

# Thematic Report

## Scenarios of Potential Escalations

### Humanitarian and Development Implications for Lebanon

August 2024



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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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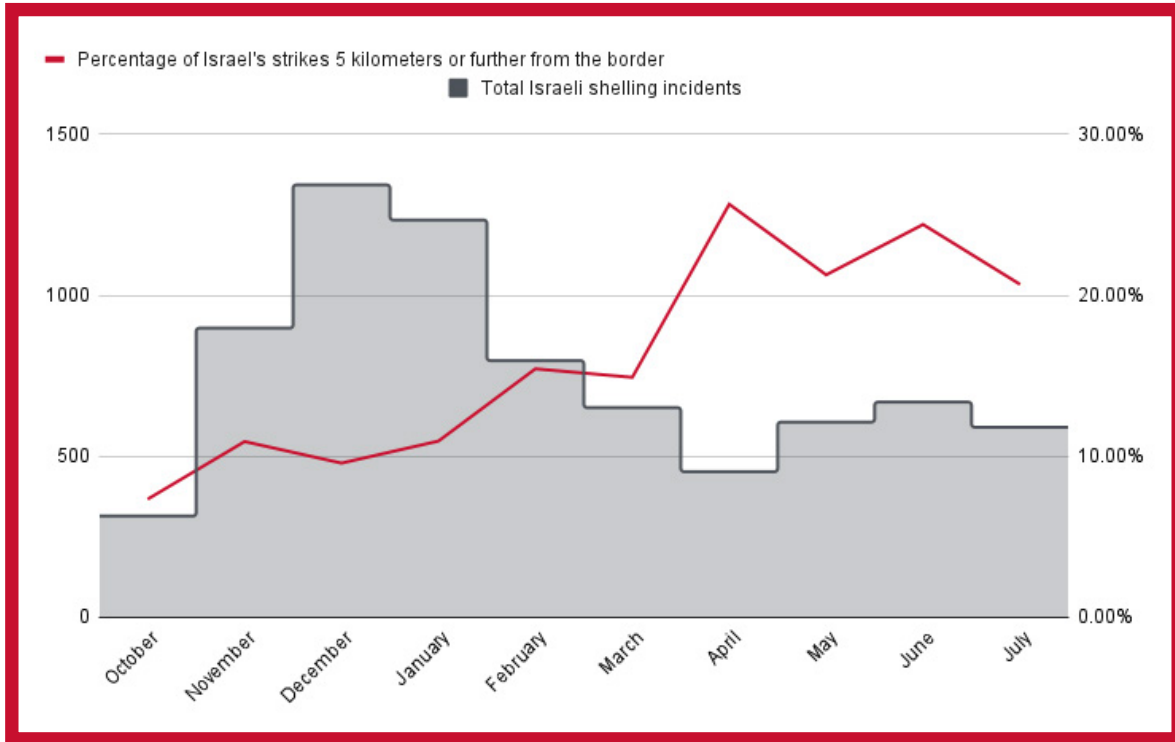
Credit: EPA

# Introduction

Hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel have remained mostly contained after ten months, although there has been a steady rise in the pace and scope of cross-border exchanges. A dramatic escalation could have serious humanitarian and development ramifications for Lebanon. Since October 8, 2023, Israel’s bombardment has shifted from targeting rural and agricultural areas of southern Lebanon to towns and villages in the south and in the Bekaa Valley, damaging homes, stores, roads, and utilities. This LCAT thematic report examines three potential near- and medium-term scenarios, based on lessons learned from the 2006 Lebanon War and the present conflict in Gaza and southern Lebanon. These three scenarios can be summarized as follows:

1. Continued fighting along the border and limited airstrikes elsewhere in Lebanon.
2. Significant escalation in Israeli shelling of southern Lebanon and increased airstrikes elsewhere in the country, but short of a full war.
3. Full-scale war affecting the whole of Lebanon as threatened by Israeli officials in recent months, and of greater intensity than the 2006 Lebanon War.





**Figure 1:** Percentage of Israeli strikes 5 kilometers or further from the border and total Israeli shelling incidents.  
**Source:** LCAT daily monitoring of Lebanon's state-run National News Agency and major media for reports on Israeli shelling.

At the time of publication, Israel has increasingly adjusted the focus of its shelling to target areas beyond the immediate border region. Since late 2023, Israeli officials have repeatedly threatened to launch a wide-scale military campaign to force Hezbollah to re-deploy north of the Litani River. This demand – which was made pursuant to United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1701 that ended the 2006 war – calls for “the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL” and the delineation of the border.<sup>1</sup> Hezbollah has rejected such a withdrawal and vowed it will not engage in talks and halt military action until Tel Aviv agrees to a ceasefire in Gaza that is acceptable to Hamas.<sup>2</sup> Despite months of international mediation, based on a constructively ambiguous interpretation of Resolution 1701, little headway has been made toward reaching a diplomatic solution.<sup>3</sup> In October 2023, 7.3% of Israel’s fire was directed at areas five kilometers or more from the border, while in June this increased to 24.40%.<sup>4</sup> Since February 2024, Israel has conducted 23 rounds of airstrikes in eastern Lebanon. Hezbollah, for its part, has increased the range and severity of its strikes into Israel. In June, the group carried out its highest monthly number of attacks deeper than five kilometers into Israeli territory — the de-facto line of evacuation in Israel — since the beginning of the conflict.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Times of Israel, [While diplomatic efforts go on, IDF is bracing for short but devastating war in Lebanon](#) March 30, 2024; Reuters, [Exclusive: Lebanon's Hezbollah will halt fire if Hamas OKs Gaza truce, sources say](#) February 27, 2024; Resolution 1701 (2006), [UN Security Council](#) August 11, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Al-Akhbar, [حزب الله يمهد لما بعد الحرب: باقون في جنوب اللباني](#) April 8, 2024; L'Orient Today, [Hochstein back in Beirut to avoid the worst?](#) April 24, 2024

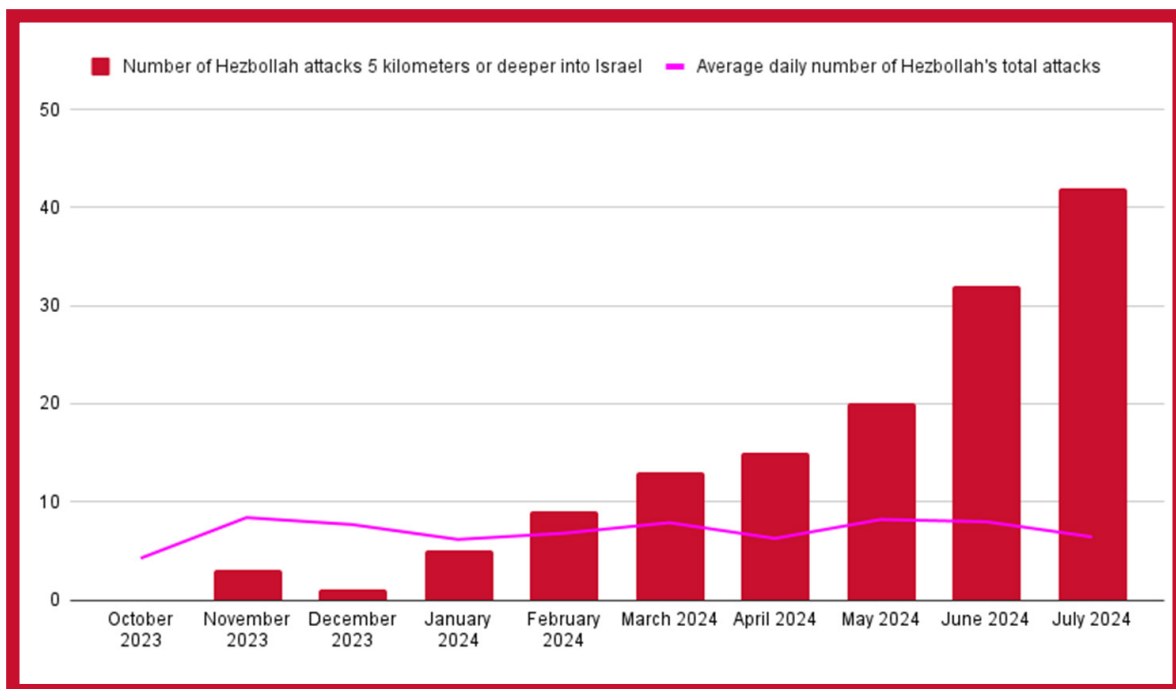
<sup>3</sup> L'Orient Today, [Hochstein back in Beirut to avoid the worst?](#) April 24, 2024

<sup>4</sup> LCAT has been logging Israeli strikes in Lebanon on a daily basis, classifying them as artillery or airstrikes and noting their locations and depth from the border. This granular data permits LCAT to draw larger analyses of trends.

<sup>5</sup> LCAT logs all attacks claimed by Hezbollah, noting the geographic target, its distance from the border, and the type of weapon used. In June, Hezbollah conducted 32 attacks at targets five kilometers or deeper into Israel, up from 20 in May, 15 in April, 13 in March, 9 in February, 5 in January, 1 in December and 3 in November. Hezbollah did not conduct any attacks deeper than 5 kilometers in October. In May, Hezbollah conducted an average of 8.2 attacks a day, up from its average of 6.3 in April, 7.9 in March, 6.8 in February, 6.2 in January, 7.7 in December, 8.4 in November, and 4.3 in October.



On July 4, the group launched its deepest attack yet into Israel.<sup>6</sup> That same day, Hezbollah fired at least 200 rockets and 20 unmanned aerial vehicles into Israel in retaliation to the assassination of one of its commanders.<sup>7</sup> On July 17, Hezbollah leader said his group would strike more towns it had not hit previously before if Israel continues to kill civilians in Lebanon.<sup>8</sup> The night before this threat, Hezbollah launched a series of rocket barrages aimed at seven unevacuated towns after Israeli strikes killed five civilians.<sup>9</sup> On July 27, a munition hit a soccer field in Majdal Shams in the occupied Golan, an incident Israel attributed to Hezbollah,<sup>10</sup> which denied responsibility.<sup>11</sup> In retaliation, Israel conducted the airstrike in southern Beirut on July 30. Hezbollah has vowed a severe relation, raising fears of further sharp escalation.



**Figure 2:** Hezbollah operations deep into Israel.  
**Source:** LCAT daily monitoring of Hezbollah statements claiming attacks in Israel.

Lebanon’s economy will likely contract in 2024, continuing the negative trend from the previous year. The World Bank projected that Lebanon’s gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by 0.6% to 0.9% in 2023, due in large part to tourism sector losses partly attributable to the cross-border conflict. Heightened fears of a major conflict between Hezbollah and Israel have led a number of airlines to cut back or suspend flights to Beirut in August, further disrupting the tourism sector.

<sup>6</sup> Hezbollah on July 4, 2024 [claimed](#) an attack with explosive laden unmanned aerial vehicles against the Ilaniya base located 33 kilometers south of the border with Israel.

