

Lebanon at War

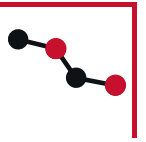
Crisis Update

March 2025



Credit: AP

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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:

- Israel intensified its military campaign in Lebanon throughout March, conducting 117 airstrikes – the highest monthly total since the Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) agreement took effect on November 27, 2024. Notably, 79 of these strikes targeted areas north of the Litani river. On March 28, Israeli forces struck the southern Beirut suburbs for the first time since the CoH began, followed by another attack in the same area on April 1 that killed four people and left seven injured. Overall, Israeli military operations claimed 32 lives in Lebanon throughout March.
- Clashes between Syrian security forces and members of Lebanese clans along the northeastern Lebanon-Syria border in March resulted in 14 deaths (7 in Lebanon, 7 in Syria) and 52 injuries. The fighting, centered around the border town of Houch al-Sayyid Ali, subsided when a ceasefire was reached on March 17.
- Violence in Syria's coastal region has triggered a new influx of at least 28,025 displaced persons into Lebanon's Akkar and North governorates. These displaced individuals face severe humanitarian challenges, with communal shelters critically undersupplied and northern Lebanese host communities already contending with economic hardship.
- The Council of Ministers issued a decree enacting the 2025 Budget, with Prime Minister Nawaf Salam stressing the need for state spending to adapt to post-war realities in Lebanon. Salam tasked the Finance Ministry with regularly amending the budget and monitoring fiscal spending, given that the previous government formulated the budget before the 2024 Israel-Hezbollah War.
- Representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) convened with key Lebanese officials, including President Joseph Aoun, Prime Minister Salam, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, and Finance Minister Yassine Jaber. During these meetings, the IMF delegation pressed the government to expedite economic recovery through implementation of a "unified financial reform plan."
- Minister of Interior and Municipalities Ahmad Al-Hajjar announced that municipal elections will be held in May, with polling stations opening on different days across various regions of the country.
- The World Bank has estimated that water, wastewater, and irrigation reconstruction in Lebanon will cost 508 million US dollars (USD). The South Lebanon Water Establishment (SLWE) began repairing wastewater treatment facilities and restoring water supply to towns in southern Lebanon in March. The worst drought in 65 years will complicate water and wastewater management and hydropower production heading into summer.



2025

MARCH

The Council of Ministers enacts the 2025 Budget by decree

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An International Monetary Fund delegation visits Beirut

Israeli Minister of Defense Israel Katz announces that Israeli forces will remain indefinitely at five hilltop outposts along Lebanon's southern border

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The Council of Ministers appoints General Rodolph Haykal as the new commander-in-chief of the Lebanese Armed Forces

Syrian forces shell the town of Houch al-Sayyid Ali during clashes along the Lebanese-Syrian border

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Contract teachers go on strike, demanding higher salaries and more timely remuneration

The Israeli military launches the highest number of airstrikes targeting Lebanese territory since the cessation of hostilities (CoH) came into effect

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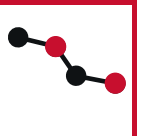
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The Council of Ministers appoints Karim Souaid as Central Bank governor

Israeli forces target Beirut's southern suburbs for the first time since the CoH came into effect

28





Source: AFP

Conflict Updates :

Cessation of Hostilities

Throughout March, Israel significantly escalated its bombing in Lebanon, including its first airstrike in the greater Beirut area since the start of the CoH on November 27, 2024.¹ The March 28 airstrike, which collapsed a building in the Hadath suburb of the capital, followed a warning from the Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesperson, triggering a panicked evacuation. The bombing came in response to two rockets being launched toward Israel from southern Lebanon.² Days prior, on March 22, Israeli forces launched 41 airstrikes across southern Lebanon and the Bekaa valley – the highest number of strikes in Lebanon on a single day since the start of the CoH³ – in retaliation for another cross-border rocket attack.⁴ While Israeli officials did not directly blame Hezbollah for either rocket attack, they announced that Israeli forces targeted Hezbollah sites in response.⁵ Hezbollah denied responsibility for the two rocket launches.^{6,7} Israel conducted 117 airstrikes throughout March, its highest monthly tally since the CoH came into effect.⁸ The Israeli military claimed that its strikes were in response to alleged Hezbollah violations of the CoH.⁹

¹ L'Orient Today, [First Israeli strike on Beirut's southern suburbs since cease-fire](#) March 28, 2025

² L'Orient Today, [Netanyahu says "Israel will strike anywhere in Lebanon"](#) March 28, 2025

³ LCAT logs all Israeli airstrikes reported by Lebanon's National News Agency, *L'Orient Today*, and *Al-Mayadeen*.

⁴ Times of Israel, [IDF: 6 rockets fired this morning from Lebanon, probe ongoing into who's responsible](#) March 22, 2025

⁵ Reuters, [Truce shaky as Israel strikes Lebanon in response to rocket fire](#) March 22, 2025;

The New York Times, [Israel Launches Airstrikes Near Beirut For First Time Since Cease-fire](#) March 28, 2025

⁶ NNA, ["حزب الله" ينفي علاقته بإطلاق الصواريخ من الجنوب](#) March 22, 2025;

NNA, [مصدر مسؤول في حزب الله: ملتزمون وقف النار ولا علاقة لنا بإطلاق الصواريخ اليوم](#) March 28, 2025

⁷ BBC, [Israel strikes Lebanon after first rocket attack since ceasefire](#) March 22, 2025

⁸ LCAT logs all Israeli airstrikes reported by Lebanon's National News Agency, *L'Orient Today*, and *Al-Mayadeen*. LCAT logged 117 airstrikes in March 2025, 61 in February 2025, 29 in January 2025, 75 in December 2024, and 11 between November 27, 2024 and November 30, 2024.

For context, Israel conducted an average of 297 strikes per month between November 2023 through August 2024, before the start of its widescale military campaign on September 23, 2024.

