

Lebanon Crisis Update

April 2024 ■ ■



Credit: Rabih Daher/AFP

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The Monthly Lebanon Crisis Update provides an overview of economic and political developments to alert the international aid response to new and emerging challenges that could impact the humanitarian situation in Lebanon. In the context of the multiple crises affecting Lebanon, the update tracks the impact of political developments on the economy, relevant international developments, updates on service delivery and governance issues, and analysis of the drivers of humanitarian need as they develop. The report also aims to provide nuanced forecasting on contextual shifts relevant to shifting needs and the implementation of humanitarian programming. The report draws upon a desk review of currently available literature, analysis of relevant quantitative data, and key informant interviews with a range of experts and individuals with knowledge of Lebanon's economy.

The Lebanon Crisis Analytics Team (LCAT) provides reactive and in-depth context analysis to inform the aid community in Lebanon. The information and analysis contained in this report is therefore strictly to inform humanitarian and development actors and associated policymaking on Lebanon.

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Key Takeaways:

- For the third time, Lebanon's parliament has voted to postpone municipal elections, extending the mandates of mukhtars and municipal councils until May 2025. The ongoing cross-border conflict between Hezbollah and the Israeli military was cited as the reason for the delay.
- Israel and Hezbollah continued their escalatory tit-for-tat operations throughout April as both sides targeted areas farther from the border than they had in previous months. These included several strikes by Israeli forces in the Bekaa Valley.
- The murder of Lebanese Forces official and political coordinator Pascal Sleiman was followed by a nationwide string of attacks on Syrian nationals, and renewed calls by politicians for Syrian refugees to be returned to their home country. These tensions come amid calls for Lebanon to cooperate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on safe and voluntary returns, and concerns raised by Human Rights Watch regarding Lebanon's treatment of refugees.
- The president of Lebanon's National Social Security Fund expressed concern that contributions based on the recently increased minimum wage are insufficient to restore the fund's pre-crisis capacity. He estimated a significant revenue shortfall and called for stricter enforcement measures to ensure accurate payroll reporting by private businesses.
- The International Monetary Fund announced that it will fund a safeguard assessment of the Central Bank, in a bid to strengthen the Bank's oversight of commercial banks, ensure proper IMF data reporting, and manage financial assistance to Lebanon.
- Following several appeals by opposition parties, the Constitutional Council suspended eight articles of the 2024 Budget. The Council found that these articles lacked implementation details or deviated from established budgetary principles.



2024

APRIL

The Constitutional Council suspends eight articles of the 2024 Budget.



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The Lebanese Armed Forces announce that Lebanese Forces official Pascal Sleiman was killed by a group of Syrian nationals.

Lebanon's airspace closes to commercial flights in anticipation of Iran's drone and missile attack on Israel.



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The Electricité du Liban employees' union announces that it will go on strike through April 26.

The International Monetary Fund announces that it will fund a safeguards assessment of the Central Bank.



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Prime Minister Najib Mikati meets with European Union officials and requests that aid for Syrian refugees be redirected toward their repatriation.

Human Rights Watch publishes a report condemning Lebanon's discriminatory treatment of Syrian refugees.



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French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné visits Beirut and submits an updated French proposal to end the cross-border conflict between Hezbollah and the Israeli military.





Credit: JOSEPH EID/AFP

Cross-Border Conflict:

Throughout April, Israeli artillery and air raids increasingly focused on Lebanese areas five or more kilometers from the border, damaging homes, commercial spaces, and public infrastructure.¹ Israeli shelling disrupted electrical networks in Maroun al-Ras² and Kfar Hamam,³ and Israeli soldiers fired on journalists and a nearby Électricité du Liban contractor outside Adeisseh, without causing injury.⁴ Israeli gunfire and shelling also hit fishing vessels in Naqoura,⁵ a mosque in Blida,⁶ and farm workers in Al-Mari.⁷ Air strikes damaged roads in southern Lebanon at least three times, making them impassible.⁸ ⁹ Seven civilians were killed during the month, bringing total non-combatant deaths to 75 since fighting started on October 8, and the total number of injured to 1,378.¹⁰ The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) rose slightly from 91,405 at the end of March to 92,621 at the end of April, although the International Organization for Migration reported that 1,770 people had returned to their homes in South Lebanon by the end of April.¹¹ The vast majority of IDPs are living with host families or in rented accommodations, with 2% (1,565) staying at public shelters.¹²

¹ National News Agency, [غارتان إسرائيليّتان بالصواريخ ليلًا استهدفتا مارون الراس](#) April 25, 2024

² Ibid

³ National News Agency, [جرحى في الغارة المعادية أمس على كفرحمام](#), April 5, 2024

⁴ L'Orient Today, [Israel's army announces opening of new crossing point with northern Gaza: Day 189 of the Gaza war](#) April 12, 2024

⁵ National News Agency, [قصف متقطع لأطراف علما الشعب والناقورة فجرا بعد غارات ليلًا خلقت أضرارا مادية جسيمة](#) April 29, 2024

⁶ Al-Manar correspondent Ali Shoeb via X (formerly Twitter), [القصف المدفعي الصهيوني الذي استهدف](#) April 28, 2024

⁷ L'Orient Today, ['Widening Israeli aggression will lead to a wider response,' Hezbollah warns: Gaza war, day 204](#) April 27, 2024

⁸ National News Agency, [غارة على طريق كفر كلا دمرت قصرا وخلفت أضرارا جسيمة في الممتلكات والمنازل المجاورة](#) April 30, 2024;

National News Agency, [غارتان استهدفتا طريق علما الضهرة مما أدى إلى قطعها من الجهتين](#) April 15, 2024;

National News Agency, [غارة على بارين أدت إلى قطع الطريق وسط البلدة](#) April 13, 2024

⁹ L'Orient Today, [War or deal: Lebanon at a turning point](#) April 26, 2024

¹⁰ Ministry of Public Health, [التقرير التراكمي للطوارئ الصحية](#) April 24, 2024

¹¹ IOM, [Mobility Snapshot - Round 33 - 18-04-2024 | Displacement Tracking Matrix](#) April 18, 2024;

IOM, [Mobility Snapshot - Round 30 - 28-03-2024 | Displacement Tracking Matrix](#) March 28, 2024

¹² IOM, [Mobility Snapshot - Round 33 - 18-04-2024 | Displacement Tracking Matrix](#) April 18, 2024