<sup>7</sup> Associated Press, [Hezbollah fires over 200 rockets into Israel after killing of senior commander](#) July 4, 2024

<sup>8</sup> Reuters, [Hezbollah to hit new areas in Israel if civilians targeted, Nasrallah says](#) July 17, 2024

<sup>9</sup> Between the evening of July 16 and early hours of July 17, Hezbollah claimed rocket barrages aimed at the towns of Kabri, Kfar Hoshen, Or HaGanuz, Bar Yohai, Meron, Sa’ar and Geshar Haziv

<sup>10</sup> Reuters, [Israel cabinet authorizes government to respond to Hezbollah rocket strike](#) July 29, 2024

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



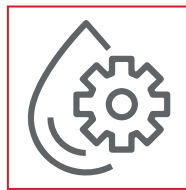
## Infrastructure damage in southern Lebanon

Since October 8, 2023, Israeli airstrikes, artillery shelling, and the use of phosphorus munitions on towns, villages, and agricultural fields within 10 kilometers of the border have caused at least 1.5 billion US dollars (USD) in damage.<sup>12</sup> The Southern Council estimates that these strikes have caused at least USD 500 million in damage to water, electricity, road, and health infrastructure.<sup>13</sup>

Through mid-July 2024, various Lebanese state agencies and international organizations have reported the following damage:



1,700 buildings completely destroyed and 14,000 damaged<sup>14</sup>



13 water facilities damaged, affecting 200,000 residents<sup>15</sup>



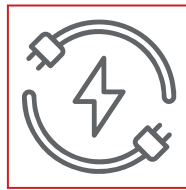
Disruptions to satellite TV and telecoms in southern Lebanon<sup>16</sup>



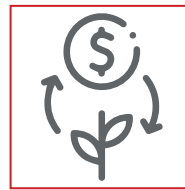
6 primary health care centers closed in the districts of Marjayoun and Bint Jbeil<sup>17</sup>



At least 21 health workers killed since October 8, 2023<sup>18</sup>



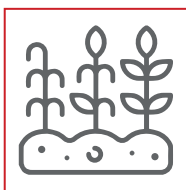
At least 20 Israeli strikes disrupting electricity provision<sup>19</sup>



Up to USD 2.5 billion in damage to the agricultural sector<sup>20</sup>



1,900 hectares of land affected by fires<sup>21</sup>



800 hectares of agricultural fields severely damaged<sup>22</sup>



75% of farmers in southern Lebanon have lost their livelihoods<sup>23</sup>



Over 47,000 olive trees destroyed<sup>24</sup>



63% of farmers unable to access their fields<sup>25</sup>

<sup>12</sup> AFP, [Lebanon body puts Israeli bombardment damage at \\$1.5 bln](#) May 8, 2024

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon: At a Glance - Escalation of hostilities in South Lebanon, as of 14 July 2024](#) July 14, 2024

<sup>16</sup> National News Agency, [تشويش معاد على أجهزة GPS والقنوات التلفزيونية الفضائية والاتصالات الخلوية في صور والجنوب](#), April 17, 2024

<sup>17</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon: Flash Update #22 - Escalation of hostilities in south Lebanon](#) July 14, 2024

<sup>18</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon: At a Glance - Escalation of hostilities in South Lebanon, as of 14 July 2024](#) July 14, 2024

<sup>19</sup> As part of its conflict monitoring, LCAT has logged media reports on electricity network disruptions in southern Lebanon from Israeli bombardment.

<sup>20</sup> The National, [WTO: Lebanon faces \\$2.5bn in damages as military attacks degrade farmland, says minister](#) February 26, 2024

<sup>21</sup> FAO, [Lebanon: Impact assessment of the escalating hostilities in southern Lebanon on agriculture, food security and livelihoods](#) February 2024

<sup>22</sup> The National, [Lebanese PM declares agricultural disaster in south Lebanon](#) April 5, 2024

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> FAO, [Lebanon: Impact assessment of the escalating hostilities in southern Lebanon on agriculture, food security and livelihoods](#) February 2024

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



# **Scenario 1:** **Conflict continues indefinitely** **at the current level**

**Status:** Unfolding at the time of publication

**Short-term likelihood:** Likely

**Medium-term likelihood:** Unlikely (Israeli officials have repeatedly threatened to intensify their military campaign in Lebanon; analysts believe escalation is likely)

**Potential barriers to escalation:**

- Mutual deterrence dissuades Hezbollah and Israel from sustained escalations that risk a devastating war.
- Given the challenges and possible consequences of mobilizing tens of thousands of troops for a sustained military campaign, Israeli officials decide against a wider campaign.
- International mediation efforts “contain” the conflict, which continues at its current pace and within a limited geographic scope.
- The US applies pressure on Israel not to escalate and risk a war within Lebanon that could ignite a regional conflict.
- Israel and Hamas agree to a permanent ceasefire that paves the way for an agreement to officially demarcate the Lebanon-Israel border.



## Context:

In this scenario, Israel and Hezbollah do not substantially escalate military operations and follow patterns established over the past ten months. Since October 8, 2023, the two belligerents have gradually stepped up the scope and tempo of their military operations while avoiding sudden escalations that would lead to wide-scale conflict. In the short term, with diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict at a standstill, this state of affairs is expected to continue.<sup>26</sup> Since November, mediators have shuttled between Lebanon and Israel in a bid to encourage the belligerents to keep the conflict within geographic limits, without securing firm commitments to de-escalate.<sup>27</sup> In the medium term – and absent a comprehensive diplomatic solution to the Israel-Hamas conflict – analysts expect the conflict to continue escalating beyond the parameters set out in this scenario (see scenarios 2 and 3).<sup>28</sup> Top Israeli officials have repeatedly warned they would widen their country’s military campaign in Lebanon.<sup>29</sup>

In response to Hezbollah downing Israeli UAVs and conducting operations deep into Israeli territory, Israel continues to carry out up to 10 waves of strikes each month in the Baalbek-Hermel and Bekaa governorates of eastern Lebanon. Also under this scenario, Israel conducts occasional bombing raids outside Lebanon’s southern border region and the Bekaa Valley. This is in line with the existing pattern of conflict, which is characterized by Israel selectively conducting escalatory airstrikes – including targeted assassinations – far from the border, such as in Beirut on January 2 and outside Saida on February 29.<sup>30</sup>

In this scenario, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is not projected to significantly exceed the current level of 100,000. This figure might even decrease slightly if families decide to return to homes in (relatively) less conflict-affected areas.

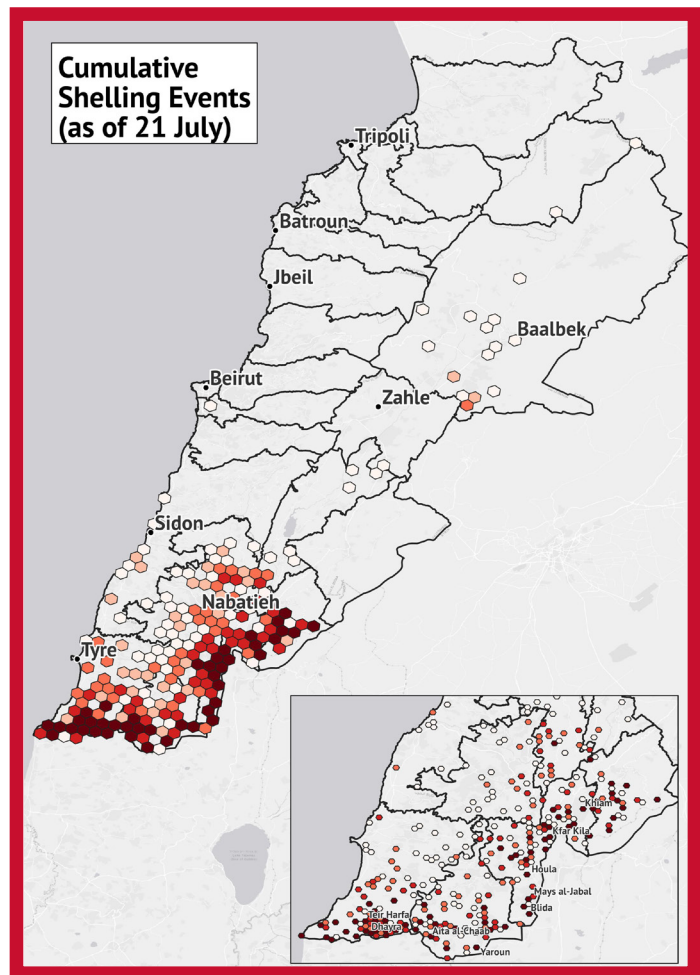


Figure 3: Israel’s bombardment in Lebanon through July 21.

<sup>26</sup> L’Orient Today, [Hochstein back in Beirut to avoid the worst?](#) April 24, 2024

<sup>27</sup> L’Orient Today, [Whats behind Hochstein’s surprise visit to Beirut?](#) November 8, 2023;

Carnegie Endowment, [A Conversation with Senior Advisor to the President for Energy and Investment, Amos Hochstein](#) May 30, 2024

<sup>28</sup> Foreign Affairs, [Israel’s Next Front? Iran, Hezbollah, and the Coming War in Lebanon](#) April 24, 2024;

Al-Jazeera English, [What will the future bring between Hezbollah and Israel?](#) April 11, 2024;

Center for Strategic & International Studies, [The Coming Conflict with Hezbollah](#) March 21, 2024

<sup>29</sup> Times of Israel, [IDF hits 40 Hezbollah sites: Gallant says group’s south Lebanon command decimated](#) April 24, 2024;

The National, [Israeli minister Gantz says Lebanese front close to ‘moment of truth’](#) April 21, 2024

<sup>30</sup> Reuters, [Israeli strike kills a Hezbollah commander in Lebanon](#) January 8, 2024;

L’Orient Today, [Several injured in Israeli strikes south of Saida; Israel claims targeting Hezbollah weapons depots: Day 136 of Hamas-Israeli war](#) February 19, 2024





Sporadic Israeli airstrikes 10 kilometers or more north of the border, including in the Bekaa Valley, are highly unlikely to spark any major displacements. Up to the time of publication, none of Lebanon’s 102,523 IDPs have been displaced from eastern Lebanon.<sup>31</sup> The disaster risk management (DRM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) units in conflict-stricken areas will continue to require support from the Lebanese state and international organizations for their operations, including for the procurement of supplies for communal shelters.

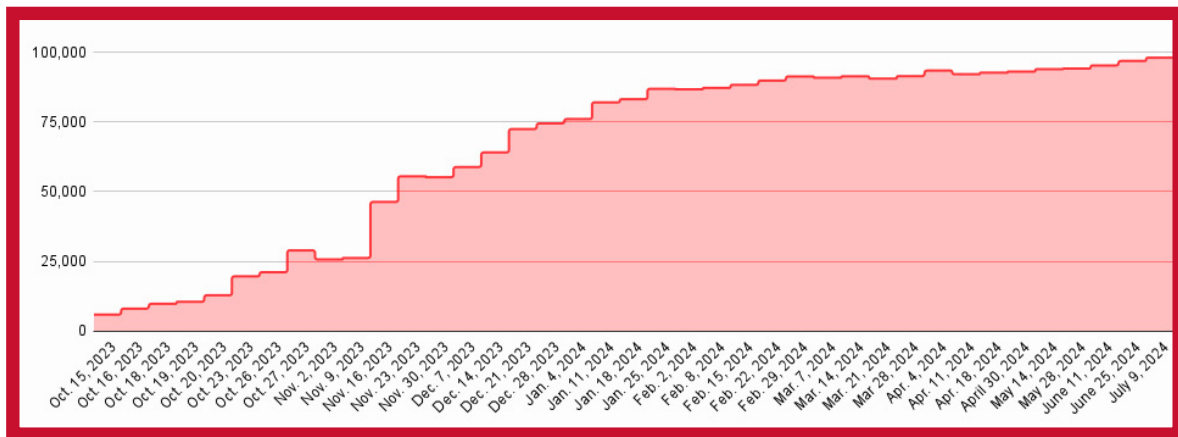


Figure 4: Number of displaced persons in Lebanon due to Hezbollah-Israel conflict. Source: UN IOM Mobility Snapshots

## Impact:

### Host communities under increasing strain, barriers to return increase

The vast majority of IDPs (97%) are hosted by families, renting accommodations or residing in a second home, with 1% residing in 15 communal shelters.<sup>32</sup> A substantial portion of these IDPs are hosted in peripheral, vulnerable, and conflict-stricken areas. For example, a little over 56,000 are now residing in the districts of Nabatieh, Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun, Hasbaya, and Sour in southern Lebanon, which are intermittently bombed by Israeli forces.<sup>33</sup>

District	Number of IDPs from border conflict	Population of Syrian refugees	Population of Palestinian refugees	Percent of the population facing food stress	Percent of people facing food crisis
Sour	28,050	40,387	22,748	46	22
Nabatieh	19,906	31,804		41	22
Bint Jbeil	5,807	13,070		50	20
Marjayoun	1,904	15,355		45	26
Hasbaya	814	5,489		47	16

Table 1: Source: UN IOM Mobility Snapshot - Round 41; IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis (Lebanon) October 2023 - September 2024.