⁹ Times of Israel, [IDF confirms strike on Hezbollah weapons facility in northeastern Lebanon](#) March 13, 2025;

Times of Israel, [IDF confirms airstrikes against Hezbollah military sites in Lebanon](#) March 17, 2025;

Times of Israel, [IDF says Hezbollah operatives, command posts and rocket launchers among the targets in latest strikes](#) March 22, 2025

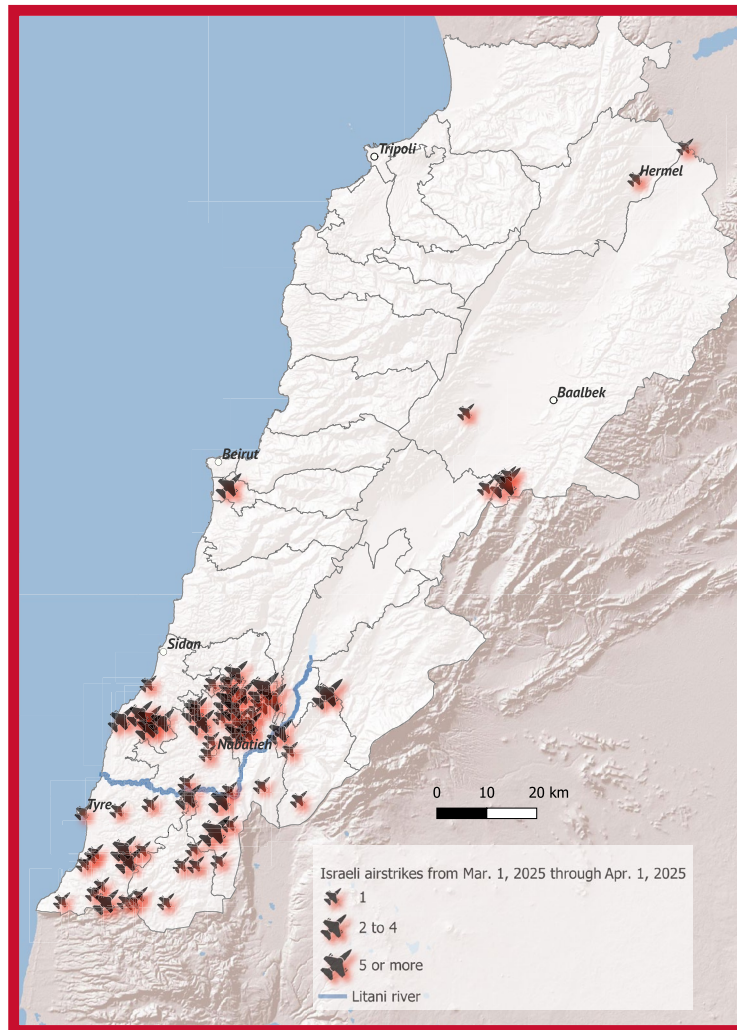


Figure 1: The locations of 118 Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon from March 1, 2025 through April 1, 2025.

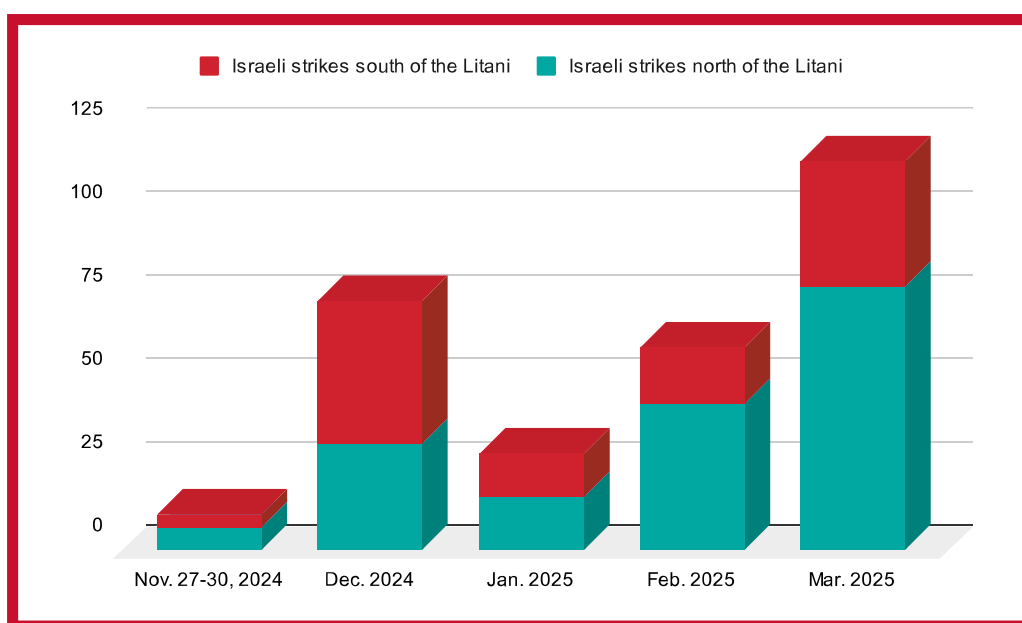


Figure 2: The frequency of Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon since the start of the CoH.



As part of its widened military operations, Israel has intensified its campaign of targeted assassinations, including an April 1 strike that killed a Hezbollah member at his home in the southern suburbs of Beirut.¹⁰ In March, Israel conducted targeted assassinations against six alleged Hezbollah military officials, including commanders in the organization's Radwan Forces, aerial defense unit, and anti-tank guided missile unit.¹¹ Israel also conducted nine strikes against vehicles allegedly transporting lower-ranking Hezbollah fighters,¹² its highest monthly rate since November 2024.¹³ Additionally, Israel increased its rate of bombing north of the Litani river in March, conducting 79 such strikes.¹⁴

