and weatherproofing to keep out rain and cold – have benefited 177 displaced Syrian refugees, especially women, children, older people, and people with disabilities.

- **Reaching displaced refugees inside and outside collective shelters**

Following an Inter-Ministerial Committee decision to allocate dedicated shelters for non-Lebanese in each governate, UNHCR is working with local authorities to identify and equip these sites. So far, 14 collective shelters have been opened specifically for refugees and other non-Lebanese who cannot access other locations, providing urgently needed safe spaces for families who previously had nowhere to go. Outside collective shelters, UNHCR has assisted 825 Syrian refugees displaced in informal tented settlements and individual shelters through the distribution of more than 2,700 core relief items.

- **Supporting people remaining in hard-to-reach front-line areas through convoys**

So far, UNHCR has contributed essential supplies to 4 inter-agency convoys reaching communities remaining in front-line municipalities of Rmeich, Qlayaa, Hasbaya, and Tibnin in the South. These convoys deliver mattresses, blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets, and solar lamps to families sheltering in areas where local services are stretched and movement is dangerous.



*UNHCR, together with the European Union and the Governments of Ireland and Italy, welcomed a humanitarian airbridge flight on 26 March carrying urgently needed emergency relief items to support the growing number of forcibly displaced families across Lebanon. ©UNHCR*

## CASH ASSISTANCE

Most displaced households are staying outside collective shelters, hosted by relatives, renting temporary accommodation, or staying in informal arrangements. They need money to pay rent, buy food and medicine, and cover transport and other basic costs. Without support, families are more likely to incur debt, cut back on essential items, resort to dangerous coping strategies, or seek accommodation in the collective shelters that have been activated to host displaced families – adding to the pressure on these.

The Government's Shock Responsive Safety Net (SRSN) allows emergency payments to Lebanese households from evacuated areas. However, refugees affected by the escalation are not covered, even though many have lost their sources of income and face the same rising costs of living as Lebanese families.

### **How UNHCR is responding**

Where markets continue to function and goods are available, financial support remains one of the most efficient and dignified ways to help people meet their needs:

- **Complementing the SRSN for refugees**

In close coordination with MoSA and within the framework of UNHCR's and WFP's long-standing joint action on multipurpose cash assistance to Syrian refugees, UNHCR is providing Emergency Multipurpose Cash Assistance to vulnerable displaced refugee families who are not covered by the SRSN, with the first round of payments to refugees already made. The aim is to align targeting, transfer value, and duration with the Government system so that assistance is coherent and predictable, and families receive similar levels of support regardless of nationality.

## UNHCR Emergency Appeal for Lebanon USD 61 million

The **Lebanon Flash Appeal** calls for **US\$ 308.3 million** to provide lifesaving assistance and protection to one million affected people over three months, from March to May 2026. Within the framework of this appeal, **UNHCR requires US\$ 61 million** to reach **600,000** displaced people with protection, shelter, core-relief items, and cash assistance. These programs are aimed to reinforce and complement the Government-led emergency response, and the funding for the appeal should enable humanitarian partners to rapidly scale up assistance across priority sectors over the three-month period. Confirmed funding and projections against the emergency appeal reach approximately a **quarter of needs** to date.

As of the end of February 2026, UNHCR in Lebanon was only **14% funded** – with overall needs totalling US\$ 472.3 million. Flexible and timely contributions are essential to:

- Maintain live-saving protection services;
- Improve and scale-up collective shelters so they are safe, dignified, and accessible;
- Provide financial support to the most vulnerable displaced households, especially those outside shelters;
- Replenish essential supplies so that UNHCR can respond quickly to further waves of displacement.

UNHCR is grateful to donors who have already stepped up to support and welcomes additional flexible contributions that enable teams on the ground to adapt quickly as the situation evolves. Special thanks to France, the EU, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland for their swift support to UNHCR's emergency response.

### UNHCR and partners presence

UNHCR maintains presence in Lebanon through its Country Office and three Field Offices (Beirut, Tripoli, and Zahle) with a workforce of more than 300 personnel. We deliver our programmes with 13 I/NGO partners (9 national, 4 international) and in close coordination and collaboration with the Government of Lebanon.



UNHCR is grateful for the support from our donors who contributed to this operation

Australia | Austria | Canada | China | Denmark | European Union | Finland | Germany | Iceland | Ireland | Italy | Monaco | Netherlands (Kingdom of the) | Norway | Republic of Korea | Sweden | Switzerland | Private donors

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