<sup>31</sup> International Organization for Migration, [Displacement Tracking Matrix Mobility Snapshot - Round 39](#) July 11, 2024

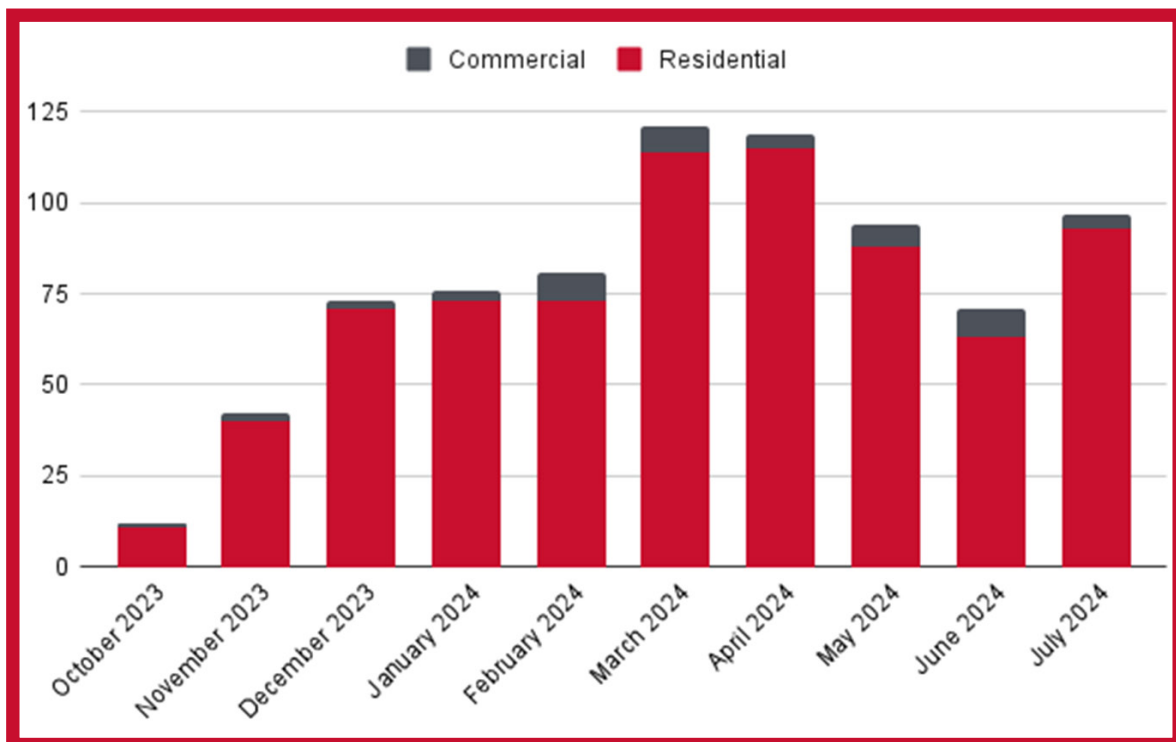
<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



Humanitarian actors should assume that the Lebanese state will be unable to support displaced families and their hosts, beyond limited actions, while international aid programs will contend with addressing growing needs with tighter resources. The Ministry of Social Affairs has thus far arranged a one-time payment of USD 25 per displaced family and USD 20 per individual, which is in most cases not sufficient for them to afford rental housing.<sup>34</sup> Existing international aid programs for Lebanon, including a World Food Programme (WFP) food assistance program, have been cut back due to global funding constraints.<sup>35</sup> In its latest appeal for funding in April, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) said its operations in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan have been chronically underfunded despite growing needs.<sup>36 37</sup>

The destruction of housing units increases incrementally in this scenario, augmenting barriers to IDP returns. Humanitarian actors should expect at least 100 Israeli strikes a month that destroy buildings and damage surrounding property, on par with the rate of destruction in July.<sup>38</sup> Unexploded ordinance will represent another barrier to return, with an estimated 10% failure rate for ordinance fired by Israel.<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 5:** Reported incidents of Israeli strikes on property in Southern Lebanon.

**Source:** LCAT daily monitoring of Lebanon's state-run National News Agency and major media for reports on Israeli shelling

<sup>34</sup> L'Orient Today, [In South Lebanon, solidarity with the displaced despite everything](#) February 5, 2024

<sup>35</sup> USAID, [Factsheet #1: Lebanon - Complex Emergency](#) April 3, 2024

<sup>36</sup> UN, [Amid a funding crisis, UNRWA's work in Lebanon could end by March](#) February 6, 2024

<sup>37</sup> UNRWA, [UNRWA launches US \\$415.4 million appeal for Palestine refugees in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan](#) April 3, 2024

<sup>38</sup> LCAT logs all strikes that cause property damage, noting ones that are direct strikes or indirect strikes, based on media reports. As with the shelling tracking, LCAT consults Lebanon's state-run National News Agency, Hezbollah's Al-Manar, and Al-Mayadeen television, and other outlets when applicable. LCAT logged 84 such attacks in May, 115 in April and 114 in March

<sup>39</sup> AFP, [UN agency finds unexploded 1,000-pound bombs in Gaza schools](#) April 16, 2024



## **Continuing strain on health sector in southern Lebanon**

The health sector in southern Lebanon is jeopardized by the attritional consequences of sustained casualties and damage to road, water, and electrical networks. Humanitarian actors should anticipate the same level of casualties in southern Lebanon, or an average of 5.7 injuries and 1.7 deaths per day.<sup>40</sup> Israeli strikes targeting first responders and emergency response centers are also expected to continue, degrading the ability of these critical services.<sup>41</sup> Health centers that remain open in the conflict zone will face further challenges with staffing and attendance.<sup>42</sup>

## **Lebanon in recession, agricultural devastation in the south**

In this scenario, the conflict will continue at the current level into the summer, Lebanon's peak tourist season, which will extend the economic recession. Diaspora-driven tourism over the last ten months has appeared more resilient than pessimistic initial projections. The number of arrivals at Beirut International Airport dropped by 10.8% between October 2023 and July 2024 compared to the same period one year earlier.<sup>43</sup> As the conflict would be largely contained to the south, this scenario assumes that diaspora Lebanese could visit areas not affected by Israeli bombardment. Overall, optimism should be tempered. Lebanon's purchasing managers' index – an indicator of trends in the manufacturing and services sectors – signals that the private sector through June 2024 was showing signs of deterioration amid falling demand and business activity.<sup>44</sup>

Humanitarian actors should expect Israel to continue using phosphorus and other incendiary munitions, causing additional damage to the agriculture sector in southern Lebanon, specifically in areas near the southern border. White phosphorus, which is highly flammable and toxic, contaminates crops while causing possible long-term pollution to soil, although its effects have not been fully researched.<sup>45</sup> Nearly three-quarters of farming households could face difficulties safely accessing their fields while about one-third could lose their harvests, outcomes which would slightly exceed the current trend.<sup>46</sup> Israeli shelling will also continue to kill sheep and cows while cutting off access to grazing areas, affecting not only herders but others working in the livestock supply chain.

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Public Health, [التقرير التراكمي للطوارئ الصحية](#) July 9, 2024 (1,438 casualties divided by 275 days between October 8, 2023 and July 9, 2024; 466 deaths divided by 275 days)

<sup>41</sup> The National, [Israel killing of paramedics in South Lebanon instills shock and fear](#) March 29, 2024;

The Washington Post, [News investigations say Israeli tank shell killed journalist in Lebanon](#) December 7, 2024

<sup>42</sup> WHO, [Emergency Readiness and Response Situation update #14](#) January 4, 2024

<sup>43</sup> Banque du Liban, [Flow of Passengers B.I.A. - Arrival](#) accessed June 12, 2024;

BlomInvest Bank, [BLOM Lebanon PMI falls to 16-month low in May](#) June 5, 2024;

Al-Hurra, [لبنان يخسر سياحته](#) June 9, 2024

Al-Hurra, [صيف لبنان...المغتربون يعودون رغم شيخ الحرب](#) July 15, 2024

<sup>44</sup> BlomInvest Bank, [Conflict and security concerns dampen Lebanese economy in June](#) July 3, 2024;

BlomInvest Bank, [BLOM Lebanon PMI falls to 16-month low in May](#) June 5, 2024

<sup>45</sup> The National, [I can't sell poison:: Farmers in south Lebanon say white phosphorus has ruined crops](#) November 28, 2023;

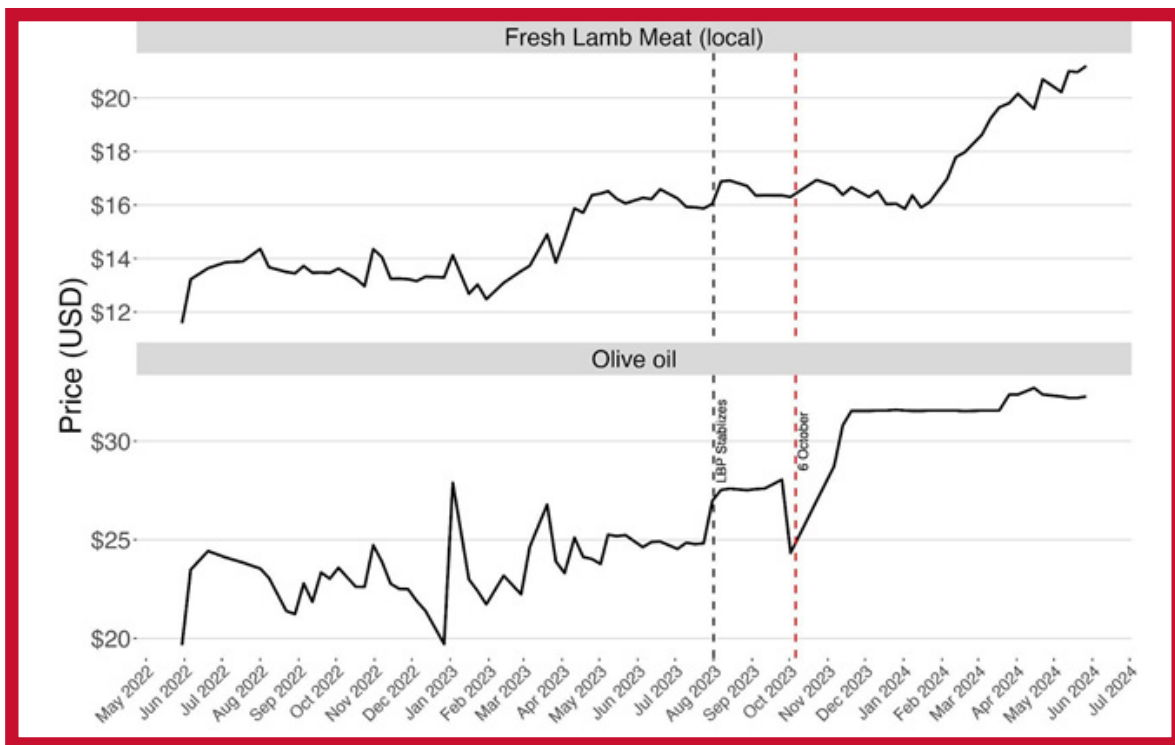
AFP, [Israel using white phosphorus in military operations in Lebanon, rights group say](#) June 5, 2024