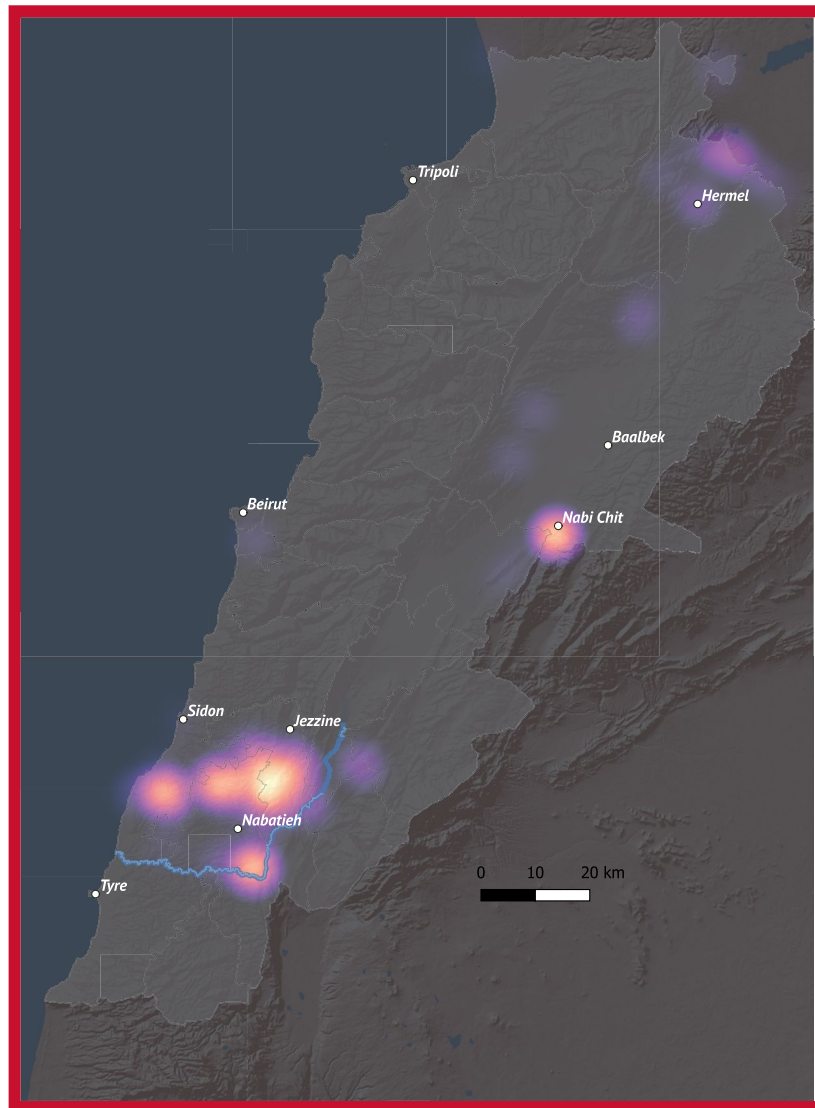


Figure 3: A heatmap of Israeli strikes north of the Litani river since the start of the CoH on November 27, 2024. Strikes are clustered in the remote valleys between Nabatieh and Jezzine, as well as around Nabi Chit near the Syrian border.

¹⁰ AFP, [Hezbollah official among four dead in Israeli strike on Beirut](#) April 1, 2025

¹¹ LCAT logs all of Israel's reported targeted assassinations, cross-referencing reports from the National News Agency, *L'Orient Today*, and *Al-Mayadeen* with Israeli military statements.

Israel conducted four targeted assassinations in February 2025, before which they conducted none during the CoH period.

¹² LCAT logs Israeli military statements on strikes targeting vehicles in Lebanon, sorting between targeted assassinations against Hezbollah military officials and strikes that kill alleged lower-ranking militants in the organization.

¹³ LCAT logs all Israeli airstrikes targeting vehicles. Israel conducted five such strikes in February 2025, two in January 2025, six in December 2024, and two between November 27 and November 30, 2024.

¹⁴ LCAT logs all Israeli airstrikes reported by Lebanon's National News Agency, *L'Orient Today*, and *Al-Mayadeen*, locating and tallying the strikes north of the Litani river.

Israel conducted 44 strikes north of the Litani in February 2025, 16 in January 2025, 32 in December 2024, and seven between November 27 and November 30, 2024.

Hezbollah has refrained from overt military action against Israel since early December. The organization has claimed only one attack against Israel since the start of the CoH – firing two mortar rounds on December 2 at the contested Shebaa Farms area claimed by Lebanon, Israel, and Syria¹⁵ – an action it called an initial and defensive warning.¹⁶ Following Israel's retaliation to the cross-border rocket launch on March 22, Hezbollah representatives said the organization was being patient and avoiding giving Israel a pretext to start a new war.¹⁷ The day after Israel's March 28 bombing in the southern Beirut suburbs, Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem said his party would be "forced to return to other options" if the Lebanese state is unable to bring diplomatic pressure to end Israel's airstrikes. However, Qassem did not directly state that the organization would conduct military operations.¹⁸

Barriers to Returns

Israel's ongoing military operations across Lebanon's southern border region threaten the safety of returning residents and reconstruction efforts, highlighted by Israel pursuing a policy of establishing a vaguely defined "buffer zone" near the border. On March 13, Israeli Minister of Defense Israel Katz stated that his country's military would remain indefinitely on five Lebanese hilltops near the border to control the buffer zone.¹⁹ The Israeli military regularly opens small arms fire near the border, which killed 1 person and injured at least 10 in March.²⁰ Among these casualties were two inspectors from Hezbollah's Jihad al-Bina construction organization, both of whom were injured by Israeli military gunfire near Kfar Kila on March 7.²¹ The Israeli military regularly deploys quadcopter drones to drop stun grenades and explosive devices near the border, including on March 23, when a person was injured by an explosive device dropped near a bulldozer removing rubble in Yaroun.²² A total of 32 people were killed in Lebanon last month by Israeli military action.²³

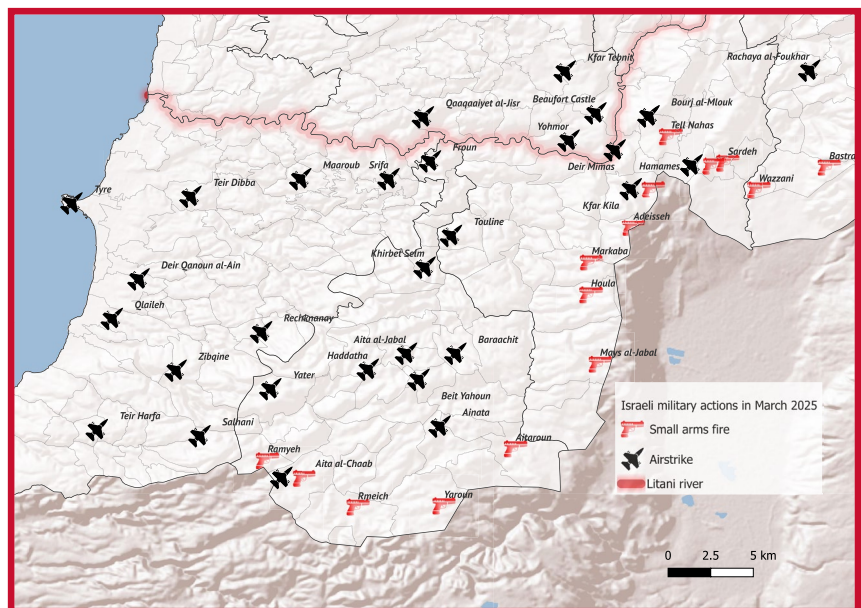


Figure 4: Israeli airstrikes and small arms fire in southern Lebanon in March 2025.