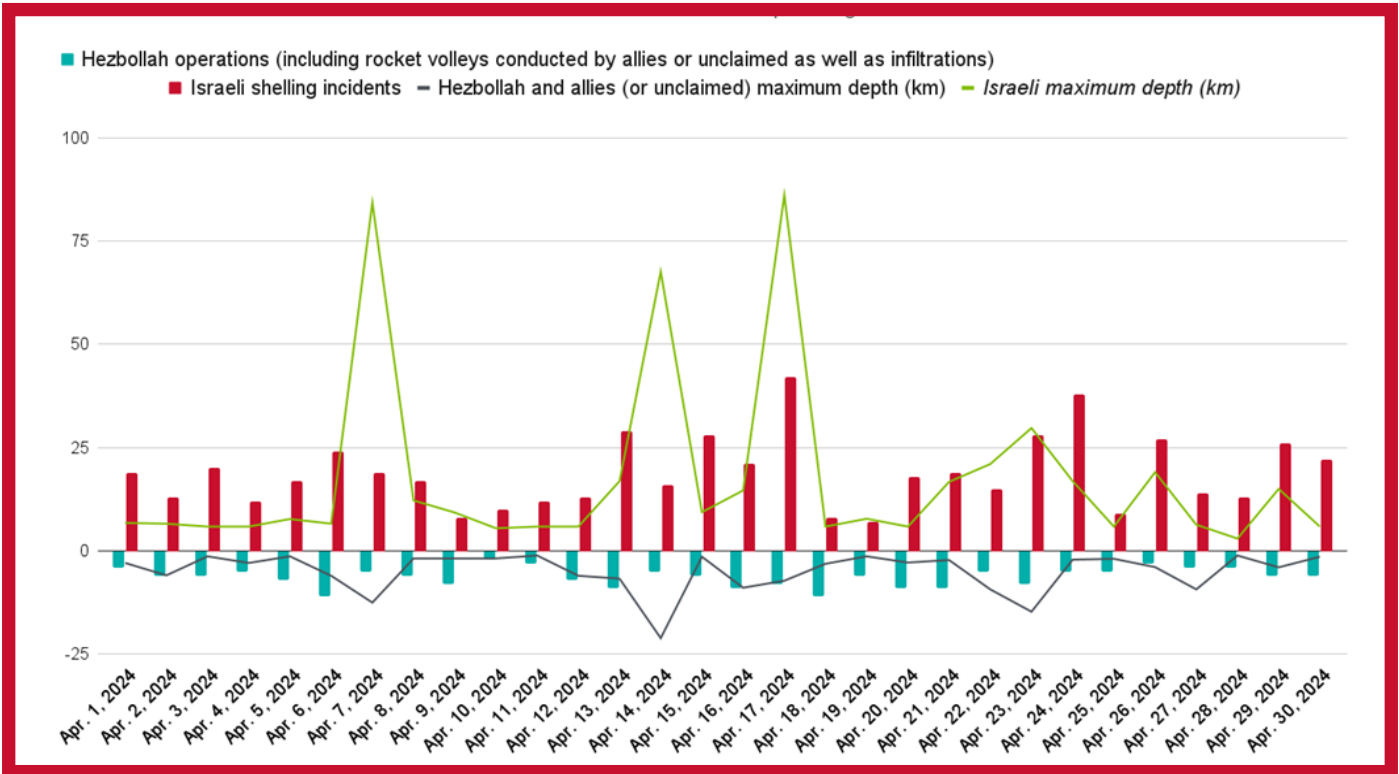


Figure 1: Israel and Hezbollah attacks and their distance from the border throughout April.

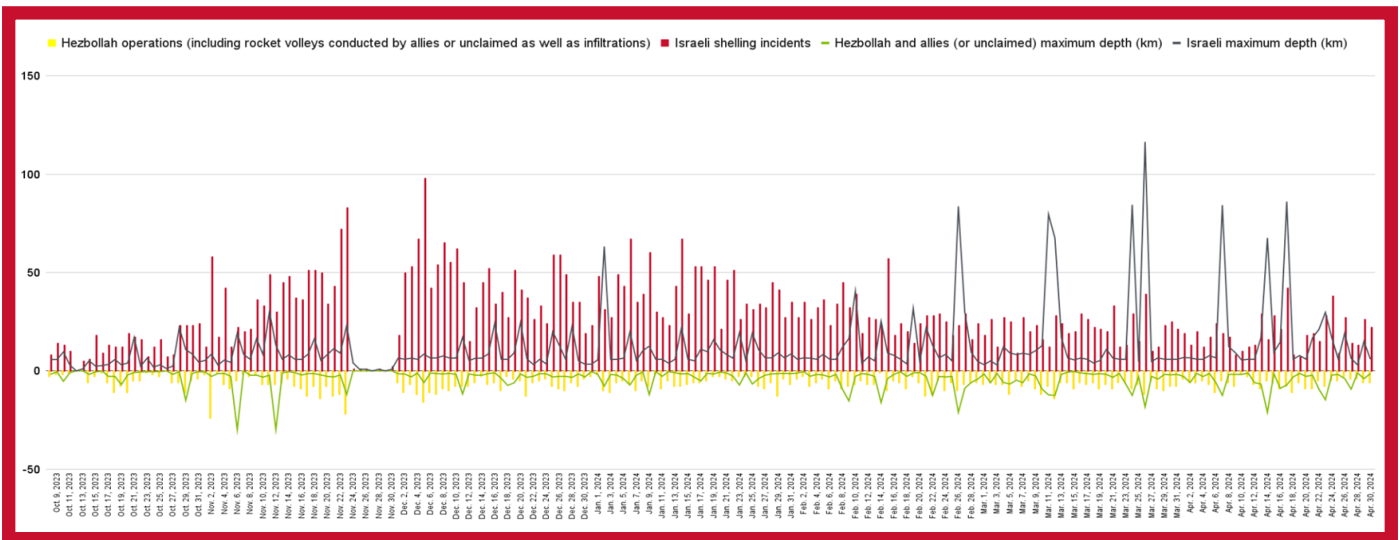


Figure 2: Israel and Hezbollah attacks and their distance from the border since October 8.

When Iran launched a drone and missile strike on Israel on April 13, Lebanon closed its airspace to commercial traffic overnight.¹³ Hezbollah launched dozens of rockets into the Golan Heights on the same night, though it did not officially declare that it was supporting the Iranian attack.¹⁴

¹³ Al-Jazeera, [Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq reopen airspace closed over Iran's attacks on Israel](#) April 14, 2024

¹⁴ The Washington Post, [Mapping the wide-scale Iranian drone and missile attacks](#) April 14, 2024



Israel and Hezbollah continued their escalatory tit-for-tat operations throughout April as both sides targeted areas farther from the border. The Israeli military conducted four targeted assassinations of what it claimed were commanders in Hezbollah’s elite Radwan Forces,¹⁵ in addition to four air raids in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley.¹⁶ Hezbollah downed two Israeli drones¹⁷ and launched explosive-laden drones along Israel’s coast, its closest attack to the Israeli city of Haifa since hostilities erupted on October 8.¹⁸ While overall Israeli shelling dropped in volume for the second month in a row,¹⁹ Israel conducted 115 direct artillery or aerial strikes on residences in southern Lebanon, the same rate as in March.²⁰ The shelling has also shifted progressively northward from the border since the start of the conflict. In April 2024, some 24.68% of Israel’s total fire was directed at areas five kilometers or more from the border, while in October 2023 it stood at 7.3%.²¹ Israeli officials continued to hint at a major military operation to push Hezbollah back from the border, with Israel’s foreign minister on April 30 threatening to occupy a large area in southern Lebanon.²²