<sup>46</sup> FAO, [Lebanon: Impact assessment of the escalating hostilities in southern Lebanon on agriculture](#) February 2024



This poses severe risks to residents in the south, including farmers and seasonal workers, whose livelihoods depend on agriculture, and will lead to dwindling incomes for already vulnerable people.<sup>47</sup> The conflict will continue to place pressure on the labor market in the districts housing the highest proportion of IDPs, particularly Sour (28%), Nabatieh (20%), Baabda (12%), and Saida (12%).<sup>48</sup>

According to Lebanese state estimates from 2020, agriculture-related activities are the basis of the southern economy, making up nearly 80% of the region’s GDP,<sup>49</sup> and an estimated 70% of total household income.<sup>50</sup> The supply-side economic impact of the conflict on agriculture production in the south has already been evidenced. Figure X shows that the prices of olive oil and lamb meat have unseasonably increased since October 6, 2023, with olive oil prices increasing ahead of lower anticipated local supply.



**Figure 6:** USD price of olive oil (per 3.6 liters) and local fresh lamb meat (per kilo). Since October 6, 2023, these major agricultural products from southern Lebanon have exhibited seasonally abnormal price increases. Source: [Lebanon Ministry of Economy & Trade](#).

### **Infrastructure and humanitarian access severely disrupted near border**

This scenario assumes that Israel will continue to target repair crews for utilities such as telecom firms. If the attritional conflict continues at the current level for several more months, state utilities could become largely inoperable up to 5 kilometers from the border – and heavily disrupted up to 10 kilometers from the border.

<sup>47</sup> UNDP, [Gaza War: Preliminary findings on the socio-economic and environmental impact on Lebanon](#) December 18, 2023

<sup>48</sup> International Organization for Migration, [Displacement Tracking Matrix Mobility Snapshot – Round 39](#) July 11, 2024

<sup>49</sup> Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, [Lebanon National Agriculture Strategy 2020-2025](#) July 2020

<sup>50</sup> FAO, [Lebanon: damage to agriculture, fisheries and forestry estimated at around \\$280 million](#) November 27, 2006





Humanitarian responders will continue to face significant security risks and access constraints, limiting the capacity of aid actors to respond to the needs of individuals remaining in areas where the conflict is most active. This would continue the trend, noted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), that residents remaining within 10 kilometers of the border are facing severe shortages of food, medicine, and medical equipment.<sup>51</sup>

### **Ongoing challenges to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), education, and food security**

Absent a significant military escalation, humanitarian actors should expect continued challenges related to food security, WASH, and education in southern Lebanon. The South Lebanon Water Corporation (SLWC) is at particular risk of disruption – more so than nationwide utilities such as Électricité du Liban – since its resources and staff are localized in a conflict-stricken area. Fee collections from subscribers in conflict-affected areas in the South and Nabatieh governorates are near zero.<sup>52</sup> OCHA has warned that SLWC is in urgent need of financial support, as it requires USD 500,000 per month to maintain service delivery.<sup>53</sup>

It is highly likely that this scenario will not lead to more temporary school closings, though short-term closings in the immediate aftermath of bombardment in otherwise conflict-free areas are possible. The number of children whose education has been disrupted would be expected to remain at about 20,000. Prolonged conflict would impose an emotional and psychological toll on displaced children and those whose schools have closed in favor of in-person education.

A significant proportion of Lebanese residents are already coping with food insecurity due to the persistent economic crisis. Recent cutbacks to nationwide aid programs have compounded this problem.<sup>54</sup> The conflict in southern Lebanon has necessitated food support for IDPs in communal shelters and other vulnerable groups. Under this scenario, food security is unlikely to worsen nationwide.

<sup>51</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon Flash Update #15](#) April 5, 2024

<sup>52</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon Flash Update #18](#) May 17, 2024

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> IPC, [Lebanon: Acute Food Insecurity Situation Projection Update Analysis - April 2024 - September 2024](#) May 30, 2024



## **Scenario 2:** **Conflict escalates significantly but short of full war**

**Status:** Not yet occurred

**Short-term likelihood:** Somewhat Likely

**Medium-term likelihood:** Likely

**Potential barriers to escalation:**

- Hezbollah increases the tempo of its strikes, hitting areas at least five kilometers into Israel, targeting unevacuated towns and forcing Israeli decision-makers to consider further evacuations and/or retaliation via a wide-scale campaign.
- Israel and/or Hezbollah inflict such a high number of civilian and/or military casualties that it prompts their opponent to conduct a sustained, escalatory campaign.
- Israel assassinates high-ranking Hezbollah officials, sparking a heavy retaliation after which Tel Aviv launches a wide-scale military campaign.
- Israel attempts to compel Hezbollah to end its border fire with escalated wide-scale bombardment campaigns.



## Context:

**In this scenario, the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah escalates to the point that Israel heavily bombards towns and villages up to the Litani River.** Tel Aviv has demanded that Hezbollah withdraw north of the Litani, pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1701, or face the possibility of a broader military campaign.<sup>55</sup> This scenario entails Israel concentrating its daily fire on southern Lebanese towns and villages – many of which are hosting IDPs – that have so far only been hit by occasional airstrikes. In this scenario, Israel would conduct near-daily air raids outside southern Lebanon in response to increasingly deep Hezbollah rocket volleys into northern Israel.

It is likely that Israel would also expand its list of publicly stated targets beyond Hezbollah (and its allies) to include civilian infrastructure. In mid-February 2024, an influential member of Israel’s War Cabinet said that his country holds the Lebanese government responsible “for allowing the rocket fire from its territory,” a stance voiced repeatedly in the past by Tel Aviv.<sup>56</sup> Israel has targeted Lebanese civilian infrastructure in previous military campaigns.<sup>57</sup> **Israel has already bombed electrical, water, and telecom infrastructure along the border and would be expected to continue doing so, entailing a wider and more intense aerial campaign up to the Litani River.** Lebanon’s state-organized emergency response logistics, including the DRM and DRR units organized by local authorities at the municipal level, would come under strain nationwide and face possible insurmountable challenges in conflict-stricken areas south of the Litani. Communal shelters in conflict-stricken areas would need to shutter, with IDPs moved again to safer areas.

In this scenario, Israel would heavily bombard the districts of Nabatieh, Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun, Hasbaya, Rachaya, and Sour, which collectively have a population of at least 800,000 and host at least 54,974 IDPs.<sup>58</sup> **Increased bombardment would likely displace a substantial portion of this population – likely over 400,000 people – to perceived safer areas within these districts, the Beirut metropolitan area, or elsewhere in Lebanon.** A smaller wave of people would be displaced from areas in and around the towns of Hermel and Baalbek due to sustained Israeli bombardment. Israel would refrain from sustained bombardment of Beirut and Saida to avoid Hezbollah rocket fire on Tel Aviv and Haifa, allowing these two Lebanese cities to host IDPs.

<sup>54</sup> L’Orient Today, [Israel is growing increasingly aggressive in Lebanon: It will be war if necessary](#) January 22, 2024

<sup>56</sup> Middle East Monitor, [Israel’s Gantz vows ‘strong’ response to rocket fire from Lebanon](#) February 14, 2024

<sup>57</sup> Los Angeles Times, [Israel Knocks Out Beirut Electricity](#) April 16, 1996

<sup>58</sup> Estimate based on registered voters, [via](#) the Directorate General of Civil Status’s Statistical Map for 2024

Lebanon does not conduct censuses. To arrive at the population estimate, LCAT tabulated the registered voters in the districts of Rachaya, Hasbaya, Marjayoun, Nabatieh, Bint Jbeil, and Sour (776,797 people). This figure includes a potentially significant number of voters who do not regularly reside in the districts but does not include children, or Palestinian and Syrian refugees, who would not be registered for voting. LCAT added the number of IDPs in the districts as per IOM figures. This results in an estimated total of 829,962.

International Organization for Migration, [Displacement Tracking Matrix Mobility Snapshot - Round 39](#) July 11, 2024



## Impact:

### **Degradation of services in host communities, increased communal tensions**

In this scenario, humanitarian actors should expect an acute need for aid at public shelters and increased communal tensions due to the influx of IDPs. The majority of IDPs currently reside in host settings elsewhere in the south, an arrangement that would be infeasible in this scenario.<sup>59</sup> Up to the time of publication, about 1% of Lebanon's IDPs have sought public shelter. It is highly likely this ratio would rise to at least 10%, matching numbers from the 2006 war.<sup>60</sup> Lebanon's state planning for public shelter is [hampered](#) by a lack of resources and clear aims for stockpiling and distributing resources for these centers.

Lebanon's state planning for public shelters does not provide for assistance to Syrian refugees, who would be disinclined to return to Syria due to worsening conditions there. Their movement to new residences in Lebanon would risk sparking tensions within destination communities. Without access to Lebanese state assistance, including from DRM and DRR units operated by local municipal authorities, Syrians would require support from the UNHCR and other organizations, including potentially for necessities such as WASH and food. For some time, local Lebanese authorities have been imposing harsh restrictions on Syrians, which have increased since the early April murder of a Lebanese political official, allegedly by Syrians.<sup>61</sup> In the wake of the murder, several violent reprisals were reported against Syrian nationals.<sup>62</sup>

The wave of IDPs moving in with host families, including in Beirut's southern suburbs, would cause a surge in local demand for water and electricity, among other already beleaguered state services. During the 2006 war, these services started faltering by the second week of the conflict, a trend that might be even more acute now after years of population growth and state utility failures.<sup>63</sup>

### **Significant strain on national health sector, collapse in southern Lebanon**

In this scenario, hospitals in southern Lebanon would be unable to sustain operations effectively amid heavy bombardment that disrupts electricity provision, road travel, and the delivery of critical medical supplies and fuel. Israeli fire on South Lebanon would also increasingly target medical infrastructure, consistent with Israeli military action and policy in Gaza and its strikes in southern Lebanon on first responders and emergency health centers.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> International Organization for Migration, [Displacement Tracking Matrix Mobility Snapshot - Round 39](#) June 27, 2024

<sup>60</sup> UNHCR, [UNHCR Activities in Lebanon 12 Jul - 31 Aug 2006](#) August 31, 2006

<sup>61</sup> L'Orient Today, [Pascal Sleiman's murder: Public anger turns toward Syrian residents](#) April 16, 2024;

L'Orient Today, [Beirut governor takes administrative measures targeting Syrian refugees](#) March 13, 2024;

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

<sup>62</sup> L'Orient Today, [Syrian national stabbed to death in Burj Hammoud](#) April 29, 2024

<sup>63</sup> Marwan Khawaja, Shireen Assaf & Rouham Yamout (2011) [Predictors of displacement behaviour during the 2006 Lebanon war](#), *Global Public Health*, 6:5, 488-504

<sup>64</sup> The New York Times, [Israel's Military Campaign Has Left Gaza's Medical System Near Collapse](#) April 26, 2024;

The National, [Israel killing of paramedics in South Lebanon instills shock and fear](#) March 29, 2024;

The Washington Post, [News investigations say Israeli tank shell killed journalist in Lebanon](#) December 7, 2024





A significantly escalated Israeli bombardment campaign throughout southern Lebanon, as well as stepped up airstrikes elsewhere, would lead to a surge in casualties. This would likely be at a rate of at least 25 injuries and 8 deaths per day, or approximately five times higher than the average daily toll in the first ten months of the conflict.<sup>65</sup> Lebanon’s Public Health Ministry has developed a [preparedness plan](#) that assumes the need for hospitals in unaffected areas to receive patients from the south, with approximately 40 hospitals set to receive 4,000 patients at once. While funds from a pre-existing World Bank loan have been allocated for this contingency plan, the health sector would still [depend](#) on international organizations to provide direct health services, including mobile clinics.