¹⁵ L'Orient Today, [To whom do Shebaa Farms belong?](#) January 24, 2024

¹⁶ NNA, [المقاومة الإسلامية: رداً على الخروقات الإسرائيلية](#) December 2, 2024

¹⁷ L'Orient Today, [Live Blog March 23, 2025](#)

¹⁸ NNA, [نعيم قاسم: العالم يشهد أن لبنان نفذ اتفاق وقف إطلاق النار لكن إسرائيل لم تنفذه](#) March 29, 2025;

L'Orient Today/AFP, [Qassem: "If the state does not succeed politically, we will seek other options"](#) March 29, 2025

¹⁹ Times of Israel, [Katz says IDF will stay at 5 key points in southern Lebanon, despite talks on border disputes](#) March 14, 2025

²⁰ LCAT logs all reports by the Ministry of Public Health, National News Agency, *L'Orient Today*, and *Al-Mayadeen* of casualties caused by Israeli military actions. When reports differ between sources, LCAT uses the numbers reported by the Ministry of Public Health.

²¹ NNA, [إصابة شخصين من فريق "جهاد البناء" وآخر سوري وصفت حالته بالدرجة قتيلا كفرلا](#) March 7, 2025

²² NNA, [جريح بالقاء قنبلة على جرافة كانت تعمل على رفع الركام في يارون](#) March 23, 2025

²³ LCAT logs all reports by the Ministry of Public Health, National News Agency, *L'Orient Today*, and *Al-Mayadeen* of casualties caused by Israeli military actions. When reports differ between sources, LCAT uses the numbers reported by the Ministry of Public Health.



The Israeli military also targeted prefabricated houses in Yaroun,²⁴ Kfar Kila,²⁵ Naqoura,²⁶ and Chihine²⁷ throughout the month. Prefabricated housing in villages and towns along the border are a temporary solution to house laborers, including agricultural workers, in a bid to revive economic activity.²⁸

As of March 26, 93,906 people were still displaced across Lebanon due to Israeli military action. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has remained relatively static since Israel completed its withdrawal from towns and villages in southern Lebanon on February 18, when 98,994 people remained displaced.²⁹ Returning residents are contending with extensive property and infrastructure damage in their home villages. On March 11, the mayor of Kfar Chouba said reconstruction efforts were stalled, state utilities were not providing adequate water or electricity, and an official damage assessment had not been conducted.³⁰ In Nabatieh, residents said that rubble removal had not yet moved forward.³¹ Unexploded ordnance also poses a safety threat. In the past month, one man was injured in Blida after a small explosive device detonated as he was collecting scrap metal.³²

Syria-Lebanon clashes

Clashes broke out between members of Lebanese clans and Syrian security forces along Lebanon's northeastern border with Syria again in March, killing seven people and injuring 52 others in Lebanon. Seven Syrian soldiers were also killed in Syria.³³ On March 16, Syrian security forces started shelling the border area around Al-Qasr³⁴ after accusing Hezbollah militants of kidnapping three soldiers from Syrian territory and executing them.³⁵ Hezbollah denied³⁶ involvement in the fighting. Media reports claimed the clashes involved members of Lebanese clans³⁷ who have cross-border familial ties. Amid the fighting between Syrian security forces and Lebanese clan members, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) deployed to the area.³⁸ On March 17, Syrian security forces focused their fire on the village of Houch al-Sayyid Ali,³⁹ which is located along the disputed and imprecisely demarcated border.⁴⁰ A tentative ceasefire was brokered that evening, which called for the demilitarization of the village and the withdrawal of the LAF and Syrian security forces.⁴¹ This round of fighting came only one month after a similar round of clashes between the same belligerents in early February, when 4 people were killed and at least 10 others injured.⁴²

²⁴ NNA, [مدفعية العدو استهدفت منزلا جاهزا في يارون](#) March 16, 2025

²⁵ NNA, [مروحية معادية استهدفت منزلا جاهزا ومحطة محروقات في كفر كلا](#) March 16, 2025;

[Al-Mayadeen via X, مراسل الميادين في جنوب لبنان](#) March 30, 2025

²⁶ NNA, [استهداف عدد من البيوت الجاهزة في الناقورة وشيحين](#) March 23, 2025

²⁷ [ibid.](#)

²⁸ L'Orient Today, [Prefabricated containers as a temporary solution for the inhabitants of South Lebanon?](#) March 14, 2025

²⁹ IOM, [Mobility Snapshot - Round 77](#) February 20, 2025

³⁰ NNA, [رئيس بلدية كفرشوبا طالب في مؤتمر صحافي بالمزيد من الاهتمام بالبلدة](#) March 11, 2025;

[L'Orient Today, Head of Kfar Shuba municipality calls for accelerated reconstruction of the village](#) March 11, 2025

³¹ Al-Modon, [النيطية بعد الدمار: مدينة تصارع الركام وتنتظر الإعمار](#) March 19, 2025

³² NNA, [انفجار جسم صغير بأحد المواطنين خلال قيامه بجمع الخردة في بلدا](#) March 9, 2025

³³ NNA, [الصحة: 7 شهداء و52 جريحا حصيلة التطورات على الحدود اللبنانية - السورية](#) March 17, 2025;

[L'Orient Today, Border clashes put Beirut-Damascus relations at a crossroads](#) March 18, 2025

³⁴ Nida al-Watan, [بالفيديو - تصعيد مستمر عند الحدود الشرقية](#) March 17, 2025

³⁵ SANA via Facebook, [Syrian defense ministry media relations](#) March 16, 2025

³⁶ NNA, ["حزب الله" العلاقات الإعلامية](#) March 16, 2025

³⁷ Washington Post, [Syria and Lebanon agree to halt violence following border clashes](#) March 17, 2025;

[L'Orient Today, Deadly clashes on Lebanon-Syria border since Sunday: What we know](#) March 17, 2025

³⁸ Lebanese Presidency via X, [Presidential Statement](#) March 17, 2025

³⁹ SANA via Facebook, [Syrian defense ministry sources statement](#) March 17, 2025

⁴⁰ L'Orient Today, [Lebanon-Syria agree to a cease-fire after Lebanese Army fires back at the border](#) March 17, 2025