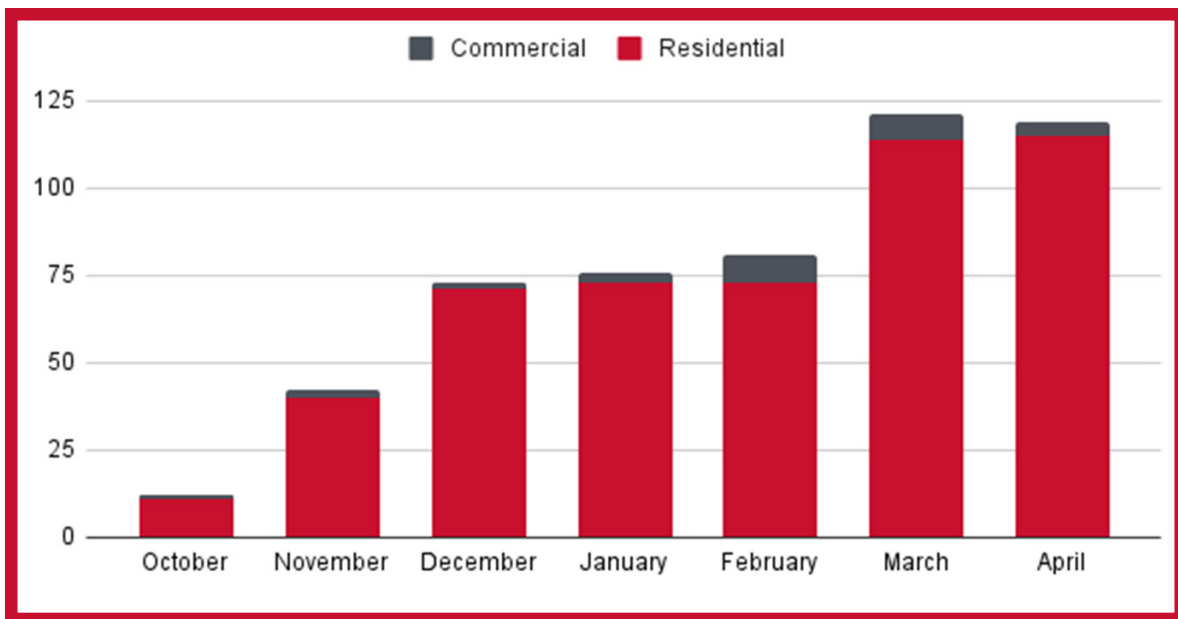


Figure 3: Number of commercial and residential properties directly hit by Israeli shelling since October.

¹⁵ Reuters, [Israel says it killed two Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon](#) April 23, 2024;

L’Orient Today, [Israeli strikes on cars in south Lebanon kill four, including Hezbollah commander](#) April 16, 2024;

Agence France Presse, [Israel says Hezbollah commander killed in Lebanon strike](#) April 8, 2024

¹⁶ LCAT logs all Israeli shelling incidents reported by Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency, Hezbollah’s Al-Manar, and Al-Mayadeen television, along with other outlets when applicable.

The location of these strikes are logged and the geographic distribution of Israel’s strikes are analyzed daily.

¹⁷ The Times of Israel, [Israeli drone downed by Hezbollah missile over south Lebanon](#) April 22, 2024

¹⁸ L’Orient Today, [New strikes from both Hezbollah and Israel: in Lebanon, woman and child killed](#) April 23, 2024

¹⁹ In April, Israel averaged 18.9 reported strikes a day on Lebanon, down from 21 in March, 27.6 in February, 40.2 in January, 43.2 in November, according to LCAT’s analysis of its shelling incident log. In October 2023, the first month of the conflict, Israel averaged 13.1 strikes a day, the only month lower in volume than April 2024.

²⁰ LCAT logs all strikes that cause property damage, noting ones that are direct strikes or indirect strikes, based on media reports of the incidents. As with the shelling tracking, LCAT consults Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency, Hezbollah’s Al-Manar, and Al-Mayadeen television, along with other outlets when applicable.

LCAT logged 114 such attacks in March, 73 attacks each in February and January, 71 in December, 40 in November and 11 in October.

²¹ LCAT logs all reported Israeli shelling incidents and tabulates their distance from the border. As part of LCAT’s analysis, the incidents are sorted between 0 to 5 kilometers, over 5 to 10 kilometers and over 10 kilometers are sorted, to show where Israel is concentrating its fire.

²² The Jerusalem Post, [Katz warns France: If Hezbollah doesn’t withdraw, we’ll occupy southern Lebanon](#) April 30, 2024

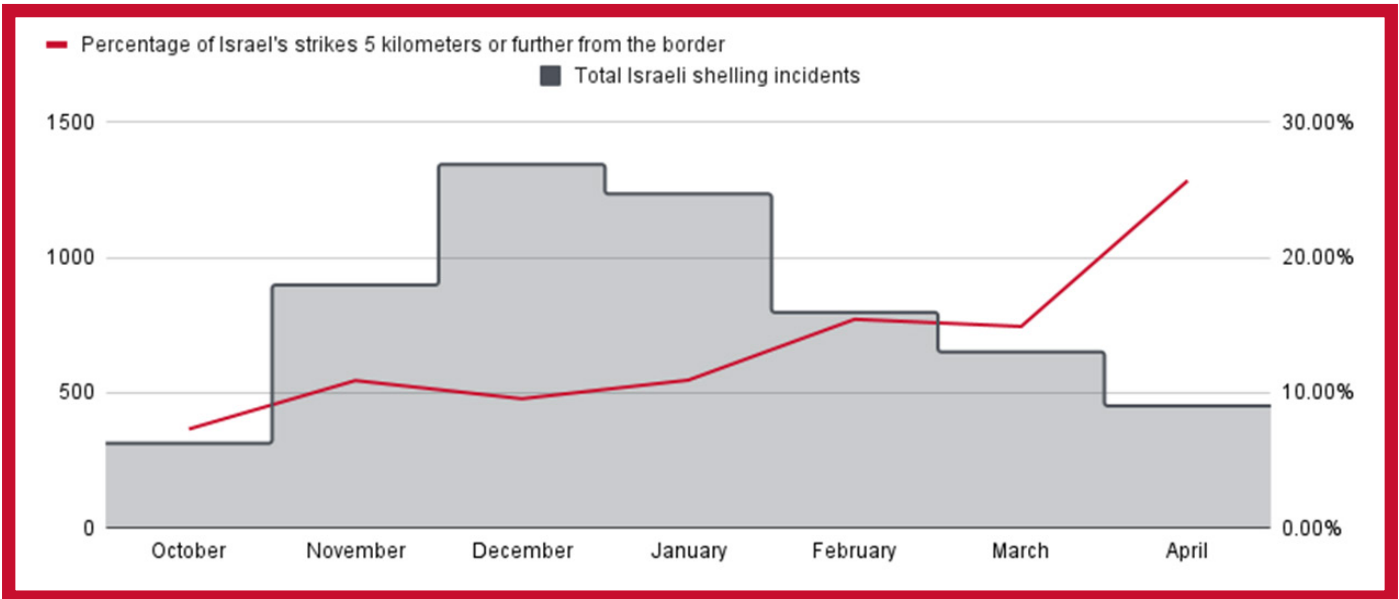


Figure 4: Percentage of Israeli shelling at least five kilometers from border versus total shelling.