### **Severe disruption of utilities in southern Lebanon**

This scenario entails widespread electrical outages in southern Lebanon, major interruptions to state water provision, and severe disruptions to satellite TV and mobile phone reception.

Bombardment of critical electrical and telecommunications system nodes in southern Lebanon would be coupled with access restrictions. Destruction of bridges and roads as well as ongoing shelling would make repair work highly difficult. It is also highly likely that Israel would continue to target state electricity, telecom, and water utility repair workers.<sup>66</sup>

Nationwide infrastructure damage would be avoided in this scenario (at least before it could escalate to Scenario 3). No major power plants, ports, or other key facilities serving the whole country are located south of the Litani River.

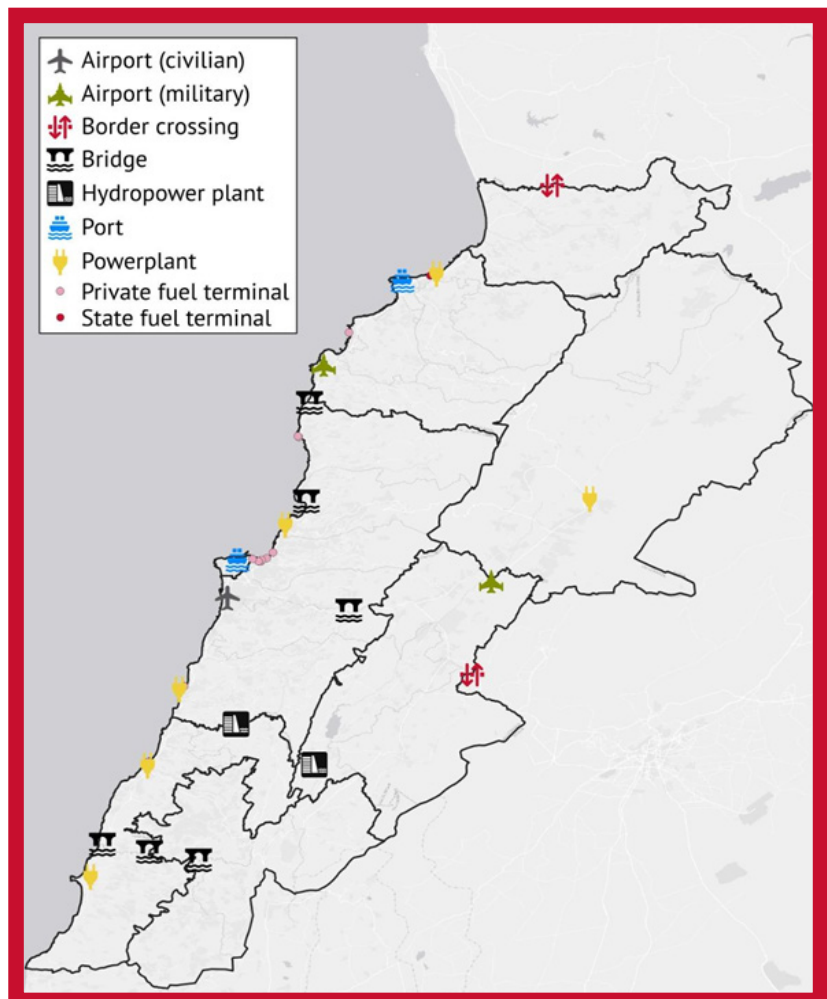


Figure 7: Select key infrastructure in Lebanon.

<sup>65</sup> Ministry of Public Health, [التقرير التراكمي للطوارئ الصحية](#) July 9, 2022

<sup>66</sup> National News Agency, [شهادة طبرجرفا: عنصر في كشافه الرسالة الإسلامية وفني من شركة POWER TEC](#) May 10, 2024

National News Agency, [تعرض عمال مؤسسة الكهرباء لقصف معاد في حولا أثناء إصلاح كابلات انقطعت بفعل الاعتداءات الاسرائيلية ولا اصابات](#) January 7, 2024;

National News Agency, [ثلاث غارات بعد منتصف الليل على مارون الراس تسببت بأضرار في البنى التحتية والممتلكات](#) April 25, 2024;

National News Agency, [مؤسسة مياه لبنان الجنوبي نعت شهيدا صالح](#) June 11, 2024



## Increased food insecurity

This scenario would likely lead to an exacerbation of the acute food crisis faced by IDPs from southern Lebanon. In its latest report, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) projected 1.2 million people would face a food crisis in Lebanon through September 2024, with 85,000 suffering from a food emergency.<sup>67</sup> The IPC projection is based on the current conflict continuing at the same intensity, and assumes that markets remain open in southern Lebanon and humanitarian access is not impeded. In the event of an escalation, approximately 700,000 people in southern Lebanon would face widespread bombardment, forcing their displacement amid market chaos. It is likely that a significant proportion of the 220,000 people that the IPC projected as food secure in southern Lebanon would face some form of crisis under this scenario.<sup>68</sup>

District	Nationality	Total Population	Population in food security	Population in food stress	Population in food crisis
Sour	Lebanese	197,068	68,974	88,681	39,414
Sour	Syrian refugees	40,387	8,077	20,194	12,116
Sour	Palestinian refugees	22,748	5,687	11,374	5,687
Bint Jbeil	Lebanese	84,781	25,434	42,391	16,956
Bint Jbeil	Syrian refugees	13,070	3,921	6,535	2,614
Nabatieh	Lebanese	146,560	58,624	58,624	29,312
Nabatieh	Syrian refugees	31,804	7,951	14,312	9,541
Hasbaya	Lebanese	25,759	1,372	14,611	4,962
Hasbaya	Syrian refugees	5,489	11,676	40,491	5,784
Marjayoun	Lebanese	64,527	19,358	29,037	16,132
Marjayoun	Syrian refugees	15,355	3,839	6,910	4,607
Rachaya	Lebanese	31,737	11,108	15,869	4,182
Rachaya	Syrian refugees	10,456	2,091	4,182	8,943
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>689,741</b>	<b>228,112</b>	<b>353,211</b>	<b>160,250</b>

Table 2: IPC Projections for southern Lebanon based on conflict continuing at current intensity.

<sup>67</sup> IPC, [Lebanon: Acute Food Insecurity Situation Projection Update Analysis - April 2024 - September 2024](#) May 30, 2024

<sup>68</sup> Ibid



Among the 700,000 people facing displacement from southern Lebanon in this scenario are an estimated 130,000 Syrian and Palestinian refugees – vulnerable population groups at risk of losing access to already weak social safety nets. Nationwide, 510,000 Syrian refugees – or 34% of this population group – and 68,600 Palestinian refugees are facing an acute food crisis, a number that would be expected to grow in the event of the economic downturn and market chaos.<sup>69</sup>

The likely degradation in food security would be exacerbated by an expected reduction in subsidies and support programs. Lebanon’s economy minister has said that the World Bank’s loan to support wheat imports and help subsidize bread is expected to end by October.<sup>70</sup> Food security programs, such as the suspended Emergency Social Safety Net program, are faced with financial constraints or delays, adding to insecurity.<sup>71</sup> The World Food Program has reduced cash assistance to Syrian refugees while stopping in-kind assistance for 50% of previously aided Lebanese households.<sup>72</sup> The intensified conflict foreseen in this scenario would likely lead to greater insecurity along the Mediterranean coast of Lebanon, forcing higher shipping costs due to war-risk insurance, prompting further food staple inflation.

### **Severely limited humanitarian access south of the Litani**

Humanitarian access to areas south of the Litani River – which at some points runs as far as 25 kilometers from the border – would be severely restricted, consistent with current humanitarian access challenges within 10 kilometers of the border.<sup>73</sup> The expansion of Israel’s reported strategy of cutting roads between population centers would severely disrupt the provision of supplies to the conflict-stricken zone.<sup>74</sup> In Gaza, Israel has bombed humanitarian convoys, a pattern of behavior likely to be repeated in southern Lebanon in a more widespread aerial campaign.<sup>75</sup> In 2006, Israel did not facilitate humanitarian corridors into the conflict zone in southern Lebanon, making access impossible.<sup>76</sup> Humanitarian actors should expect tens of thousands of residents to remain, though estimates are difficult to make due to sparse data on how many people stayed behind so far in conflict-affected areas. It is likely elderly persons would be left behind, with many older residents refusing to relocate themselves in the 2006 War.<sup>77</sup>

### **Acute WASH crisis in southern Lebanon and challenges nationwide**

In this scenario, it is highly likely that the SLWC would suffer a major degradation in both coverage and continuity. Wide-scale bombing would damage and destroy pumping stations and pipelines, as well as affiliated electrical and back-up power generation infrastructure.

<sup>69</sup> IPC, [Lebanon: Acute Food Insecurity Situation Projection Update Analysis - April 2024 - September 2024](#) May 30, 2024

<sup>70</sup> This is Beirut, [Wheat: From a General Subsidy to a Targeted Subsidy](#) May 10, 2024

<sup>71</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon Flash Update #18](#) May 17, 2024

<sup>72</sup> World Food Program, [WFP Lebanon Situation Report - March 2024](#) April 30, 2024

<sup>73</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon Flash Update #15](#) April 5, 2024

<sup>74</sup> L’Orient Today, [War or deal: Lebanon at a turning point](#) April 26, 2024

<sup>75</sup> UN OCHR, [Gaza: Israel’s dehumanisation of displaced persons must end, says UN expert](#) March 6, 2024

<sup>76</sup> Reuters, [Aid workers lament no safe access to south Lebanon](#) July 28, 2024

<sup>77</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Civilian Casualty Incidents Investigated by Human Rights Watch](#), 2007



This scenario would also involve destruction to water pumping and provision by municipalities, while Israeli targeting of roadways would prevent trucks from transporting water supplies. As such, residents in southern Lebanon who have not moved to conflict-free zones would face acute water shortages and severe hygiene and sanitation challenges.

In conflict-free areas of Lebanon, humanitarian actors should anticipate that IDPs will contend with WASH challenges in host communities. In this scenario, it is highly likely that displaced persons would seek new accommodation in areas serviced by the Beirut and Mount Lebanon Water Corporation (EBML), which has recently had to impose water rationing.<sup>78</sup> An influx of hundreds of thousands of IDPs to this service area would spike demand and cause serious strains. Furthermore, if this resource strain takes hold in the late summer or early fall, it would take place during the regular water scarcity season in Lebanon.<sup>79</sup> Residents in the Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates have increasingly turned to trucked water, an ad-hoc private sector supply source that would come under serious strain. In Beirut the dependence on trucked water surged from 50% of the population in 2019 to 80% in 2023, while in Mount Lebanon it rose from 10% to 19%.<sup>80</sup> Water access challenges, both potable and for sanitation, raise the possibility of inter-communal tensions in destination areas. Sanitation, sewage and garbage collection services would likely continue in Beirut and Mount Lebanon and other conflict-free areas.