⁴¹ SANA via Facebook, [Statement of Commanding Officer of Syrian Army's 52nd Division](#) March 19, 2025

⁴² Mercy Corps, [Regime Change in Syria :Implications for Lebanon](#) March 3, 2025

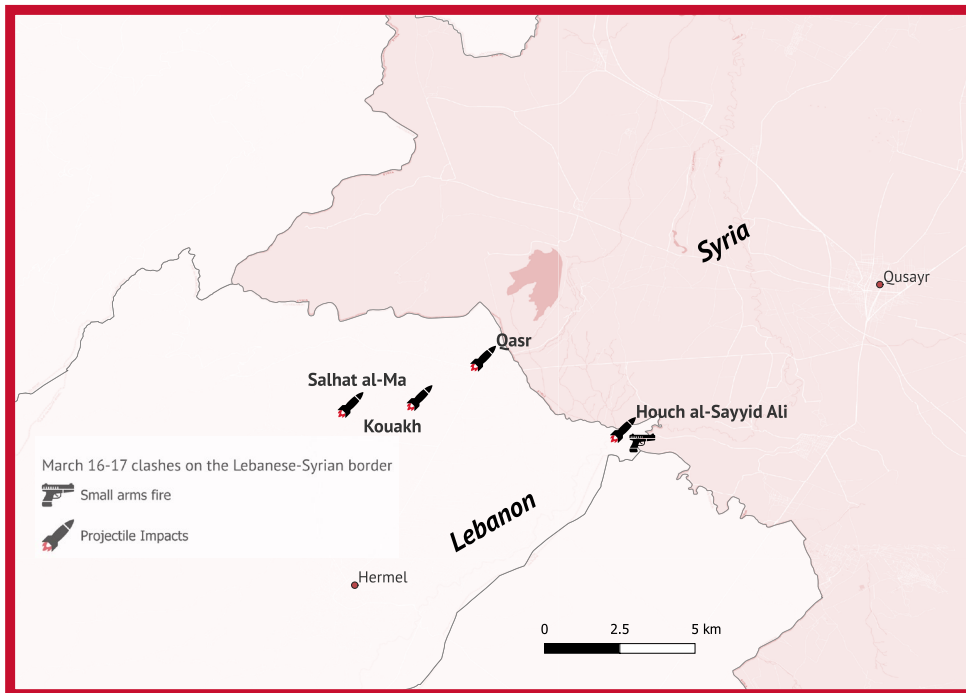


Figure 5: Locations of cross-border fighting between Syrian security forces and Lebanese clan members in March.

The fighting reportedly led to displacement from villages along the border,⁴³ though no reliable data is available on the number of people who fled the area. The largest village in the shelled area along the border, Al-Qasr, has an estimated population of 4,000 full-time residents.⁴⁴ Following the fighting, municipal officials in Hermel district issued a statement that Houch al-Sayyid Ali had become a disaster zone, and called on Lebanese officials to provide compensation and shelter for displaced residents.⁴⁵

New wave of Syrian refugees

A surge of sectarian violence in Syria's coastal region precipitated a new wave of refugees entering Lebanon's Akkar governorate and the city of Tripoli. The UN has verified 111 civilians were killed in violence across the coastal region that peaked in early March, with the total figure likely far higher.⁴⁶ As of April 1, at least 28,496 people have been displaced by the violence in Syria's coastal region to Lebanon's Akkar and North governorates.⁴⁷

Individuals displaced from Syria's coastal region are being hosted by local communities, including relatives in Lebanon, as well as at least 17 communal shelters hosting 1,977 people. UNHCR said that these communal shelters lack requisite fuel for back-up electricity generation, cooking facilities, and water supplies.⁴⁸ Lebanese news outlets have reported that the recently displaced Syrians are struggling to access healthcare and food due to economic hardships in host communities.⁴⁹

⁴³ Al-Jadeed via X, [Movement of displaced](#) March 16, 2025

⁴⁴ The Monthly, [Al-Qasr](#) August 1, 2013

⁴⁵ NNA, [مخاطر قضاء الهرمل طالبوا بالاهتمام بآمن المنطقة وحمايتها](#) March 19, 2025

⁴⁶ United Nations OHCHR, [Syria: Distressing scale of violence in coastal areas](#) March 11, 2025;

Human Rights Watch, [Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians](#) March 10, 2025;

⁴⁷ As of April 1, the Disaster Risk Unit in Akkar had tallied 20,496 refugees arriving to the governorate from Syria since March 10.

An-Nahar, [خمسة آلاف نازح سوري إلى شمال لبنان في غضون 24 ساعة](#) April 1, 2025;

According to a UN report published on March 27, the Lebanese Red Cross tallied 7,529 refugees arriving to Lebanon from Syria since violence broke out in Syria's coastal region.

UNHCR, [Regional Flash Update #20 - Syria situation crisis](#) March 27, 2025

⁴⁸ UNHCR, [New Arrivals to North Lebanon](#) March 21, 2025

⁴⁹ An-Nahar, [عقب الإعدامات الأخيرة... نزوح علويين من سوريا إلى سهل عكار شمالي لبنان](#) March 8, 2025;

Kataeb, [Fresh Wave of Syrian Displaced Puts Pressure on Akkar Communities](#) March 13, 2025



Source: Presidency's X account

Economic Updates:

On March 6, the Council of Ministers issued a decree enacting the 2025 Budget law. Prime Minister Salam said that that government could not operate using monthly allocations – in line with the “one-twelfth” principle⁵⁰ – because spending needs have changed compared to 2024.⁵¹ Minister of Finance Yassin Jaber has been tasked with addressing fees or taxes in the enacted budget that the government assesses could have “social and economic ramifications on citizens.”⁵² The Minister will also monitor government spending on a weekly basis, given that overspending is likely in light of the “unrealistic forecasts” in the budget. During the same cabinet session, the government also discussed tax exemptions for people whose homes or businesses were damaged during the war.

On March 27, the Council of Ministers appointed Karim Souaid as the new Governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon. This decision ends a two-year official vacancy in the Central Bank’s top position – former governor Riad Salameh’s term ended on July 31, 2023, after which Wassim Mansouri took over as acting governor.⁵³ Prime Minister Salam stated that Souaid must implement policies aligned with the government’s financial reform strategy. These include securing state financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and restructuring financial sector debt while protecting depositors’ rights.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ According to the “one-twelfth” principle, the government can spend up to one-twelfth of the previous year’s budget each month if the government and the parliament’s Finance and Finance Committee fail to pass the budget law by the beginning of the fiscal year. This strategy, which is a temporary solution to avoid government shutdowns while the new budget is being negotiated and approved, ensures that essential government services, salaries, and operational expenses can continue.

