

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	856
Land:	Libanon
Kilde:	Inter Press Service
Titel:	Attacks on Aid Personnel in Lebanon Impede Relief Efforts
Udgivet:	18. oktober 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	11. december 2024

Attacks on Aid Personnel in Lebanon Impede Relief Efforts



UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Ted Chaiban, WFP Deputy Executive Director Carl Skau, UNICEF Lebanon Representative Édouard Beigbeder, and WFP Country Director for Lebanon Matthew Hollingworth, visited the Masnaa Border in the Bekaa where UNICEF is working to provide critical support to affected communities. Credit: UNICEF/Fouad Choufany

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 18 2024 (IPS) - In the midst of Israel's ground incursion of southern Lebanon, frequent airstrikes have demolished civilian infrastructure, which is only contributing to the increasing rates of civilian casualties and displacement. Humanitarian organizations fear that conditions in Lebanon will soon resemble those of Gaza if a ceasefire isn't reached soon.

The United Nations (UN) has urged the Israeli military to consider a ceasefire while the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is stationed at the nation's borders recording security violations and attempting to preserve peace. On October 16, UNIFIL had reported a series of airstrikes in the town of Nabatieh and surrounding areas in south Lebanon.

According to Lebanon's Health Ministry, the attacks caused fifteen civilian casualties, including the mayor of the town, Ahmad Kahil, and members of the Disaster Risk Management Unit. Lebanon's prime minister Najib Mikati condemned the attacks, accusing the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) of intentionally targeting a council meeting. The UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, referred to Wednesday's attacks as "violations of international humanitarian war".

Prior to the escalation of hostilities observed in Lebanon in the past two weeks, an IDF spokesperson had informed reporters that the attacks were intended to target Hezbollah military operations only. However, recent airstrikes have been increasingly indiscriminate, targeting densely populated areas.

“We know that Hezbollah many times takes advantage of civilian facilities”, said Israel’s Permanent Representative to the UN Danny Danon.

Internal displacement has soared in Lebanon since the escalation of hostilities. UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Ted Chaiban told reporters on Wednesday that over 1.2 million people have been displaced as a result of this conflict, including over 400,000 children. Displacement shelters have been pushed to their limits, with over 85 percent of all shelters being at maximum capacity. Thousands of people seek refuge on the streets or in public centers.

The escalation of hostilities has taken a significant toll on Lebanon’s healthcare system. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 23 attacks on medical facilities have been reported in the past month, with 100 hospitals in conflict-affected areas shutting down.

“Attacks on health care debilitate health systems and impede their ability to continue to perform. They also prevent entire communities from accessing health services when they need them the most,” said Dr. Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

The collective mental health of Lebanese civilians in highly affected areas has declined significantly. Chaiban remarked that this has been particularly difficult for children. “The psychological toll is immense, particularly on the young. Children now grapple with nightmares of bombardment, the loss of loved ones, and the erasure of their homes and schools,” he said.

Additionally, there has been an influx of injured civilians, resulting in a massive demand for medicines, surgical supplies, and psychosocial support. WHO and the Lebanese Red Cross have partnered with Lebanon’s Ministry of Health to provide local hospitals with adequate supplies and establish trauma centers.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has deployed a team of 22 medical workers experienced in handling destructive injuries at the Rafik Hariri University Hospital in Beirut.

“While our surgical team and medical supplies will help ease the burden on healthcare providers, sustained and safe humanitarian aid is urgently needed. The humanitarian crisis deepens by the hour,” said Simone Casabianca-Aeschlimann, the head of the ICRC team in Lebanon.

Humanitarian organizations fear that living conditions will grow more dire in the coming winter months. The UN and its agencies such as WHO, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) are mobilized to scale up response efforts as the situation continues to change. There have been calls for flexible funding for the humanitarian efforts, such as with UNICEF’S appeal for USD 105 million for the next three months which is currently only eight percent funded. The UN urges donor contributions as hostilities show no signs of ceasing in the near future.

IPS UN Bureau Report