In this scenario, Israel would not be expected to knock out roadways or public utilities outside of southern Lebanon. Moreover, there would be fewer IDPs than the Lebanese state has already planned for, making it likely that relevant aid actors would be able to equip collective shelters with water, bottled potable water, and hygiene kits.

### **Significant economic deterioration and potential of black markets**

Wide-scale Israeli bombardment up to the Litani River would likely result in many potential tourists electing not to travel to Lebanon, including returning members of the Lebanese diaspora. This would lead to a serious economic contraction. S&P Global estimated that a 10% to 30% drop in tourism revenues could lead to GDP contracting by 10%, while a 70% falloff in tourism revenues could precipitate a drop in GDP of 23%.<sup>81</sup> A significant decline in the number of returning Lebanese diaspora would also decrease remittance inflows to Lebanon. There are no reliable statistics on the level of remittances brought to Lebanon via tourists arriving with cash, but the figure is believed to be in the billions of USD.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> L'Orient Today, [Harsh water rationing to begin in Beirut, Mount Lebanon](#) August 24, 2023

<sup>79</sup> L'Orient Today, [Summer water rationing looms after light winter snowfall](#) June 14, 2023

<sup>80</sup> AQUA Water Infrastructure, [Ecosystems and Society. Navigating the water-energy nexus amidst the Lebanese economic crisis](#) May 3, 2024

<sup>81</sup> The National, [Israel-Gaza war may wipe 23% off Lebanon's GDP as conflict hits tourism](#) November 7, 2023

<sup>82</sup> Arabian Gulf Business Insight, [Lebanon pushed to the brink by the war next door](#) February 28, 2024





Beyond major hits to the tourism and hospitality sectors, consumer behavior would likely be affected. A temporary wave of panic buying of canned goods, medicines, and other supplies broke out in October 2023, in anticipation of a potential deterioration of the situation in Lebanon.<sup>83</sup> The head of Lebanon’s Supermarket Owners Syndicate said that, by the middle of that month, foodstuff demand had increased by 25% in southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut – areas with a Hezbollah presence that were heavily bombed in the 2006 war.<sup>84</sup> In this scenario, a dramatic escalation of Israeli bombardment and a major displacement of residents would likely spark an even greater wave of panic buying and hoarding. An expansion of the conflict would also likely lead to an increase in risk premiums for shipments to Lebanon, which is almost wholly dependent on imports.

The Lebanese state’s National Short- and Medium-term Preparedness and Response Plan [calls](#) on private sector actors to stockpile critical resources, such as fuel, to last for 45 days. In this scenario, ports would remain open, allowing for the replenishment of supplies. Nevertheless, spikes in demand could lead to shortages that encourage black markets in critical goods at highly-inflated prices, consistent with illicit sales of gasoline and diesel during Lebanon’s fuel crisis in 2021.<sup>85</sup> This would potentially affect other essential goods such as foodstuffs and medicine due to panic buying and fears that import-dependent Lebanon could no longer source these goods in the event of a full-scale conflict.

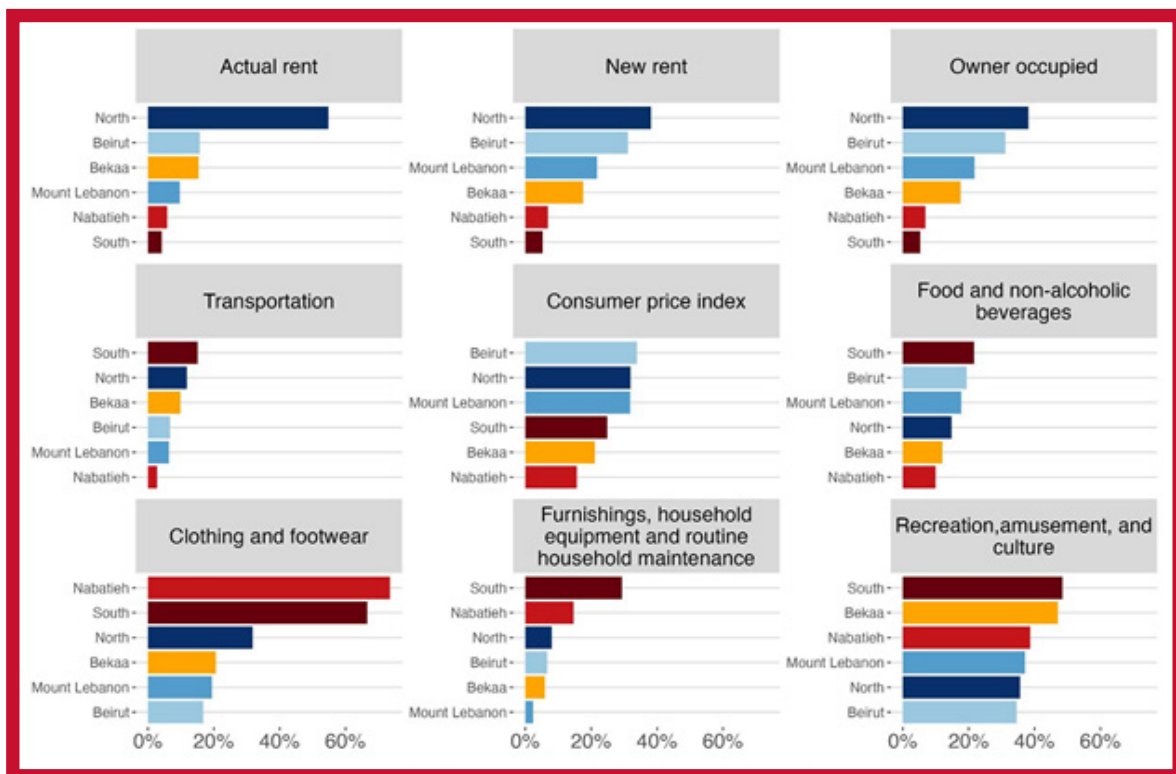


Figure 8: Percent changes in CPI in conflict-affected areas between September 2023 and April 2024.

<sup>83</sup> Financial Times, [Lebanon on edge over threat from Israel-Hamas conflict](#) October 24, 2023

<sup>84</sup> Al-Anbaa Online, [Did the events in the south affect the economic and living conditions](#) October 14, 2023

<sup>85</sup> L’Orient Today, [Lebanon’s top prosecutor orders new measures to crack down on fuel hoarding and smuggling](#) July 29, 2023



An escalation of the conflict would accelerate already observable regional disparities in the relative inflation of several Consumer Price Index<sup>86</sup> categories. Compared to the pre-conflict period (prior to September 2023), the Food and Transportation CPI has increased at the fastest rate in southern Lebanon, which would accelerate further in the event of escalation, and perhaps drive similar increases in Nabatieh if it becomes more embroiled in the conflict. The price of consumer goods – particularly clothing, household equipment, and furniture – have grown significantly faster in southern Lebanon and Nabatieh compared to the pre-conflict period, and would continue to disproportionately increase if the conflict escalates. Property destruction and mass displacement caused by the conflict has collapsed property and rent values in the South and Nabatieh governorates, as demonstrated by the much slower growth of housing-related CPI (actual rent, new rent, and owner-occupied homes), compared to large housing-related CPI increases in non-affected regions – particularly the Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, Beirut, and North Lebanon – which would continue to increase if the conflict escalates.

### **Severe disruption to education**

If the events forecast in this scenario take place during or after the start of the school year in September, they could significantly impede education in Lebanon. Since October 8, 2023, the education of approximately 20,000 children in southern Lebanon has been severely disrupted, with 44 schools permanently closed.<sup>87</sup> A wide-scale bombing campaign would likely lead to the displacement of the majority of the approximately 200,000 students enrolled in public, private, and UNRWA schools (from preschool through high school) in the South Lebanon and Nabatieh governorates.<sup>88</sup> Lebanon's Ministry of Education has made contingency plans for a similar scale of displacement, with its proposal calling for online education and regional school hubs if internet connections are not available to students.<sup>89</sup> The Lebanese state appears to be prioritizing other concerns over education, with dozens of public schools across Lebanon designated as communal public shelters. While the Ministry of Education has established and equipped 20 education centers for displaced students so far, the scale of displacement in this scenario would likely overwhelm the ministry's ability to effectively establish regional hubs.<sup>90</sup>

This scenario assumes both mass displacement from southern Lebanon and severe communication disruptions, making any transition to online education highly unlikely in the near term. Schools that have already moved to online education due to Israeli shelling are facing logistical issues, such as students not having consistent access to electricity or internet connectivity, contributing to low attendance.<sup>91</sup> Mass “dropouts” should be expected at any schools trying to move to online lessons. This scenario would also cause psychological distress for students across Lebanon, severely impacting their ability to pursue education.

<sup>86</sup> Central Administration of Statistics, [Consumer Price Index](#)

<sup>87</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon: Flash Update #17](#) May 2, 2024;

Asharq Alawsat, [الحرب في جنوب لبنان أخرجت 11 ألف طالب من التعليم](#), May 14, 2024

<sup>88</sup> Center for Educational Research and Development, [النشرة الإحصائية 2022-2023](#) accessed June 10, 2024

<sup>89</sup> Presidency of the Council of Ministers, National Short and Medium-term Preparedness and Response Plan November 2023

<sup>90</sup> Asharq Alawsat, [الحرب في جنوب لبنان أخرجت 11 ألف طالب من التعليم](#), May 14, 2024

<sup>91</sup> L'Orient Today, [Israeli bombs drove them from schools in south Lebanon. Now these students are forced to study online](#) March 5, 2024



# **Scenario 3:** **Full-scale conflict affecting all of Lebanon**

**Status:** Not yet occurred

**Short-term likelihood:** Unlikely (Many analysts believe that the Israeli military can not conduct operations in Gaza while simultaneously invading Lebanon)

**Medium-term likelihood:** Somewhat likely

**Potential barriers to escalation:**

- Israeli ground troops invade southern Lebanon as Tel Aviv attempts to establish a security strip, prompting major Hezbollah retaliation that devolves into a wide-scale war.
- Facing the security dilemma of a potential wide-scale Israeli military campaign, Hezbollah takes pre-emptive action by launching its own campaign aimed at disrupting Israel's offensive capabilities.