On April 28, French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné visited Beirut and presented a revised French proposal for ending fighting along the border.²³ The proposal was drafted in line with a similar United States (US) initiative and entails the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701. The US proposal outlines three steps for de-escalation: a ceasefire on both sides of the border to facilitate the return of residents to their homes; the cessation of hostilities and deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and United Nations Interim Force along the border; and an agreement on demarcating the Lebanese-Israeli border.²⁴ Lebanon has not offered a comprehensive response to the proposal, which would also require Israeli assent.²⁵ Whether or not Lebanon officially adopts the plan likely hinges on Hezbollah, which has repeatedly stated that the conflict along the border will end only when Israel ends its current operation in the Gaza Strip. Séjourné also reportedly asserted that full implementation of UNSCR 1701 is predicated on Lebanon electing a new president.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati declared South Lebanon a devastated agricultural area on April 5.²⁶ According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Israeli shelling in the south has cost Lebanon some 30% of its agricultural output and affected the livelihood of 70% of the region's inhabitants benefiting from this sector. This has led to price increases of locally cultivated fruits and vegetables.^{27 28} The agriculture minister estimated that fighting has resulted in about 3 billion US dollars (USD) worth of losses in the agriculture sector, in addition to environmental damage caused by Israel's use of phosphorus munitions on cultivated areas, herding spaces, and lakes.²⁹

²³ The Associated Press, [Top French diplomat arrives in Lebanon in attempt to broker a halt to Hezbollah-Israeli clashes](#) April 28, 2024

²⁴ L'Orient Today, [French, American efforts converge as Lebanon navigates escalating tensions](#) April 29, 2024

²⁵ LBCI, [Lebanon receives modified French proposal for de escalation and ceasefire in southern Lebanon](#) April 30, 2024

²⁶ Reuters, [Israeli strikes have made south Lebanon a "devastated agricultural area", PM says](#) April 5, 2024

²⁷ Ministry of Agriculture, [وزير الزراعة: القطاع الزراعي تعرض لخسائر كبيرة نتيجة الاعتداءات الإسرائيلية في الجنوب](#) March 19, 2024

²⁸ Ministry of Agriculture, [تراجع الإنتاج الزراعي بنسبة 30%... وزير الزراعة اللبناني الدكتور عباس الحاج حسن: خسائر بمليارات الدول](#) March 22, 2024

²⁹ Nidaa Al Watan, [إنكبة الجنوب تطل كل لبنان إقتصادياً: خسائر بالمليارات... والأمن الغذائي مهتر](#) April 6, 2024



Economic Updates:

The Constitutional Council suspended eight articles of the 2024 Budget and partially suspended eight others.³⁰ The April 4 decision concerned several provisions, including mukhtar stamp prices (40 and 41), state property management (56), tax increases on imported tobacco and electronic cigarettes (83), unpaid income taxes and Value Added Taxes (87), Lebanese University fees (92), new tax imposition on companies (94), and regulatory laws and audited accounts (95).³¹ According to the Council, the articles either lack sufficient detail to explain how they will be implemented or should have been implemented as governmental decrees.³²

National Social Security Fund (NSSF) president Mohammad Karaki announced that contributions based on the new private sector minimum wage are insufficient to accelerate the fund's recovery. In a statement on April 8, Karaki estimated that the NSSF needs 30 trillion Lebanese pounds (LBP) in revenues to recapitalize the fund and restore its pre-crisis service capacity. However, the new minimum wage, totaling LBP 18 million or USD 201,³³ will bring only about LBP 1 trillion in revenues from monthly subscription fees. The president also blamed the Economic Bodies'³⁴ influence for the shortfall in NSSF revenues and called on the government to impose stricter measures and requirements to ensure that private employers disclose their total payroll amounts to the state.

³⁰ L'Orient Today, [Constitutional Council suspends eight articles of the 2024 budget](#) April 5, 2024

³¹ Article 40 details regulations on using and distributing official "Mukhtar" stamps.

Article 56 modifies the mechanisms by which government-owned properties are managed and rented.

Article 83 imposes new fees on trucks importing products to Lebanon but delegates most details for the government to decide later.

Article 87 discusses the process of appealing against imposed taxes on profit and income.

Article 94 mandates that importers who qualify for Central Bank subsidies should pay a 10% tax on profits.

³² Nidaa Al Watan, [المجلس الدستوري يُطل موازٍ تُعَدِّي الخزينة بالإيرادات](#) April 15, 2024

³³ At the LBP/USD 89,500 exchange rate.

³⁴ The Economic Bodies represent the interests of Lebanon's largest private sector industries and businesses during meetings with state institutions.



The Directorate of General Security raised fees on residence and education permits for foreign nationals.³⁵ The measure, implemented on April 20, raised the price of permits from as low as USD 11 (for the lowest category permit) to USD 916. The first, second, third, and fourth category work permits will now cost LBP 82 million (USD 916), LBP 55 million (USD 614), LBP 18 million (USD 201), and LBP 13 million (USD 145), respectively.³⁶

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced it will fund a safeguards assessment of the Central Bank. The assessment should help the Central Bank enhance its oversight of commercial banks through a diagnostic review of its governance mechanisms and control framework. In its April 22 statement, the IMF said that it will examine several key Central Bank operations to “safeguard IMF disbursements and minimize the risk of inaccurate reporting of key data to the IMF.”^{37 38}