⁵¹ PCM, [الرئيس سلام في جلسة لمجلس الوزراء بعيدا](#), March 6, 2025

⁵² Nidaa al-Watan, [جابر: الموازنة بمرسوم لتعويض دلسة ناقصة قبل بدء التفاوض مع صندوق النقد](#), March 7, 2025

⁵³ [مجلس الوزراء يعين كريم سعيد حاكما لمصرف لبنان بـ17 صوتا من أصل 24... من هو؟ وما صلاحياته؟](#), Annahar, March 27, 2025;

[L'Orient Today, Cabinet chooses Karim Souhaid as next governor of Banque du Liban](#), March 27, 2025

⁵⁴ [Annahar, سلام تحفظ على تعيين سعيد حاكما لمصرف لبنان: الأهم أن يلتزم بالسياسة المالية لحكومتنا الإصلاحية](#), March 27, 2025



An IMF delegation visited Lebanon between March 10 and March 13.⁵⁵ On March 12, the team met with President Joseph Aoun, Prime Minister Salam, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. Head of the IMF mission Ernesto Ramirez-Rigo urged Lebanese leaders to agree on a “unified financial reform plan.” The IMF representatives also met with Finance Minister Jaber and discussed a recovery roadmap.⁵⁶ The delegation plans to visit Beirut again in early April.⁵⁷

On March 7, the World Bank released a Rapid Damages and Needs Assessment (RDNA) report on the impact of the 2024 Israel-Hezbollah War. The report estimates that Lebanon incurred USD 6.8 billion in damages to physical assets and USD 7.2 billion in economic losses – including in the tourism and industrial sectors. The Bank’s report highlights that Lebanon requires up to USD 11 billion for recovery and reconstruction. This includes USD 6 billion to USD 8 billion in direct financial support for the private sector and USD 3 billion to USD 5 billion for the public sector. The funding for the public sector would prioritize infrastructure, agriculture, education, and healthcare.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ International Monetary Fund, [IMF Staff Concludes Visit to Lebanon](#) March 13, 2025

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ L'Orient Today, [IMF will help Lebanon prepare a <new plan>](#) March 13, 2025

⁵⁸ World Bank, [Lebanon's Recovery and Reconstruction Needs Estimated at US\\$11 Billion](#) March 7, 2025



Source: AFP

Political Updates:

On March 13, the cabinet appointed new heads of military and security agencies, followed by several judicial and administrative appointments later in the month. Rodolph Haykal was named LAF commander-in-chief, succeeding Hassan Aoude, who had served as interim commander-in-chief since January 9, following the election of President Aoun.⁵⁹ The government appointed Hassan Choucair as Director General of General Security, replacing Elias Baissari, who served as acting director since March 2023, following the retirement of General Abbas Ibrahim. Additionally, Raed Abdullah was named Director General of the Internal Security Forces, Edgar Lawandos was appointed the Director General of State Security, and Al-Hajj Suleiman was named Deputy Director General of State Security.⁶⁰

On March 27, the government appointed Judge Jamal Hajar as Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation, Judge Ayman Oueidat as head of the Judicial Inspection Authority, and Judge Youssef Jamil as President of the State Council.⁶¹ Several judicial and administrative appointments are outstanding, including the selection of a financial prosecutor amid ongoing controversy over appointments at Télé Liban and replacing the former head of Ogero Imad Kreidieh.⁶²

On March 24, Minister of Interior and Municipalities Ahmad Al-Hajjar announced that municipal elections will be held in May. Elections will be held in Mount Lebanon on May 4; in North Lebanon and Akkar on May 11; in Beirut, Bekaa, and Baalbek-Hermel on May 18; and in South Lebanon and Nabatieh on May 25, 2025. Al-Hajjar said that “special measures” will be taken to facilitate voting in southern Lebanon, without elaborating.⁶³ On April 2, Al-Hajjar approved the formation of electoral bodies responsible for overseeing municipal polls in Mount Lebanon.⁶⁴ The Minister is expected to approve electoral bodies in other regions as elections there draw nearer.

⁵⁹ Alaraby, [رودولف هيكل قائداً للجيش اللبناني.. أبرز التحديات](#), March 13, 2025

⁶⁰ L'Orient Today, [Who are the new heads of Lebanon's security services?](#) March 15, 2025;

Aliwa, [بالأسماء: مجلس الوزراء يقر التعيينات الأمنية والعسكرية](#), March 13, 2025

⁶¹ PCM, [الرئيس سلام يجلسه لمجلس الوزراء في قصر بعيدا](#), March 27, 2025

⁶² Almodon, [صراع خفي وخلاف حيال التعيينات الإدارية: "محنة مبكرة للعهد"](#), March 26, 2025

⁶³ Annahar, [تواريخ إجراء الانتخابات البلدية والاختيارية بحسب المحافظات](#), March 24, 2025

⁶⁴ Lebanon Debate, [في جبل لبنان... الحجار يوقع دعوة الهيئات الناحية للانتخابات البلدية](#), April 2, 2025



Source: Taher Abu Hamdan/Xinhua

Access to Services:

Lebanon faces significant challenges restoring its water, wastewater, and irrigation infrastructure after the Israel-Hezbollah War, with recovery and reconstruction costs estimated at USD 508 million.⁶⁵ The South Lebanon Water Establishment (SLWE) announced on March 6 that it completed wastewater treatment upgrades in the south, increasing capacity to 10,900 cubic meters per day in Nabatieh and 3,500 cubic meters per day in Bint Jbeil, benefiting 17 villages.⁶⁶ On March 12, it restored water supply to 11 towns, delivered additional 10,000-liter tanks to villages along the border, and increased pumping capacity at the Batoulieh station.⁶⁷ As of March 18, the SLWE had installed at least 31 additional 5,000-liter water tanks across southern towns.⁶⁸

The Ministry of Agriculture called for water rationing due to a 30% drop in annual rainfall and higher-than-average temperatures.⁶⁹ The ministry added that “the amount of rainfall is insufficient to replenish groundwater reservoirs,” as Lebanon is currently experiencing its worst drought in 65 years. This threatens a severe reduction in sanitation and drinking water availability, forcing both households and businesses to rely on water trucks to compensate for shortages. Currently, the agricultural sector consumes approximately 70% of the available water supply.⁷⁰ Production at hydroelectric plants is also expected to significantly decrease during the dry summer months.