## Context:

Israeli officials have repeatedly warned that they could expand the scope of their military campaign in Lebanon to achieve their publicly stated goal of Hezbollah withdrawing its elite forces away from the border with Israel. On June 3, Israel's finance minister called for the Israeli military to impose a security zone in southern Lebanon, destroy the country's infrastructure, and severely damage Beirut.<sup>92</sup> Top Hezbollah officials have not backed down in the face of Israeli threats, vowing that their organization is ready to engage in a full-scale war against Israel.<sup>93</sup>

**In this scenario, Israel engages in an all-out war against Hezbollah and launches a major bombing campaign throughout Lebanon.** This would be consistent in intensity with its aerial campaign in the 2006 Lebanon War and its bombardment of the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023. In a reprisal of its actions in the 2006 war, Israel would impose an aerial and naval blockade on Lebanon, leaving the import-dependent country reliant on tenuous overland routes to Syria, which would also be the target of Israeli bombardment. In the 2006 war, Israel's military conducted limited ground raids into Lebanon before launching an aborted offensive aimed at reaching the Litani River.<sup>94</sup> In this scenario, Israel's military would launch a major ground offensive with multiple divisions, backed by heavy aerial bombardment, to erode Hezbollah's ability to launch projectiles. Israeli ground troops would conduct ground raids up to the Awali River, including in the districts of Saida, Nabatieh, and Jezzine, as well as in the Bekaa governorate.<sup>95</sup> This scenario also assumes comprehensive Israeli bombardment of Lebanon's infrastructure pursuant to Tel Aviv's "Dahiyeh Doctrine", a policy developed in the wake of the 2006 war, for the disproportionate use of force by Israel, including targeting of key civilian infrastructure.<sup>96</sup> Israel would target vital roadways, bridges, communication nodes, and fuel depots, according to analyses of Tel Aviv's war planning.<sup>97</sup> **This scenario entails the displacement of at least 1 million people, including not only from southern Lebanon but also the southern Beirut suburbs and the Bekaa Valley.** Lebanon's emergency response logistics — including the establishment of communal shelters — would face severe strains, such as bottlenecks of critical supplies and difficulties organizing due to communication outages. Authorities would need to activate disaster risk management units at the national and governorate levels, bolstered by all possible support from the UN and international organizations, while local municipalities in conflict stricken areas would likely not be able to organize emergency responses.

**Israel is unlikely to launch a full-scale war on Lebanon until it can withdraw sufficient numbers of troops from Gaza.** On June 24, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the "intense phase" of fighting in Lebanon would soon wind down, which would allow for the redeployment of troops toward Lebanon.<sup>98</sup> Since this announcement, three Israeli divisions — joined by brigades reassigned from the Northern Command responsible for the Lebanon border — have engaged in heavy fighting in Gaza.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>92</sup> L'Orient Today, [Smotrich calls on Israel to occupy southern Lebanon and 'severely damage' Beirut: Day 241 of the Gaza war](#) June 3, 2024

<sup>93</sup> L'Orient Today, [Ninety percent chance Lebanon avoids full-scale war: Hezbollah deputy leader](#) March 6, 2024

<sup>94</sup> Rand, [Hard Fighting: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza](#) January 19, 2012

<sup>95</sup> The Washington Institute, [If War Comes - Israel vs. Hizballah and Its Allies](#) September 2010

<sup>96</sup> Jerusalem Post, [The Dahiya Doctrine: Fighting dirty or a knock-out punch?](#) January 28, 2010

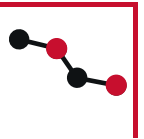
<sup>97</sup> The Washington Institute, [If War Comes - Israel vs. Hizballah and Its Allies](#) September 2010;

The Washington Institute, [A War Like No Other: Israel vs. Hezbollah in 2015](#) January 29, 2015

<sup>98</sup> CNN, ['Intense phase of war with Hamas about to end,' focus to shift to Lebanon border](#), Netanyahu says June 23, 2024

<sup>99</sup> The 162nd Armored Division, which took part in the 2006 War, is engaged in fighting in Rafah. The 98th Airborne Division, which also took part in the 2006 War, engaged in fighting in Shujaiya until its withdrawal from Gaza on July 10, 2024. The 7th Brigade of the 36th Armored Division – the only regular duty division in Israel's Northern Command – was engaged in fighting alongside the 98th Airborne Division in Gaza. The 3rd Infantry Brigade and 8th Armored Brigade of the 91st Division – a Northern Command division that participated in the 2006 War – are engaged in fighting in Gaza as of July 16, 2024





One of these divisions, the 98th Paratroopers, withdrew in mid-July, with its commanding officer saying it would require at least a month of preparation before being ready for any potential offensive in Lebanon.<sup>100</sup> It is unclear for how much longer Israel will conduct such wide-scale operations in Gaza. Hezbollah leadership have downplayed the prospects of a full-scale war, with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on June 9 saying the possibility had greatly diminished.<sup>101</sup>

## Impact:

### **Enormous surge in IDPs; risk of significant intercommunal tensions**

Humanitarian actors should anticipate the displacement of over 1 million people in this scenario, resulting in severe humanitarian challenges. The Lebanese state, in coordination with UN agencies, has engaged in initial planning to account for major displacement, including opening public shelters to house up to 200,000 IDPs. A lack of state resources and clear lines of authority have blurred this planning, with individual ministries unable to prepare beyond implementing basic measures such as developing a list of public schools that would become shelters. Staffing and equipping the shelters would be a serious challenge, especially in the event of a full scale war.

Over 900,000 people were displaced in the 2006 war. According to a 2011 study on displacement in the conflict, a majority of IDPs that remained in Lebanon sought private accommodations in the Mount Lebanon, Tripoli, and Beirut governorates.<sup>102</sup> The study noted high levels of support and solidarity among host residents for providing shelter for IDPs.<sup>103</sup> Unlike in 2006, the mass displacement of persons within Lebanon could now spark intercommunal sectarian tensions in destination areas. Analysts have raised concerns that tensions could escalate in the event of a wide-scale war, citing recent intercommunal clashes in Lebanon involving Hezbollah, such as in Tayyouneh in 2021 and in Kahaleh in 2023.<sup>104</sup> On March 26, residents of Rmeich – a predominantly Christian-populated town near the border with Israel – reportedly engaged in a brawl with Hezbollah members purportedly attempting to install a rocket launcher nearby.<sup>105</sup> In late May, the head of a major party opposed to Hezbollah said he was opposed to a state budget allocation to provide aid to residents impacted by fighting.<sup>106</sup> State utility provisioning, already damaged by heavy Israeli bombardment in this scenario, would come under further pressure due to population surges in destination areas. Unlike in 2006, Lebanon now hosts a large population of Syrians estimated to number over 1.5 million, according to government figures.<sup>107</sup> Barred from Lebanese state-led emergency response measures, Syrian refugees would likely face heightened vulnerabilities and challenges accessing essential items. Renewed displacement of Syrians would heighten tensions between residents of destination areas and IDPs. A wave of anti-Syrian sentiment had already been growing in Lebanon before the murder of a local political official in April 2024, blamed on Syrian perpetrators, sparked a series of violent incidents and local restrictions against Syrians.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>100</sup> YNet News, [«Another round in Gaza» and waiting to enter Lebanon: Ynet with IDF troops in Shijaiyah](#) July 10, 2024

<sup>101</sup> L'Orient Today, [«The threats of war have greatly decreased» but still come up](#) June 9, 2024 <sup>100</sup> Marwan Khawaja, Shireen Assaf & Rouham Yamout (2011) Predictors of displacement behaviour during the 2006 Lebanon war, Global Public Health, 6:5, 488-504, DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2010.546806

<sup>102</sup> Marwan Khawaja, Shireen Assaf & Rouham Yamout (2011) Predictors of displacement behaviour during the 2006 Lebanon war, Global Public Health, 6:5, 488-504, DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2010.546806

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> L'Orient Today, [In South Lebanon, solidarity with the displaced despite everything](#) February 5, 2024

<sup>105</sup> L'Orient Today, [Fight erupts between Rmeish residents and Hezbollah over missile launcher](#) March 26, 2024

<sup>106</sup> L'Orient Today, [Geagea criticizes government's funds for southern Lebanon amid war concerns](#) May 29, 2024

<sup>107</sup> Al-Jazeera, [Caught between two wars: Syrians in Lebanon fear Israel-Hamas escalation](#) October 13, 2023;

UNRWA, [Where we work](#)

<sup>108</sup> L'Orient Today, [Pascal Sleiman's murder: Public anger turns toward Syrian residents](#) April 16, 2024;

L'Orient Today, [Beirut governor takes administrative measures targeting Syrian refugees](#) March 13, 2024;

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



## **Severe strain on the healthcare system**

Lebanon's beleaguered health sector has [prepared](#) for a potential war in which 40 hospitals in unaffected areas could receive up to 4,000 patients simultaneously from conflict-affected areas. A full-scale Israeli invasion of Lebanon would likely overwhelm even a prepared network of hospitals. A wide-scale war would cause a massive surge in casualties, complicate the transport of the injured individuals from combat areas to hospitals, and disrupt hospital operations. The 2006 war killed 1,109 people and injured 4,399 more in Lebanon in just a few weeks,<sup>109</sup> with casualty counts likely to be tenfold higher in this scenario at the minimum. Israel's bombardment of Gaza since October 7, 2023 has killed at least 37,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, far exceeding death tolls from previous rounds of violence.<sup>110</sup> Despite its preparations for a war, Lebanon's beleaguered healthcare system would be incapable of coping with such a ferocious campaign or heavy casualty counts for a sustained period. Beyond financial challenges, approximately 40% of medical doctors and 30% of registered nurses in Lebanon left the country between 2020 and 2021.<sup>111</sup> This trend has reversed in the past year, with 1,000 of the 3,000 departed medical doctors returning.<sup>112</sup> The Lebanese state's emergency preparedness plan anticipates a conflict of 45 days, a duration that might be far exceeded in this scenario. Diesel reserves for back-up generators at hospitals would likely run out, knocking most facilities' modern operations offline. Also, in Gaza, Israel has deliberately targeted medical infrastructure for alleged ties to Hamas, raising the possibility that it would pursue such a policy in Lebanon.<sup>113</sup> Israel has already targeted medical centers and first responders affiliated with Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, and Jamaa al-Islamiya.<sup>114</sup>

## **Market collapse, critical shortages**

**Humanitarian actors should expect a wide-scale war on Lebanon to sharply contract the economy.** Lebanon suffered USD 3.1 billion in damages and a 10.5% GDP contraction due to the 2006 war, figures expected to be far higher in the event of a new wide-scale conflict.<sup>115</sup> In a December 2023 report, the World Bank warned that an escalation could lead to double-digit GDP decline, a sustained recession, and disruptions to imports leading to shortages of food, fuel, and other critical goods.<sup>116</sup> The Lebanese state's preparedness plan recommends that fuel importers stockpile fuel reserves for 45 days for critical sectors, including bakeries and hospitals, but some of these reserves could be damaged by Israeli bombardment. Wide-scale bombardment of Lebanon, similar to or worse than in 2006, would severely affect the distribution of dwindling supplies as a result of damage to roads, bridges, and overpasses, leading to a shutdown of economic activity. Shortages of critical goods would spark black markets in critical goods.

<sup>109</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War](#) September 5, 2007

<sup>110</sup> L'Orient Today, [Health ministry of Gaza says war death toll at 37,232](#) June 13, 2024

<sup>111</sup> World Health Organization, [Joint statement by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#) September 19, 2024

<sup>112</sup> L'Orient Today, [Emigrant doctors return to Lebanon](#) February 12, 2024

<sup>113</sup> The New York Times, [Israel's Military Campaign Has Left Gaza's Medical System Near Collapse](#) April 26, 2024

<sup>114</sup> The National, [Israel killing of paramedics in South Lebanon instills shock and fear](#) March 29, 2024

<sup>115</sup> World Bank, [Lebanon Economic Monitor - Fall 2023 : In the Grip of a New Crisis](#) December 20, 2023

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.



