



Lebanon situation report #2

Monday 17 July 2006

Highlights

- Due to the insecurity, it is not possible to transfer casualties to hospitals or medical supplies to areas where the population has relocated. Urgent protection is required to enable the transportation of seriously injured patients and life-saving medications.
- Safe passage of ambulances and unimpeded access to health facilities is crucial.
- The massive displacement of people is posing a serious challenge to the Ministry of Health in ensuring appropriate shelter, food, safe drinking water and medical attention. The Ministry of Health reports there are over 400 000 displaced people, of which more than 29 000 are in schools.

Summary

- The situation in Lebanon has seriously deteriorated within the past 48 hours. Israeli air forces continue to bomb Beirut and the South of Lebanon. Casualties so far total 175 dead and 560 wounded, according to data received by the Ministry of Health.
- Lebanon remains at UN security phase 3. The UN Department of Safety and Security has activated a Crisis Coordination Centre (DSSC3) which will be operational on a 24/7 basis.
- Ports have been hit and transportation by road is severely limited as many bridges have reportedly been destroyed.
- Forty UN international staff and dependents from Lebanon have arrived safely in Jordan via Syria.

Health impact

- The Lebanese Minister of Health informs that the access to medical supplies from Primary Health Care Centres and hospitals is cut off due to the existing security situation. So far, no shortage of supplies has been reported but there is no current means to transport them to those localities in need.
- Electricity cuts are seriously affecting operations in public and private sector hospitals.

Health response

While gathering more detailed data, WHO has already mobilized internal resources to provide support in four areas:

1. Assessment and monitoring

- WHO staff have already moved to Damascus to join the UN interagency assessment team that has been fielded to Damascus on its way to Beirut. A WHO Emergency Adviser is already in Syria to join the UN Team. Operations/Logistics/Security staff will be in Damascus on Wednesday 18 July.

2. Health coordination

- WHO is coordinating and working jointly with the Ministry of Health in needs assessment and response to urgent needs.
- An interagency meeting has been held in Geneva to share information, assess the situation, and discuss the development of a contingency plan of action. A joint flash appeal will be issued by the end of this week.
- Discussions are ongoing with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Lebanese Red Cross to look into the possible transportation of medical supplies to the areas in need within Lebanon.

3. Filling health gaps

- UNRWA Medical Services based in Saida are establishing mobile medical teams to assist the population relocated from South Lebanon and to cope with the expected influx of Palestinians into the camps that are not yet under attack. UNWRA is focusing on the mobilization of drugs and medical equipment from Beirut to their clinics in the South.
- WHO has procured locally urgent supplies for displaced populations.
- WHO logistics and security staff are moving tomorrow to support the WHO Office in Damascus.

4. Preserving and supporting local health systems

- Primary Health Care Centres in the attacked areas have been abandoned by the health staff, with all supplies left behind.

Urgent needs

- To enable the transportation of urgent life-saving medications to where they are needed.
- To continue the provision of urgently needed medical supplies and medicines.
- To provide appropriate shelter, drinking water, food and access to health care for the displaced population.

WHO, together with the Ministry of Health and other humanitarian actors, is quantifying the needs to address the crisis. A more detailed assessment will be made available.