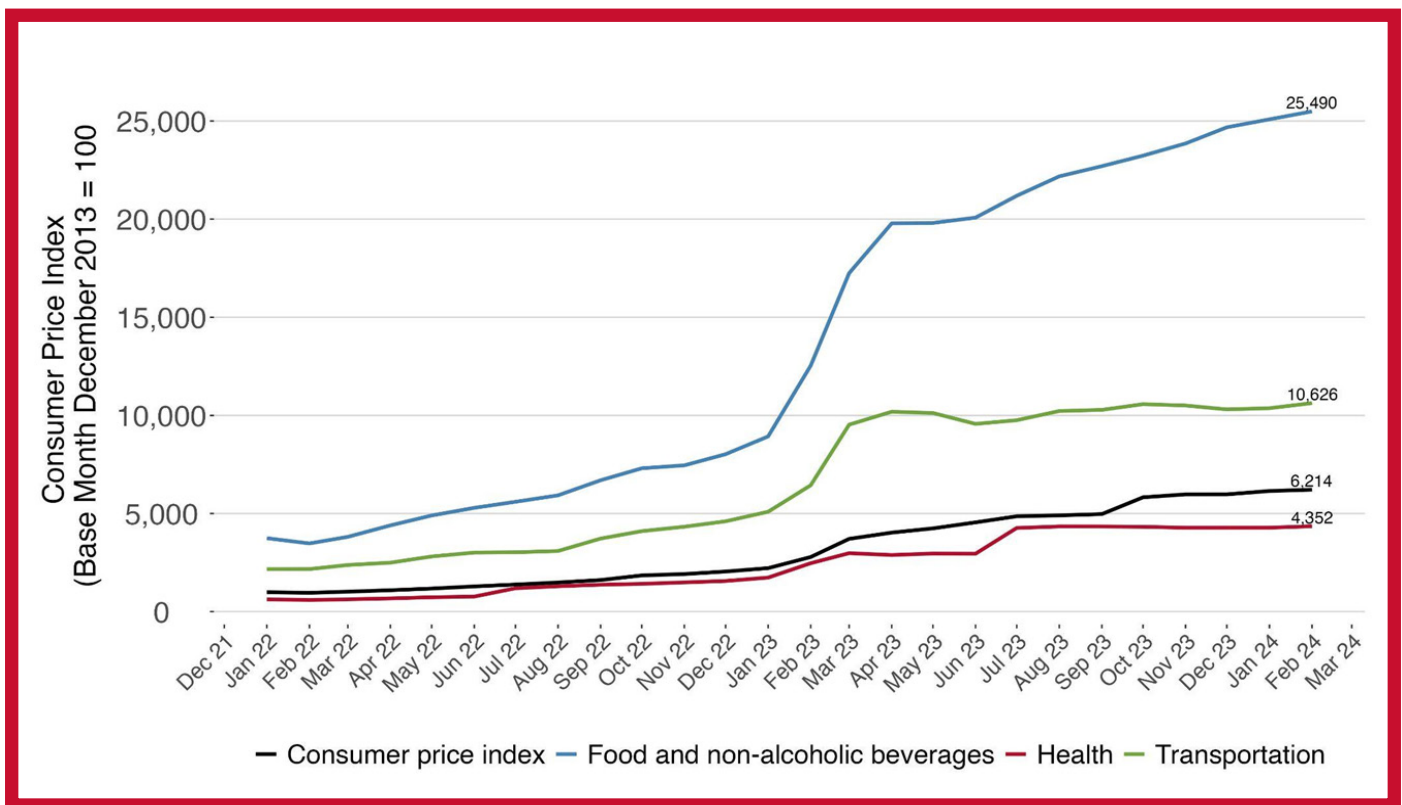


Figure 5: The evolution of Consumer Price Index components.

Year-on-year inflation rates fell from 123.21% in February to 70.36% in March.³⁹ The steep drop stems from several factors, none of which indicated that consumer prices also dropped between February and March 2024. In March 2023, the LBP-USD parallel market exchange rate fluctuated heavily, largely due to Central Bank interventions in the parallel currency market and a decision by major supermarkets to dollarize their prices.^{40 41}

³⁵ L'Orient Today, [Major increases in residence permit fees for foreign nationals announced](#) April 20, 2024

³⁶ [The General Directory of the Lebanese General Security](#)

³⁷ [International Monetary Fund](#)

³⁸ LBCI, [Unprecedented situation: Lebanon moves closer to IMF deal with BDL modernization](#) April 22, 2024

³⁹ L'Orient Today, [Inflation in Lebanon falls from three to two digits year-on-year](#) April 23, 2024

⁴⁰ From early March to early April 2023, the LBP/USD exchange rate fluctuated between LBP 60,000 and LBP 140,000, leading to heavy price shocks after retailers, particularly supermarkets, dollarized their prices. As a result, LBP prices spiked in March 2023 but declined in April after the exchange rate decreased and stabilized. / Mercy Corps Lebanon, [March Crisis Update](#) April 11, 2023

⁴¹ Mercy Corps Lebanon, [February Crisis Update](#) March 15, 2023



Monthly inflation rose by 1.72% in March 2024, with North Lebanon registering the highest increase, at 2.81%. Inflation in all other governorates came in under 2%. Countrywide, clothing, and rent prices increased the most, by 5.11% and 5.09% respectively, followed by food and non-alcoholic beverages at 2.43%.⁴²

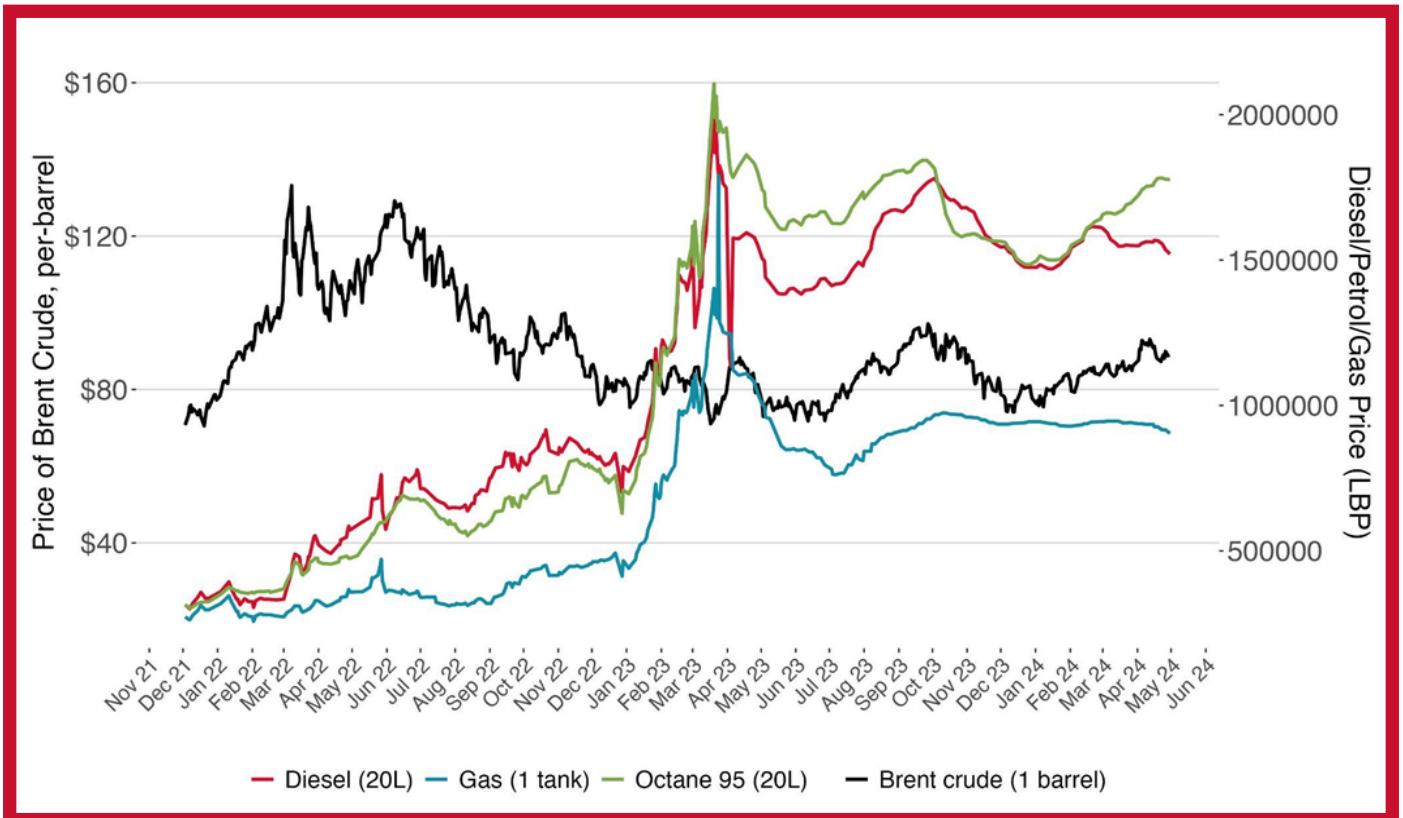


Figure 6: Fuel Prices.

Gasoline prices increased slightly in April, while diesel and cooking gas prices edged downward, in line with a stable global commodity market. Prices per fuel tank (20 liters) closed the month at LBP 1,777,000 (USD 19.85) for Octane-95, LBP 1,815,000 (USD 20.28) for Octane-98, LBP 1,521,000 (USD 17) for diesel, and LBP 904,000 (USD 10.1) for cooking gas.⁴³

⁴² [Central Administration of Statistics](#)

⁴³ Fuel prices are extracted from the IPT group [website](#).