The supply of USD cash would likely become scarce due to panic demand for remaining stocks, making inbound wire transfers impossible. With Lebanon’s insolvent financial system unable to make up losses of USD 72 billion, honor deposits, or issue loans, banks now act as conduits for wire transfers moving funds in and out of the country. Money transfer operators fulfill a similar function, but with smaller tranches of transfers. Both are dependent on the shipment of new USD banknotes to the country to fulfill customer demand for inbound transfers, which would be impossible under an Israeli blockade.<sup>117</sup> A panic surge in inbound wire transfers via banks and transfers via money service bureaus for cash payouts in Lebanon would likely overwhelm the ability of these institutions to fulfill payouts. The value of the Lebanese pound would be expected to plummet in this scenario.

Israeli shelling would likely cause billions of US dollars in property damage throughout the country and leave hundreds of thousands of IDPs homeless and not able to return when fighting ends. The shelling would likely prove catastrophic to Lebanon’s agricultural sector. Israeli bombardment has already destroyed olive groves, citrus, and tobacco fields in southern Lebanon, with such damage expected to spread to the Bekaa during a wide-scale war. The devastating economic repercussions would likely spark an even greater outflow of skilled workers, an already worsening trend since the start of Lebanon’s economic and financial crises in 2019. Following such a war, there would likely be a renewed and massive wave of illegal migration from Lebanon via boats to Cyprus, a trend that has already increased in the first quarter of 2024.<sup>118</sup>

### **Significant food crisis**

Wide-scale Israeli air and artillery strikes, coupled with a ground invasion and a naval and sea blockade, would likely cause a significant and severe food crisis in Lebanon. Since the 2019 economic collapse, the IPC’s analyses of Lebanon have been negative, with the latest analysis finding that 1.26 million residents were likely to face acute food insecurity in the coming months, even without a major escalation.<sup>119</sup> This scenario entails a near worst-case scenario escalation, which would likely jeopardize the food security of millions of Lebanese, with especially harsh consequences for vulnerable groups such as impoverished residents in the peripheries of the country and Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Heavily dependent on imports, including wheat purchased with a World Bank loan, Lebanon would not be able to source supplies that are essential to ensure food security in the event of a blockade. Israel allowed limited humanitarian supplies to arrive overland from Syria in the 2006 war, however this did not extend to the south of the country. Assuming similar policies to those in Gaza since October 7, 2023, Israel would be unlikely to permit sufficient supplies to arrive in Lebanon. Diesel needed for back-up power generation required by bakeries and local food production plants would be largely unavailable. Transportation networks would be targeted at a similar rate to the 2006 war, when Israel destroyed over 100 bridges and overpasses as well as 137 roads.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Money transfer businesses have USD cash liquidity for a month, which is replenished with cash from abroad, according to the manager of BoB Finance in an [interview](#) published March 18, 2024 by Nida al-Watan

<sup>118</sup> Al-Jazeera, [Cyprus concerned over spike in arrivals of Syrian refugees from Lebanon](#) April 2, 2024

<sup>119</sup> IPC, [Lebanon: Acute Food Insecurity Situation Projection Update Analysis - April 2024 - September 2024](#) May 30, 2024

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.



## **Acute nationwide WASH crisis**

Humanitarian actors should expect acute nationwide challenges when attempting to access potable water, water for sanitation, and other supplies for hygiene due to heavy Israeli bombardment. In the 2006 war, Israeli bombardment damaged the two water pipelines supplying southern Beirut, extensively damaged water systems in south Lebanon, and disrupted pumping, storage, and distribution in Baalbek.<sup>121</sup> Even more severe disruption to public water facilities are likely in this scenario. Nearly half of the Lebanese population (44%) relies on water supplied via tanker trucks, an already chaotic delivery system that would be seriously jeopardized by critical fuel shortages and destroyed roadways in a wide-scale conflict. In the 2006 war, garbage and sewage collection was interrupted in the southern Beirut suburbs, a threat to sanitation that would be highly likely under this scenario.<sup>122</sup> In the event of a prolonged conflict, humanitarian actors should expect outbreaks of waterborne diseases, such as cholera.<sup>123</sup>

## **Severe disruption of mobile and internet connectivity**

This scenario would entail severe and sustained outages in Lebanon’s telecommunications networks. In Gaza, Israel has repeatedly targeted the local communication grid, leaving the enclave disconnected from the internet for days at a time.<sup>124</sup> In the 2006 war, Israeli bombardment targeted fixed and mobile telecom networks, destroying 13 transmission stations.<sup>125</sup> Such strikes would likely be far more comprehensive in a full-scale war in Lebanon, pursuant to Tel Aviv’s policies in Gaza and its stated threats in the Dahiye Doctrine. Assuming sharply curtailed supplies in diesel fuel needed for power generation at telecom stations, the network would likely face widespread outages within weeks of the start of the scenario. Some 150 devices to connect to the Starlink internet constellation have reportedly been distributed to state and humanitarian organizations as a potential backup mechanism for internet access.<sup>126</sup> It is unclear how effectively backup connectivity options based on connections to satellites such as Starlink or VSAT could be scaled up in Lebanon amid a wide-scale conflict.

## **Southern Lebanon mostly inaccessible to humanitarian actors**

An Israeli invasion aimed at reaching the Litani River would make most of southern Lebanon inaccessible to relief actors. This would mirror the situation in Gaza, where Israeli ground troops conducted weeks-long military operations in Gaza City and Rafah using heavy firepower, including aerial strikes. Even with no ground incursions into the south and relatively limited airstrikes, OCHA in mid-April said that access to territory within 10 kilometers of the border was severely curtailed.<sup>127</sup> In Gaza, Israel has reportedly aimed to sideline and deny access to the existing umbrella of UN and humanitarian agencies to create a new parallel system.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Government of Lebanon, [Setting the stage for long term reconstruction: The national early recovery process](#) August 29, 2006

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> World Health Organization, [Lebanon readiness and response plan in the context of Israel-occupied Palestinian territory hostilities](#) November 16, 2023

<sup>124</sup> The Washington Post, [Why Gaza keeps losing communications](#) January 18, 2024

<sup>125</sup> Government of Lebanon, [Setting the stage for long term reconstruction: The national early recovery process](#) August 31, 2023

<sup>126</sup> SMEX, [Telecommunications Sector Emergency Plan in Lebanon: Satellite Solutions over Realistic Options](#) November 14, 2023;

NOW Lebanon, [Cyber Warfare Fallout](#) April 16, 2024

<sup>127</sup> UN OCHA, [Lebanon Flash Update #15](#) April 5, 2024

<sup>128</sup> The New Humanitarian, [In-depth: Israeli attempt to circumvent UN contributes to Gaza aid chaos](#) April 1, 2024



An April 26 OCHA report said that access constraints to Gaza were continuing to significantly hinder the work of humanitarian actors, noting that Israel facilitated only 14 of 23 humanitarian missions into Gaza in the week before the report was published.<sup>129</sup> International officials have repeatedly called on Israel to vastly scale up humanitarian access into Gaza.<sup>130</sup> Such policies could be replicated in southern Lebanon, with Israel tightly controlling and limiting humanitarian access. During the 2006 war, Israel's blockade of Lebanon allowed limited humanitarian supply corridors from Syria via northern Lebanon, but did not facilitate humanitarian access into the conflict zone in southern Lebanon, a situation that would likely be exacerbated in this scenario.<sup>131</sup> Humanitarian actors should expect tens of thousands of people to remain behind in conflict zones, including vulnerable people such as the elderly who were unable to leave their homes.

### **Complete disruption to education nationwide**

This scenario would lead to a worst-case scenario for Lebanon's already-beleaguered education system, with most schools expected to close due to the security situation and unable to conduct online classes because of communication outages. The school year would likely be postponed until the conflict ends. School officials have broached possible stopgap solutions, such as assigning homework for an extended period of time or intermittent dissemination of lessons and homework via WhatsApp when internet connectivity is available.<sup>132</sup> Beyond disruption to their education, children are especially vulnerable to conflict and will require familial support – which could be lacking or unavailable to many – for coping with the war in this scenario. UNICEF has warned that prolonged interruptions to schooling would increase the risks of child labor and child marriage.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>129</sup> UN OCHA, [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel Flash Update #158](#) April 26, 2024

<sup>130</sup> UN, ['Every Day Counts,' Senior Coordinator for Gaza Aid Tells Security Council, Urging Comprehensive Support with Commensurate Investment to Alleviate Suffering](#) April 24, 2024

<sup>131</sup> Reuters, [Aid workers lament no safe access to south Lebanon](#) July 28, 2024

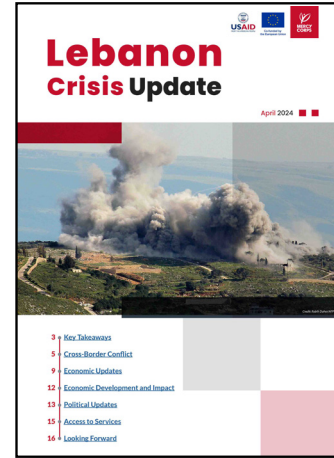
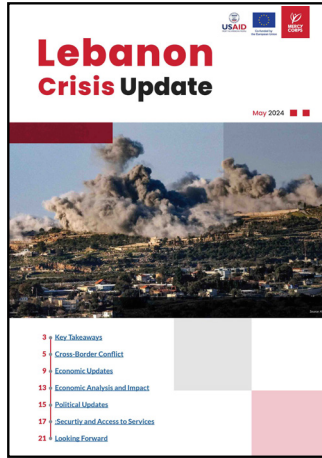
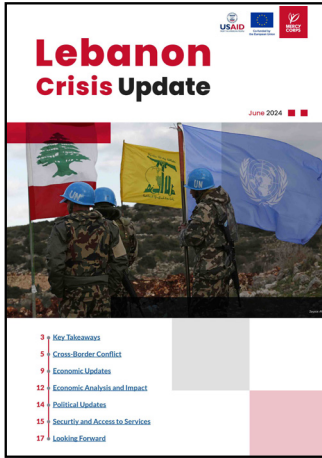
<sup>132</sup> L'Orient Today, [Lebanon's schools prepare themselves for war](#) October 23, 2023

<sup>133</sup> UNICEF Lebanon, [Caught in the Crossfire](#) April 2024

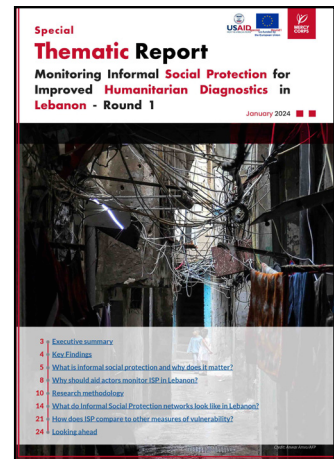




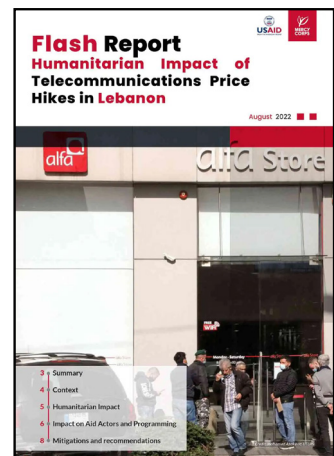
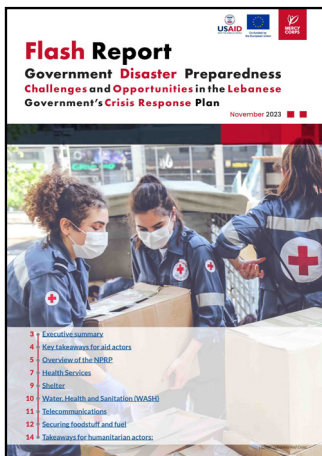
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