

Middle East Humanitarian Crisis situation report #16 Monday 31 July 2006

On 12 July Israeli forces began attacking South Lebanon and the southern part of Beirut. Existing infrastructure has been severely damaged, hundreds of people have been killed and thousands injured. The crisis has been renamed the Middle East Humanitarian Crisis.

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.



Picture: WHO/Christopher Black

The total number of people displaced by the Lebanon crisis according to the Higher Relief Committee is **898,760** as of 31 July 2006, with **128,760** people located in schools and **220,000** in Syria and other neighbouring countries.

Highlights

- Israel agreed to a 48-hour air strike halt in South Lebanon, so WHO, together with the other humanitarian partners, is monitoring the situation and revising plans.
- A convoy with food, essential drugs and other relief supplies departs today for Qana. The convoy is escorted by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
- A press conference will take place this afternoon at the UN house in Beirut. It will be led by the spokesperson from WFP.

General impact

- The UN has reopened offices in Beirut following yesterday's evacuation.
- The deteriorating security situation has serious implications for humanitarian aid in Lebanon. However, operations continue.

Health impact

Lebanon

- Several cases of diarrhoea have been reported from schools sheltering displaced people, and case investigation is currently underway. These reports highlight the urgent need for safe drinking water.
- An acute shortage of antiretroviral drugs for approximately 200 HIV/AIDS patients in Beirut exists, and WHO is looking into supplying three types of drugs.
- Large numbers of blood transfusions are occurring and WHO is trying to ensure all blood is tested for HIV.
- The oil spill, caused by attacks on the Jiyye power plant, is affecting more than 70 km of Lebanese coastline.
- UNIFIL informs that in evacuated areas in the South (e.g. Naqoura), the elderly who stayed behind are without access to needed medications.

Health response

The WHO and partners are providing support in four areas:

1. Assessment and monitoring

Lebanon

- Damage assessments of South Lebanon will be conducted by experts transported to the area in the convoy that departed for Qana today.

Lebanon and Syria

- WHO is stepping-up efforts to harmonize disease surveillance systems implemented in temporary shelters in Lebanon and Syria.

2. Health coordination

Lebanon and Syria

- Health Cluster activities continue informally. Formal meetings will be convened once the security situation permits.

Syria

- The health cluster coordination meeting was held today in Damascus with participation of at least 17 partner agencies.

3. Filling health gaps

Lebanon

- WHO is taking action to purchase necessary drugs both in Lebanon and neighbouring countries
- WHO is sending 7,500 dialysis filters to the Ministry of Public Health for a total value of 100,000 USD.
- UNIFIL medical teams in Tibnin and Naqoura provided medical and humanitarian assistance to the local population of Qana, and to the victims of aerial bombardments. UNIFIL is also assisting in clearing the debris.
- An updated list of essential medicines will be distributed later today.

4. Preserving and supporting local health systems

Lebanon and Syria

- The third mental health workshop will be held in Damascus today and will be replicated in Lebanon once the security situation allows.

Lebanon

- WHO guidelines on the Management of Dead Bodies in Disaster Situations at: <http://www.paho.org/English/DD/PED/ManejoCadaveres.htm>

Urgent needs

- Supply of chlorine tablets for safe drinking water, as well as hygiene education to minimize the number of diarrhoea cases.
- Essential medicines for all chronic diseases, including HIV/AIDS, are urgently needed.

Pledges

Pledges received by WHO to date for the Lebanon crisis (information not yet available from other partners) are depicted in the table below. WHO is currently funded at 38%, and the funding shortfall stands at US\$ 8,013,508.

Health Partner	Donor	Amount	US\$ Equivalent
WHO	Australia	AUS\$ 500,000	364,964
WHO	Italy	€ 200,000	251,256
WHO	Ireland	€ 100,000	125,628
WHO	Sweden	US\$ 600,000	600,000
WHO	Canada	CAN\$ 750,000	669,643
WHO	ECHO	€ 500,000	628,141
WHO	Norway	NOK 8,000,000	1,271,860

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

World Health Organization

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

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