⁶⁵ World Bank Group, [Lebanon - Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA\)](#) March 6, 2025

⁶⁶ NNA, [مؤسسة مياه لبنان الجنوبي أعلنت إنجاز صيانة وتأهيل محطات الصرف الصحي التابعة لها](#), March 6, 2025

⁶⁷ NNA, [مياه لبنان الجنوبي: إنجاز صيانة محطة وادي السلوقي](#), March 12, 2025

⁶⁸ NNA, [مياه الجنوب: بدء المرحلة الرابعة للاستجابة الطارئة لحاجات البلدات الحدودية وتأهيل خط الصرف الصحي في عين الدلب](#), March 18, 2025;

NNA, [مياه الجنوب: بدء المرحلة الرابعة من الاستجابة الطارئة لحاجات البلدات الحدودية من خزانات المياه](#), March 24, 2025

⁶⁹ NNA, [وزارة الزراعة دعت إلى ترشيد استهلاك المياه في ظل شح الأمطار](#), March 18, 2025

⁷⁰ Elsharek, [يبضون للشرق "نقص المياه لا يمكن وصفه بالكارثة ولا يمكن إنكاره ورفع الإشتراك السنوي للمياه لهذا العام عشوائي"](#), March 24, 2025



The World Bank estimates that Lebanese municipalities have incurred cumulative losses of USD 192 million due to the Israel-Hezbollah war. Most of the losses stem from a precipitous drop in residential and commercial property tax collection, revenue losses from utility companies, and the loss of municipal income on rented municipal properties. The municipal and public services sector suffered approximately USD 41 million in damages to municipality-owned buildings, public parks, sport facilities, fire stations, community markets, public libraries, and courthouses. Recovery and reconstruction costs are estimated at USD 76 million, the majority of which must be funneled toward infrastructure and services.⁷¹

Teachers and university professors went on strike demanding fair wages, timely payments, and improved working conditions. The Committee for Contract Teachers launched a “warning strike” on March 19, demanding an increase in their hourly wages to USD 13 and assurances that they will receive payments and productivity allowances in a timely manner. The strike concluded on March 26, when the committee agreed to a two-week grace period to allow Minister of Education Rima Karami to present a proposed solution to Minister of Finance Jaber.⁷² Similarly, the League of Professors at the Lebanese University went on strike on March 20 and 21, demanding timely payments of their monthly productivity allowances.⁷³ The labor stoppages come as Lebanon’s education sector contends with the effects of the Israel-Hezbollah War, with the World Bank estimating that sector-wide reconstruction and recovery will cost USD 554 million.⁷⁴

⁷¹ World Bank Group, [Lebanon - Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA\)](#) March 6, 2025

⁷² Annahar, [متعاقدو الأساس: تعلن فك الإضراب والعودة إلى المدارس غدا](#) March 25, 2025

⁷³ L'Orient Today, [Strikes in public schools, Lebanese University](#) March 20, 2025

⁷⁴ World Bank Group, [Lebanon - Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA\)](#) March 6, 2025



Looking Forward:



- Humanitarian actors should expect Israel to increase airstrikes north of the Litani – including in the Bekaa valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut – as Tel Aviv pressures for Hezbollah's disarmament. On March 28, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu said that his country would "attack anywhere in Lebanon against any threat to Israel."⁷⁵ Hezbollah has repeatedly signaled that it does not want to retaliate against Israel's strikes. However, a Hezbollah military response against a future Israeli strike should not be entirely ruled out. Following Israel's April 1 targeted assassination in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Hezbollah MP Ali Ammar warned that the party "is exercising the utmost degree of patience and deliberation in dealing with the enemy, but this patience has limits."⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the US is likely to apply pressure on Lebanon's government to confiscate Hezbollah weapon caches.⁷⁷ The CoH calls for the disarmament of Hezbollah, starting south of the Litani, while stipulating that only state security agencies can be armed throughout Lebanon.⁷⁸ Hezbollah interprets the CoH's executive mechanisms as only having jurisdiction over Hezbollah's arms south of the Litani.⁷⁹ On March 25, Hezbollah MP Ali Muqdad said the organization would not surrender its arsenal to the LAF.⁸⁰ Therefore, any potential attempt by Lebanon's government to confiscate Lebanon's weapons outside the border area will likely spark political tensions.
- Lebanon and Israel are expected to begin indirect talks in April on disputed points along the Blue Line, Israel's five military outposts in Lebanon, and Lebanese prisoners held in Israel.⁸¹ The US and Israel announced the upcoming negotiations on March 11, while Lebanon's government reportedly learned of the proposed talks only through public statements.⁸² Lebanese political sources speaking to local and regional outlets said US pressure on Beirut regarding the upcoming talks could be used as a springboard for the eventual normalization of ties with Israel, which Lebanon does not recognize.⁸³ On March 23, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri – a key intermediary in the talks to negotiate the CoH and an ally of Hezbollah – said Israel was trying to lure Lebanon into political negotiations to normalize ties. Berri rejected a reported proposal that Lebanon form committees composed of military officials and diplomats to negotiate with Tel Aviv.⁸⁴ In past indirect negotiations, namely on demarcating the maritime border, Lebanon has negotiated indirectly with a delegation comprising military officials and technical experts.⁸⁵ US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff denied a report that he asked Lebanon to conduct direct political negotiations with Israel,⁸⁶ though he has voiced support for Beirut normalizing ties with Tel Aviv.⁸⁷

⁷⁵ Times of Israel, [Netanyahu says Israel will continue striking Lebanon when threats arise](#) March 28, 2025

⁷⁶ NNA, [علي عمار من الضاحية: المقاومة في جهوزية تامة لمواجهة أي عدوان جديد](#) April 1, 2025

⁷⁷ Al-Arabiya, [أورثاغوس: واشنطن لا تريد حرباً بين لبنان وإسرائيل](#) March 28, 2025;

Al-Modon, [أورثاغوس في لبنان بعد العيد: سحب السلاح وتدمير](#) March 25, 2025;

⁷⁸ The National, [Revealed: Full text of the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire agreement](#) November 27, 2024

⁷⁹ Al-Manar, [الشيخ قاسم: المقاومة ثبتت وانتصرت.. ونلتزم بالإيواء والإعمار](#) December 15, 2024