Source: AP/Hassan Ammar

Economic Development and Impact:

The IMF's safeguards assessment suggests that the Fund is willing to disburse loans to the Central Bank but not necessarily to unlock monies for the state, as would have happened had Lebanon implemented reforms in line with the Staff Level Agreement. The assessment is likely the result of meetings between the IMF, World Bank, and Lebanese officials, including Acting Central Bank Governor Wassim Mansouri, which were held in Washington in late April.⁴⁴ Despite the Central Bank's success in stabilizing the LBP-USD parallel market exchange rate and addressing discrepancies in its balance sheet, it has yet to implement reforms aimed at restructuring the financial sector and enabling depositors to access their trapped savings, both of which require action by the parliament and government. Lebanon will likely not greatly benefit from its participation in the assessment, as it will not unlock billions of USD in state financial assistance. Moreover, the decision will likely not affect a forthcoming Financial Action Task Force (FATF) assessment and the anticipated blacklisting of Lebanon.

Karaki's remarks concerning NSSF contribution shortfalls highlighted a key point concerning tax and state fee collection. Many private sector employers and laborers operate more or less informally and some do not adequately register their businesses or payrolls. Others, including registered companies, file false information about their operations and payrolls. Many businesses report that every employee earns the minimum wage, regardless of how much they are paid, and thus reduce their NSSF contributions. The resulting funding shortfall means that subscribed employees do not fully benefit from NSSF services. Meanwhile, it is highly probable that employees working in the informal sector, particularly day laborers, are not covered by supplemental social insurance policies that they might need in case of medical emergencies or work accidents.

⁴⁴ Blominvest, [Can BDL Measures Assist Lebanon Passing the Grey List Test Next Month?](#) April 25, 2024



Source: Reuters

Political Updates:

The parliament voted to extend the mandates of mukhtars and municipal councils through May 2025.⁴⁵ This marks the third time these officials' terms have been extended, following earlier extensions in March 2022 and April 2023. The Lebanese Forces (LF) and Kataeb parties boycotted the April 25 parliamentary session at which the extension was approved and most independent deputies withdrew during it.⁴⁶ Political parties supporting the extension argue that the ongoing conflict between Hezbollah and Israel renders nationwide elections impractical. Postponement of municipal elections will likely result in the dissolution of some municipal councils, and consequent disruptions to services and delays in aid program implementation.

Calls for Syrian refugees to be returned to their home country intensified following the murder of LF political operative Pascal Sleiman. On April 8, the LAF announced that Sleiman, LF's political coordinator for the Jbeil district, was killed by a group of Syrian nationals during an alleged carjacking attempt.⁴⁷ The incident triggered a wave of anti-refugee rhetoric and violence. The majority of Lebanese political parties condemned the killing, with most calling for the deportation of Syrian refugees. Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea emphasized the impact of the refugee crisis on Lebanon, stressing its existential threat amid rising crime rates and financial losses.⁴⁸ Free Patriotic Movement leader Gebran Bassil called for deporting Syrians who break Lebanese laws or enter the country illegally, and for revoking the displaced person status and associated assistance for Syrians who no longer meet displacement criteria.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ L'Orient Today, [Municipal and mayoral councils extended for yet another year](#) April 25, 2024

⁴⁶ L'Orient Le Jour, [Vers une \(énième\) prorogation du mandat des conseils municipaux jeudi au Parlement](#) April 24, 2024

⁴⁷ MTV, [Lebanese Army: Pascal Sleiman Killed by Syrian Gang](#) April 8, 2024

⁴⁸ NNA, [ججاج يحذر من خطورة أزمة اللاجئين السوريين على لبنان](#) April 19, 2024

⁴⁹ L'Orient Today, [Bassil proposes criteria for deporting Syrians, including prisoners and those who 'violate Lebanese law'](#) April 15, 2024



Several social media users called for Syrians to leave certain areas of the country.⁵⁰ North Lebanon Governor Ramzi Nohra issued a directive on April 17 ordering Syrian nationals to vacate three properties in the governorate within 15 days.⁵¹ Municipalities across Lebanon also implemented measures obliging Syrian refugees to obey curfews and close their businesses.^{52 53}

Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati met with European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi in Beirut on April 22 and requested that aid dedicated to Syrians be earmarked for their repatriation.⁵⁴ Varhelyi encouraged Lebanon to cooperate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to facilitate safe and voluntary returns. He also said that the EU plans to step up efforts to strengthen border controls and implement measures to stem illegal migration. This followed discussions between Cypriot and Lebanese delegations addressing illegal migration to Cyprus after approximately 600 Syrians irregularly traveled to Cyprus by boat from Lebanon in early April.⁵⁵ Mikati reaffirmed that he would advocate for the return of Syrian refugees to safe zones in Syria at the upcoming eighth conference on Supporting the Future of Syria in Brussels in late May. On April 18, Caretaker Minister of Interior and Municipalities Bassam Mawlawi General stated that the General Directorate of General Security is conducting a thorough review of Syrian residents' legal status to identify those who should remain in the country for "legitimate security reasons".⁵⁶ On April 25, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report condemning Lebanon's treatment of Syrian refugees, citing detentions, torture, and deportations by security forces, as well as discriminatory measures such as curfews and restrictions. HRW urged donor countries to pressure Lebanon to halt these practices and ensure that aid does not contribute to human rights violations.⁵⁷

Despite continued efforts by the Quintet, negotiations over electing a new president are at a standstill. Ambassadors from the United States, France, Egypt, and Qatar held meetings with representatives and leaders of several political parties throughout April, to break Lebanon's crippling political deadlock. The Free Patriotic Movement and Kataeb parties conditioned their participation in any dialogue aimed at electing a new president on assurances that consultations would culminate in a series of electoral sessions in parliament, at which quorum will be maintained.⁵⁸ The LF remains steadfast in its rejection of any dialogue before electoral sessions. On April 18, Marada Movement leader Sleiman Frangieh announced that he would remain a candidate in the presidential race.⁵⁹ On April 15, a group of opposition deputies visited Washington DC to discuss the presidential vacuum.⁶⁰

⁵⁰ L'Orient Today, [Pascal Sleiman's murder: Public anger turns toward Syrian residents](#) April 16, 2024

⁵¹ NNA, [قرار لنهرا لاختلاء السوريين من بساتين العصي](#) April 17, 2024

⁵² L'Orient Today, [Are municipalities' restrictions against Syrians legal?](#) April 23, 2024

⁵³ L'Orient Today, [Pascal Sleiman's murder: Public anger turns toward Syrian residents](#) April 16, 2024

⁵⁴ L'Orient Le Jour, [Mikati : L'aide de l'UE devrait être orientée vers le rapatriement des réfugiés syriens](#) April 22, 2024

⁵⁵ L'Orient Today, [Issue of migrants discussed during talks between Mikati and the Cypriot president](#) April 8, 2024

⁵⁶ NNA, [مولوي يبحث مع القادة الامنيين والمحافظين موضوع النزوح السوري: الامن الذاتي ممنوع ومرفوض](#) April 18, 2024

⁵⁷ HRW, [Lebanon: Stepped-Up Repression of Syrians](#) April 25, 2024

⁵⁸ LBCI, [Lebanon's presidential stalemate remains: Quintet Ambassadors report to Berri](#) April 23, 2024

