



# Lebanon

## Watchlist Flash Alert | March 2026

Shortly after US-Israeli strikes killed Iran's Supreme Leader on February 28th, the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel. Israel subsequently launched airstrikes and a ground invasion of Lebanon, forcing upwards of 700,000 people, including around 200,000 children, to flee their homes and placing enormous strain on families, communities and aid services. Millions of people across Lebanon are now facing the gravest threats to their safety since Israel and Hezbollah agreed a ceasefire in November 2024, with displacement highly likely to surge in the coming days should hostilities continue.

Lebanon ranked in the top 10 of the IRC's **2026 Emergency Watchlist**, released in December 2025, as one of the countries globally at highest risk of humanitarian deterioration in 2026. Renewal of conflict was the top risk facing Lebanon, which IRC warned would trigger a new wave of civilian suffering and displacement. This is now unfolding.

Rising violence is intensifying the impact of Lebanon's economic collapse, which has already pushed over 80% of the population into poverty. Families are increasingly unable to afford enough food, and essential health and protection services cannot keep pace with growing demand. The ongoing military escalation starkly illustrates how communities living amid conflict endure the harshest consequences of deepening crises—often at a time when the support needed to respond is diminishing.

As of March 8th, according to Lebanon's Disaster Risk Management Unit, nearly 400 people have been killed, including 83 children, and more than 1,100 injured by airstrikes that targeted southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and the capital, Beirut. The violence has triggered widespread panic, with families leaving their homes in search of safety, often with little warning and few belongings. Since March 5th, the Israeli military has ordered residents of over 100 villages to leave their homes across southern Lebanon, parts of the Bekaa Valley and southern suburbs of Beirut, an area home to nearly half a million people.



**PHOTO ABOVE:** A Syrian woman holds her daughter outside a displaced persons shelter after she was denied entry for being Syrian on March 2, 2026 in Beirut. (Photo by Daniel Carde/Getty Images)

**A staff member with the International Rescue Committee, described the terrifying moments when airstrikes struck near her family's home.**

“ At 2:40 a.m., my parents and I were sitting in the corridor of our home, away from the windows, as the airstrikes hit around us. There had been no evacuation orders; we didn't know what was happening or what would come next. Within seconds we realized we had to leave. We grabbed our IDs, medications and a few essentials and went into the street. Women and children were screaming, cars were honking, and everyone was trying to escape at the same time. What should have been a ten-minute drive out of the neighborhood took two hours. My father was in one car, my mother with me in another, taking different roads in case one route was hit. When we finally reunited in a safer area, my nieces and elderly parents were terrified and exhausted. We are safe now, but that night will stay with us.”

Hundreds of schools and public buildings have been converted into emergency shelters, while many displaced families are staying with relatives, crowding into small apartments, or sleeping in cars along roadsides while searching for safety. Among those newly displaced are Syrian refugees who had already fled conflict once and rebuilt fragile lives in Lebanon, only to now be forced to flee again.

**David Miliband, President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee said:**

“ The crisis in Lebanon is not receiving the attention that is focused on the military operations inside Iran. 700,000 people have been forced from their homes and hundreds have been killed in recent strikes. With the full picture within Iran still coming into focus, this is now the biggest and most visible humanitarian scar. Our Watchlist highlighted just two months ago the dangers in Lebanon, and now those fears are coming to pass. The history of Lebanon in the 1980s shows the threats of destabilization, and it is vital that the needs of the Lebanese people are met.”

**How the International Rescue Committee is Responding**

The International Rescue Committee has been operational in Lebanon since 2012. Our team on the ground is now focused on ensuring that those affected by this recent crisis can access essential health services, mental health and psychosocial support, relief items like blankets and hygiene kits and protection service for vulnerable groups including children.

**Recommendations:**

- **Restore respect for international humanitarian law:** Pending a cessation of hostilities, which would offer the greatest protection for civilians, all parties should respect international law and protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. All parties should guarantee safe access for humanitarian aid and strengthen humanitarian access capabilities of frontline responders in Lebanon.
- **Protect people who face the greatest risks in conflict:** All actors should prioritize protection of civilians, especially women, children, and elderly populations who are more vulnerable in conflicts.
- **Prioritize aid funding and delivery to maximize impact and sustainability:** With humanitarian funding to Lebanon already drastically underfunded with last year's Humanitarian Response Plan only receiving a third of what was needed – the scale and pace of displacement is likely to quickly outpace available resources. Humanitarian organizations urgently need flexible funding to scale up emergency response efforts, expand health and protection services, and provide cash assistance and essential relief items to families who fled with little or nothing.