



# The multidimensional impact of Israeli attacks on Lebanon

E/ESCWA/CL6.GCP/2024/Policy brief.1



## Key messages

**Immediate action is needed to end the war,** address its root causes, and secure lasting stability under international law and United Nations resolutions, with urgent international intervention to prevent further devastation.



This policy brief examines the multifaceted impact of Israeli attacks on Lebanon within a rapidly evolving context, with events unfolding across time and geography on an hourly basis. Consequently, obtaining accurate and up-to-date assessments for several themes discussed in the brief is challenging. This includes the focus on the two southern governorates, which have borne the brunt of Israeli attacks over the past 11 months. However, since 23 September 2024, the intensity and geographic scope of these attacks have shifted considerably.

The **death toll** from the airstrikes on 23 September 2024, ranks among the **highest** for a single day in the twenty-first century.



Since 23 September 2024, more than **200,000 people** have been displaced.



**One in every three internally displaced persons is a child.** This has severely reduced children's access to services and increased protection risks, posing long-term threats to the country's human capital and social cohesion.



As of 24 September 2024, the number of people living in **multidimensional poverty** was estimated to have reached **94 per cent** in the **Nabatieh Governorate** and **87 per cent** in the **South Lebanon Governorate**.



As a result of **Israeli attacks**, between 8 October 2023 and 18 September 2024, **50,210 residential units were damaged or demolished.** Around 93 per cent of the destruction occurred in Marjaayoun, Bent Jbeil and Tyre.



**Olives and olive oil** represent roughly **10 per cent of agricultural output**, with South Lebanon producing **36 per cent.** The **destruction of 121 hectares** and **47,000 trees** will severely impact the region's economy. Moreover, tobacco, the primary agricultural cash crop in the south, has also been severely affected, as **50 per cent of tobacco farmers** are from villages and towns along the Lebanese-Israeli border.



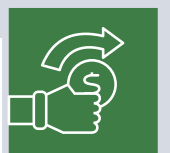
The use of **phosphorus and incendiary bombs** has **devastated agriculture** in southern Lebanon, destroying farmland, livestock and infrastructure.



A holistic, area-based approach for **recovery and reconstruction**, supported by **strong coordination and good governance**, especially at **local level**, will be essential following the cessation of hostilities.



The ongoing shortage of **public expenditure**, combined with insufficient levels of international aid and a deterioration in the rule of law and government effectiveness, will **severely undermine State institutions' capacities to address the compounding challenges resulting from the current war.**



# 1. Context

Hostilities along the Israel-Lebanon border have been recurring since 1948. The current war is one of a number of intermittent high-intensity clashes that have broken out over the past decades.

The conflicts in the area of the border have mostly been spillovers from the wider regional Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Within that context, Israel has invaded Lebanon various times. These invasions have had a devastating impact on the civilian population.<sup>1</sup>

Before 7 October 2023, Lebanon was already struggling with multiple crises. These included

one of the most severe economic and financial crises seen anywhere in the world since the mid-nineteenth century,<sup>2</sup> political and institutional gridlock, the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Beirut port explosion. As a result, much of the population is now highly vulnerable and has little capacity to withstand further shocks (see [annex 2](#) for further details on the drivers of high vulnerability and low resilience). The resilience of people in Lebanon is already low, and vulnerability levels are high. The current war will only worsen this situation, in particular for people living in or displaced from the south of the country.

