

Middle East Humanitarian Crisis situation report #15

Sunday 30 July 2006

On 12 July Israeli forces began attacking South Lebanon and the southern part of Beirut. Existing infrastructure has been severely damaged and hundreds of people have been killed. According to the Lebanese Government's Higher Relief Committee, as of 29 July, an estimated 3225 persons have been injured and more than 860 000 displaced inside Lebanon. More than 200 000 others have fled to Syria and other countries.

WHO and other health partners are supporting the national authorities in meeting urgent needs like access to safe drinking water, health care, vaccines and life saving medications.



Displaced people in Beirut are awaiting an end to the conflict.

Highlights

- In the Southern city of Qana, 22 people have been confirmed killed in an air strike. More than 50 others are still missing. A large number of the victims are children.
- No convoys could travel to the South today.
- In Beirut, protesters broke into the UN House and UN staff had to be evacuated to other premises. The UN Department of Safety and Security reports that the situation is now under control and all staff is safe. A convoy that was returning from the North of Lebanon had to be diverted for security reasons.
- The UN office in Damascus has also been closed as a precautionary measure.

General impact

- The situation becoming more volatile every hour and the number of dead and injured is sharply increasing.
- Ongoing bombing and insecurity severely hampers all aid efforts in Lebanon.
- The El Aarida crossing between Beirut and the Syria border is now open for the transport of supplies, coordinated by the World Food Programme (WFP). Yesterday the first convoy reached Beirut. Depending on how the security situation evolves, other convoys are organized for today and tomorrow.

Health impact

Lebanon

- As time passes and people have poor or no access to safe drinking water, the risk for diarrhoeal disease outbreaks is increasing.
- Access to essential medicines for chronic diseases (including antiretroviral drugs) is dramatically hampered by the ongoing bombing in South Lebanon.

Health response

The WHO and partners are providing support in four areas:

1. Assessment and monitoring

Lebanon

- WHO is calling on health partners to share information, rumours, data, reports and updates through health@leb.emro.who.int.

Syria

- Interagency assessments are ongoing in two new shelters to be opened soon for 3,000 Lebanese refugees.
- To ensure transparency and efficiency in the management of humanitarian supplies, WHO is establishing a Logistics Support System (LSS). Four experts are expected to arrive next Tuesday to Damascus.

Lebanon and Syria

- WHO is working to ensure that the surveillance systems being set up for this crisis are compatible with each other to facilitate monitoring and allow comparisons.

2. Health coordination

Lebanon

- A first draft of the *Who is doing What Where in Health in Lebanon* matrix is available at http://www.emro.who.int/eha/pdf/Who_Is_Doing_What_Where.pdf. The information will be continuously updated on the basis of the information received from partners (see also above).

Syria

- WHO is coordinating all health-related activities for the refugee population in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Syrian Red Crescent, other UN agencies and NGOs.
- Due to the closure of all UN offices, today's Health Cluster meeting has been cancelled until further notice.

3. Filling health gaps

Lebanon

- UNICEF is distributing drinking water and installing water tanks in the city of Aaley, south-east of Beirut.
- Chlorine is essential to improve water quality. WHO is exploring availability in both the national and regional markets.
- WHO purchased locally and supplied to the Ministry of Health a one-month stock of drugs for non communicable diseases.
- WHO is looking into ways to ensure safe access to drugs for people suffering from chronic diseases as well as to antiretroviral (ART) for people living with HIV/AIDS in South Lebanon.
- A measles immunization campaign for children is scheduled next week in the Beirut Area. The campaign is an initiative of the Ministry of Health, supported by UNICEF and WHO and will be implemented by national NGOs.

Lebanon and Syria

- WHO will be pre positioning New Emergency Health Kits (NEHK), cholera kits, health post kits, trauma kits, diarrhoea kits, registration kits, surgical supply kits, and water testing kit in Lebanon and Syria.
- As the increasing number of displaced persons hosted in temporary facilities need improved water and sanitation facilities, work is ongoing to identify lasting solutions.

4. Preserving and supporting local health systems*Lebanon*

- Nothing substantial to report.

Syria

- Two more mental health workshops will be organized tomorrow and in the course of next week, for all staff working with Lebanese refugees.

Urgent needs

- Provision of safe drinking water through the supply of chlorine tablets, as well as hygiene education to minimize the number of diarrhoea cases is the main priority.
- Lack of access to life-saving medication for chronic diseases, including HIV/AIDS, remains a major concern. A list of categories of medicines that will be required in Lebanon is attached in Annex to this document. It should be widely distributed to all partners including donors.

Pledges

Pledges received to date by WHO for the Lebanon crisis (no other information available on other partners yet):

Health Partner	Donor	Amount
WHO	Australia	AUS\$ 500,000
WHO	Italy	€ 200,000
WHO	Ireland	€ 100,000
WHO	Sweden	US\$ 600,000
WHO	Canada	CAN\$ 750,000
WHO	ECHO	€ 500,000
WHO	Norway	NOK 8,000,000

United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) \$ 1,000,000

World Health Organization

<http://www.emro.who.int/eha/>
<http://www.who.int/hac/en/>

Annex

Categories of medicines that will be required in Lebanon, with special emphasis on non-communicable diseases:¹

- anaesthetics
- analgesics incl. antimigraine
- antiallergics
- anticonvulsants/antiepileptics
- antianaemia
- anticoagulation
- cardiovascular:
 - antianginal
 - antiarrhythmics
 - antihypertensives
 - heart failure medicines
 - lipid lowering medicines
- diuretics
- antacids and antiulcer
- antiemetic
- insulin and other antidiabetics
- miotics and antiglaucoma medicines
- psychotherapeutics
- antiasthmatics
- solutions correcting water, electrolyte and acid-base disturbances
- materials for injections

¹Source: Lebanese Ministry of Health via a message to the UN Permanent Mission.