⁵⁹ L'Orient Today, [Frangieh gives the quintet a hard time](#) April 19, 2024

⁶⁰ L'Orient Le Jour, [Des députés de l'opposition à Washington pour discuter des dossiers libanais brûlants](#) April 15, 2024



Access to Services:

The Electricité du Liban (EdL) employees' union went on strike between April 19 and April 26.⁶¹ The union is demanding that EdL implement cost-of-living wage increases, provide higher end-of-service compensation in line with LBP depreciation, and offer full healthcare coverage. Except for power plant staff, workers at all EdL centers took part in the strike. On April 19, the employee union at state telecommunication company Ogero urged workers to join the EdL strike until April 25.^{62 63}

A study by researchers at the American University of Beirut (AUB) found that diesel-powered private generators are having a significant effect on health and the environment.⁶⁴ There are over 8,000 so-called backup generators in use across the country, and reliance on them has significantly increased due to insufficient national electricity production and a lack of state oversight. Private generator use has soared from an average of three hours per day in 2010 to 20 hours per day since the 2019 crisis.⁶⁵ AUB researchers estimate that a doubling of carcinogenic pollutants in several areas of Beirut, exceeding World Health Organization recommendations, increases the risk of contracting cancer by as much as 50% for city residents.^{66 67}

⁶¹ NNA, [نقابة مستخدمي مؤسسة كهرباء لبنان أيدت بيان اتحاد النقابات: للالتزام بالاضراب باستثناء معامل الانتاج والمناوين في محطات التحويل](#) April 18, 2024

⁶² MTV Lebanon, [Ogero Calls on Its Employees to Strike](#) April 18, 2024

⁶³ L'Orient Le Jour, [Grève des employés d'EDL et d'Ogero du 19 au 25 avril](#) April 18, 2024

⁶⁴ The Guardian, ['Where can you hide from pollution?': cancer rises 30% in Beirut as diesel generators poison city](#) April 22, 2024

⁶⁵ L'Orient Today, [Air pollution from generators has doubled in Beirut](#) March 4, 2024

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ The Guardian, ['Where can you hide from pollution?': cancer rises 30% in Beirut as diesel generators poison city](#) April 22, 2024



Looking Forward:

- On May 2, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen unveiled a substantial EUR 1 billion financial aid package for Lebanon that extends through 2027. It covers funding for basic services, economic and banking reform, security (including border management), managing migration flows and thwarting smuggling, and supporting host and refugee communities.⁶⁸ The announcement has sparked criticism and skepticism. One key point of contention is the absence of clear conditions tied to reforms, a departure from previous aid packages. Critics argue that this lack of conditionality might perpetuate, or possibly worsen, Lebanon's governance and economic challenges. Others view the package as an incentive for the country to serve as a buffer for Syrian refugees, deterring their migration to the EU. Indeed, Cyprus's decision to halt asylum processing in early April due to an influx of Syrian refugees from Lebanon underscores the urgency of addressing regional migration dynamics.
- Prime Minister Mikati is calling for EU assistance for Syrian refugees to be redirected toward facilitating their repatriation. However, this would require a comprehensive reassessment of safety conditions in Syria – either in specific areas or as a whole – by pertinent UN bodies and stakeholders, including the EU. Such a process would likely play out over a long period, during which tensions between the Lebanese and Syrian communities are likely to persist or potentially worsen, especially given reduced donor funding for aid operations.
- One month out from the near certainty that Lebanon will be placed on the FATF's Grey List, there are few, if any, indicators that the economy is on the right track. The IMF's upcoming safeguards assessment of the Central Bank may slightly improve how the Bank collects and reports data, which will benefit the IMF's database on Lebanon. It will also incentivize the Bank to revitalize its reporting methods, including updating and more accurately cataloging figures on debts, losses, and other monetary variables. Despite being touted as a sign of reform, however, the assessment will do little to unlock further IMF support.

Apart from the stabilized exchange rate – a result of monetary policy rather than fundamental changes and overhauled fiscal policies – the government has made no progress on tax reform, restructuring losses in the commercial banking sector, or tailoring expenditures in a manner that encourages economic growth. Therefore expectations for the rest of 2024 are the same: more informality. This will discourage foreign investment, which would precipitate an influx of fresh dollars to Lebanon and create job opportunities for the country's skilled labor force. Currently, skilled job seekers often look abroad for employment opportunities, as most Lebanese companies do not offer competitive compensation packages relative to their foreign counterparts.

⁶⁸ European Commission, [Press statement by the President in Beirut](#) May 2, 2024



- The Central Bank is formulating a strategy to restructure commercial bank assets and liabilities, which could allow depositors to benefit from – albeit not fully access – their trapped savings. At present, depositors rely solely on existing Central Bank circulars, which allow limited access to their savings – up to USD 400 per month at best.⁶⁹ Acting Central Bank Governor Wassim Mansouri has yet to offer specifics on how depositors would benefit from the new measures, how deposits will be categorized, or whether the country’s commercial banks will also undergo restructuring.⁷⁰ If such measures are implemented, they likely would entail the use of financial instruments to compensate depositors, in exchange for canceling deposits. These instruments could include state-issued bonds or shares in depositors’ banks. Under either scenario, depositors would likely favor receiving cash, though commercial banks are insufficiently capitalized to buy out large depositors. Small account holders would likely opt to be bought out in cash or otherwise granted greater access to their deposits, as bonds take considerable time to mature and shares in effectively insolvent banks would not net immediate returns. Small depositor households, who have already developed a range of coping mechanisms over the last four years, including taking out loans or selling belongings, are in greater need of liquid cash.
- Barring a diplomatic solution, Hezbollah and Israel are likely to continue their cross-border exchanges of fire. According to Israeli Military Radio, Hezbollah’s daily rate of rocket fire has steadily increased from an average of 10.7 in January to 24.8 in April.⁷¹ For its part, Israel will likely continue striking residences, shops, roadways, and civilian infrastructure in south Lebanon, with a growing focus on towns and villages five kilometers and more north of the border. On May 5, Hezbollah fired some 100 rockets at Israeli towns, one of its most intense barrages since the start of the conflict on October 8.⁷² The following day, Israel laid down a “firebelt” – a short, intense barrage of bombardment focused on a specific area – about 20 kilometers into Lebanon, damaging a water distribution station.⁷³ Hezbollah has repeatedly stated that it will not stop firing until a truce is reached in Gaza, while Israeli officials have publicly called for Hezbollah to pull its troops back from the border.⁷⁴

Israel has threatened to ramp up its campaign in Lebanon, including potentially invading up to the Litani River, to compel Hezbollah to withdraw from the border with Israel.⁷⁵ However, an Israeli ground campaign in the Rafah Governorate of the Gaza Strip would likely delay any such escalation. In late March, an Israeli media report quoted an anonymous Israeli official as saying that Israel would not move into Lebanon before a military campaign in Rafah,⁷⁶ and a former Israeli brigadier general told AFP that Israel would conduct a campaign in Rafah before it escalated in Lebanon.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ Depositors with USD accounts opened before October 2019 are allowed to withdraw only USD 300 to USD 400 per month in line with Circular 158. Depositors who created their USD accounts after October 2019 – by converting their LBP balances to USD, or “Lollar” – are still waiting for Circular 166 (USD 150 per month) to be implemented. / Nidaa Al Watan, «أخر مستجدات التعميم... ما هي؟» April 9, 2024

⁷⁰ Nidaa Al Watan, «منصوري: مودعون سنصتفهم» «مستثمرين» April 19, 2024

⁷¹ Israeli Army Radio correspondent Doron Kadosh wrote in a [Post on X](#) on May 5, 2024 that Hezbollah fired 744 rockets in April, 746 rockets in March, 534 in February and 334 in January.