⁸⁰ RT, [نائب في كتلة حزب الله: الحزب لن يسلم سلاحه للجيش اللبناني](#) March 25, 2025

⁸¹ US State Department – Near Eastern Affairs via X, [Statement from Deputy Presidential Special Envoy Morgan Ortogus](#) March 11, 2025;

Axios, [Israel and Lebanon agree to land border negotiations after U.S. push](#) March 11, 2025

⁸² L'Orient Today, [Is Israel making a gesture toward the new Lebanese government or setting a trap?](#) March 13, 2025

⁸³ Asharq Alawsat, [إسرائيل تضغط لبنانيا لاتفاق أكبر من الهدنة... وأقل من التطبيع](#) March 25, 2025;

Al-Akhbar, [واشنطن تهدد لبنان بغزة: المفاوضات الآن... أو إطلاق يد إسرائيل](#) March 20, 2025

⁸⁴ Asharq Alawsat, [يري لـ "الشرق الأوسط": إسرائيل تحاول استدراج لبنان للتطبيع](#) March 23, 2025;

L'Orient Today, [Berri: We are not willing to normalize relations with Israel](#) March 23, 2025

⁸⁵ Al-Jazeera, [Lebanon, Israel launch talks over maritime border dispute](#) October 14, 2020

⁸⁶ Naharnet, [Witkoff denies report on Israel talks, says Lebanon takes own decisions](#) March 20, 2025

⁸⁷ Naharnet, [Witkoff says he thinks a Lebanon-Israel peace treaty is possible](#) March 24, 2025



- Clashes along the Lebanese-Syrian border are likely to recur as Damascus continues its policy of security operations against smugglers affiliated with Lebanese clans. However, renewed hostilities are unlikely to lead to widescale fighting between the LAF and Syrian Army, with Damascus saying during the March 16-17 clashes that they had no intention of entering Lebanese territory.⁸⁸ Lebanese Minister of Defense Michel Menassa said the two countries' militaries would establish a communications channel to avoid future clashes.⁸⁹ While Syria's new leadership have sought smooth ties with the Lebanese state, they have struck an increasingly bellicose tone regarding Hezbollah.⁹⁰ Syria may expand their future military actions to targeting Hezbollah directly in Lebanon; a Syrian media outlet cited a security source as saying that Damascus could use Shahine unmanned aerial vehicles to target Hezbollah positions in Lebanon.⁹¹
- The government's frequently promoted reform package will likely be incorporated into the 2026 Budget. Given the previous cabinet's largely unsuccessful efforts to meet IMF standards, it will likely be some time before the Fund can evaluate Lebanon's progress – let alone approve the disbursement of much-needed financial assistance. Many obstacles lay in the way of financial sector reform, a key to unlocking IMF funding. Most notably, commercial banks will likely resist such efforts, necessitating close coordination between the new Central Bank governor and ministers.^{92,93} Whether Salam and Souaid can successfully implement reforms in the face of banking sector criticism and lobbying is unclear. This, however, should not prevent the government from instituting some fiscal reforms, which could entail adjustments to the tax code, another top-level IMF requirement. Lebanon's tax system is highly regressive, especially indirect taxes and fees, which make up most of the revenue base. Moreover, there are few robust mechanisms to deter tax evasion, suggesting that a comprehensive approach is necessary to implement a more progressive and just tax system.

⁸⁸ Al-Arabiya via X, [Syrian Army to Al-Arabiya](#) March 17, 2025;

SAANA via Facebook, [Syrian defense ministry source](#) March 17, 2025

⁸⁹ NNA, [اتصال بين وزير الدفاع ونظيره السوري واتفاق على وقف إطلاق النار على الحدود اللبنانية السورية](#) March 17, 2025

⁹⁰ SANA via Facebook, [Syrian defense ministry media relations](#) March 16, 2025;

SAANA via Facebook, [The General Directorate of Information in Homs Governorate](#) March 17, 2025

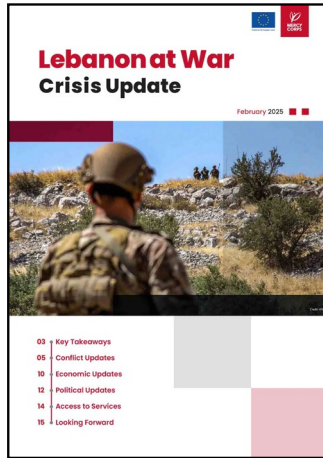
⁹¹ SY-24, [مصدر أمني لسوريا 24 يحذر: الوضع على الحدود اللبنانية يندرج بتصعيد خطير](#) March 17, 2025

⁹² Nidaa al Watan, [ماذا يريد صندوق النقد من قانوني السرية المصرفية وإصلاح المصارف؟](#) March 27, 2025

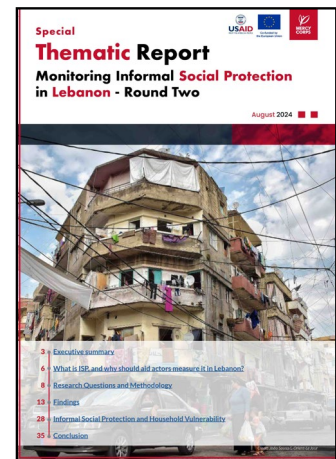
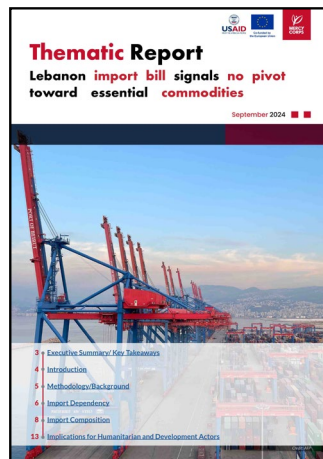
⁹³ L'Orient Today, [Lebanon and IMF :Behind the facade of optimism ,back to square one](#) March 19, 2025



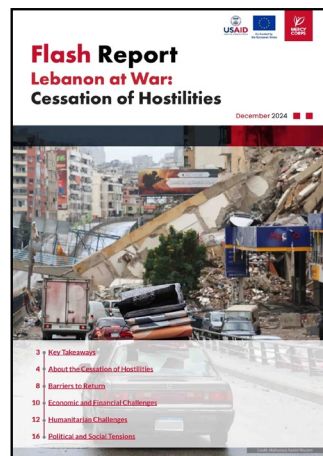
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