⁷² Jerusalem Post, [At least two wounded in rocket barrage on Kiryat Shmona](#) May 5, 2024

Hezbollah issued two statements on May 5, 2024, claiming to have fired “dozens of rockets” in separate incidents, while another four statements claimed that they launched rockets at Israeli towns:

Military Media of the Islamic Resistance Telegram posts ([13:48](#) and [16:20](#) and [18:15](#) and [19:11](#) and [19:17](#) and [19:17](#)) May 5, 2024

⁷³ L’Orient Today, [Hamas accepts Qatar-Egypt cease-fire proposal. Israeli official describes move as ‘ruse’: Day 213 of the Gaza war](#) May 6, 2024

⁷⁴ L’Orient Today, [Hochstein back in Beirut to avoid the worst?](#) April 24, 2024

⁷⁵ The Jerusalem Post, Katz warns France: If Hezbollah doesn’t withdraw, we’ll occupy southern Lebanon April 30, 2024

⁷⁶ Israel Hayom, [Senior official sees ground operation in north ‘after Rafah’](#) March 28, 2024

⁷⁷ AFP, [Fears grow in Israel of war with Lebanon’s Hezbollah](#) February 29, 2024



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to launch a ground offensive on Rafah – potentially after a temporary ceasefire with Hamas – before ending its war on Gaza.⁷⁸ Indeed, at the time of publication, Israel announced the start of civilian evacuations from eastern Rafah. If Israel does press forward with an invasion of Rafah, it would likely last at least two to three months, according to media reports citing Israeli and US officials and analysts.⁷⁹ Israel’s ground operations in Khan Yunis Governorate, lasted from December 5, 2023⁸⁰ until April 7, 2024.⁸¹

- In the four years since the economic crisis, Lebanon’s economy has slightly improved during the summer, a sort of “tourism jolt” to the economy. However, 2024 might prove to be the exception, due to heightened security concerns since October 2023, not least those stemming from cross-border fighting between Hezbollah and Israel. Arrivals at Beirut’s Rafic Hariri Airport in the first quarter of 2024 were down 7% year-on-year.⁸² This could portend a drop in arrivals during the upcoming summer season compared to last year. Tourism revenues are essential to maintaining the flow of foreign currency into the economy. Moreover, fewer arrivals could discourage tourism-related business owners from expanding their capacity, denting their hiring process. Many individuals rely on the tourism sector for part-time jobs to supplement their household income or to finance essential expenses such as education.

⁷⁸ Al-Jazeera, Netanyahu says Israel will invade Rafah as Gaza ceasefire talks continue April 30, 2024

⁷⁹ Reuters, [Israel expects full-scale military operations in Gaza for 6-8 more weeks — report](#) February 19, 2024; Jerusalem Post, [How will IDF's invasion of Rafah play out - and what will Hamas do? - analysis](#) February 11, 2024;

YNet News, [Palestinians report tanks have entered East Rafah after War Cabinet gives operation go-ahead](#) May 6, 2024

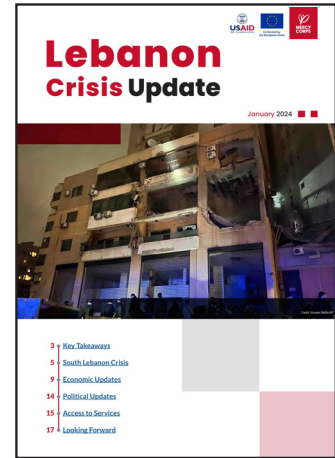
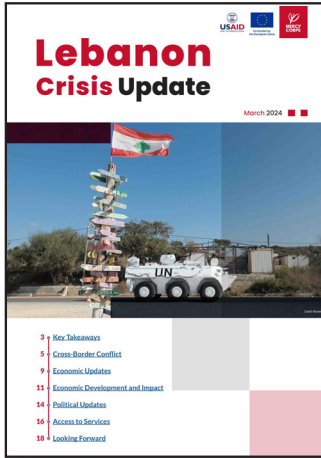
⁸⁰ Associated Press, [Israel moves into Gaza's second-largest city and intensifies strikes in bloody new phase of the war](#) December 5, 2023

⁸¹ CNN, [Israeli military says it has withdrawn its forces from Khan Yunis after months of fighting](#) April 8, 2023

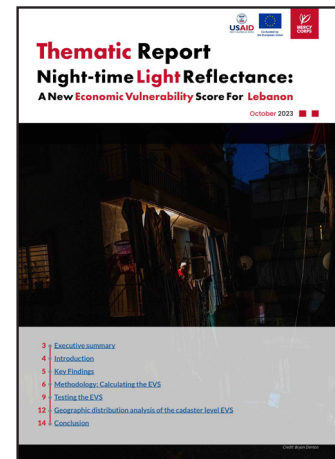
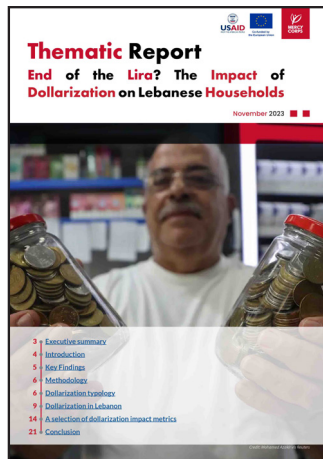
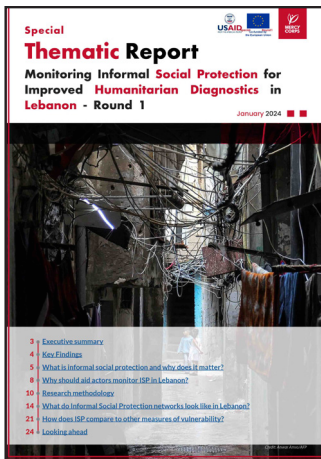
⁸² Nidaa Al Watan, [حركة المطار في الفصل الأول من ٢٠٢٤: تراجع عدد الركاب بنسبة ٧ بالمئة](#) April 4, 2024



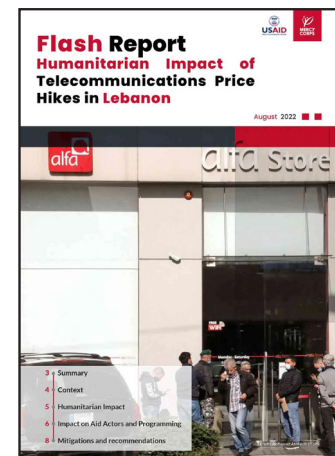
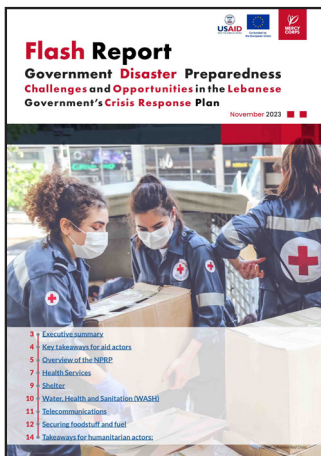
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