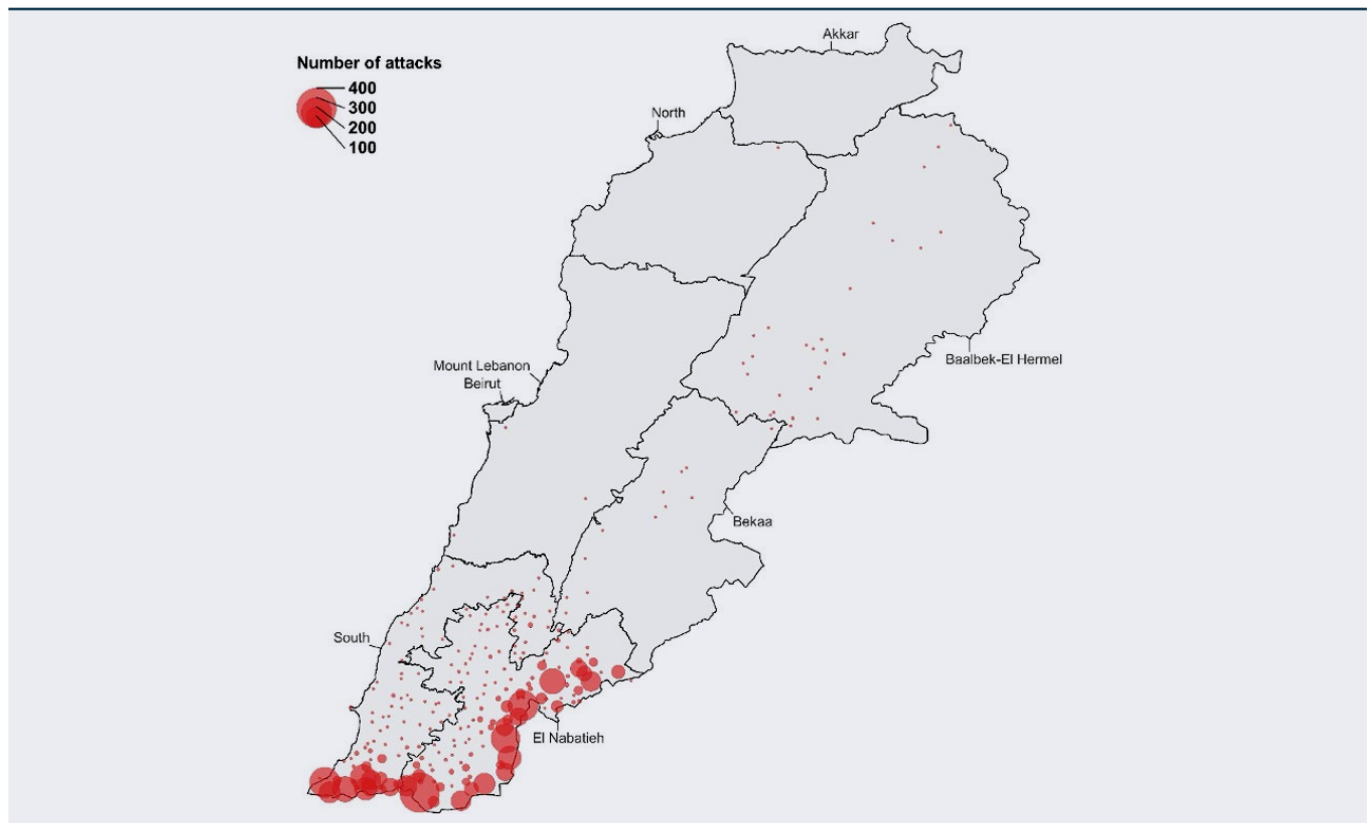
## 2. Human impact

### 2.1 Casualties

By 20 September 2024, there had been 147 fatalities and 3,578 injured in Lebanon since the war broke out on 8 October 2023. The widespread

explosions of pagers and two-way radios on 17 and 18 September 2024 killed 37 people and injured more than 3,000. The later caused serious injuries, including to eyes, face and abdomen, overwhelming hospitals.<sup>3</sup>

**Map 1.** Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon, targeted areas and fatalities



**Source:** ESCWA, based on data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project, accessed on 19 September 2024 with data from 7 October 2023 to 13 September 2024.



Since 23 September, 569 people lost their lives and 1,850 people were injured by Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon and the Bekaa. The death toll from the airstrikes on 23 September 2024, ranks among the highest for a single day in the twenty-first century.<sup>4</sup> Fifty children and 94 women were killed. UNHCR lost a staff member and her youngest son, while her husband and another of their children were injured. Another UNHCR staff working in Tyre was killed. The number of people injured or who have lost their lives will rise as Israeli attacks continue.

Map 1 shows cross-border attacks from Israel into Lebanon and the resulting fatalities from October 2023 to 13 September 2024.

## 2.2 Forced displacement: internally displaced persons and refugees

By 10 September 2024, 112,545 people in Lebanon had been internally displaced. These internally displaced persons (IDPs) have sought safety in 506 locations, including villages and neighbourhoods throughout Lebanon. Displacement has been observed in 24 out of 26 districts across all of the country's eight governorates. Five districts – Tyre, Nabatieh, Saida, Baabda and Beirut – host the majority (74 per cent) of IDPs.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of these IDPs (94 per cent) come from three districts along the southern border of Lebanon. Around 70 per cent are from Bent Jbeil, 13 per cent are from Marjaayoun, and 12 per cent are from Tyre.<sup>6</sup> Since 23 September, Lebanese authorities have indicated that there are 90,530 newly displaced persons, including

nearly 40,000 in 283 collective shelters. Among the newly displaced persons, many of those displaced since October 2023 are likely to have been secondarily displaced.<sup>7</sup> The number of IDPs has exceeded 200,000, and is expected to rise further as the war persists.

Around 78 per cent of IDPs are currently being hosted in other households, while 19 per cent have opted for rental housing. Another 2 per cent have relocated to their secondary residences, and approximately 1 per cent are housed in 15 collective shelters.

On 30 June 2024, an estimated 86,978 Syrian refugees were residing in southern Lebanon. Most of these people were already poor even before the crises.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear how many Syrian refugees have been newly displaced by the recent increase in hostilities. Of the 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, 5 are in the South Governorate.<sup>9</sup>

Any escalation or expansion of the war in Lebanon will have dire consequences for the IDPs and the significant refugee population in the country. In March 2023, 80 per cent of Palestinian refugees were already living below the national poverty line. According to UNRWA, without the distribution of quarterly cash assistance, this would increase to 93 per cent.<sup>10</sup> Lebanon hosted the largest number of refugees per capita globally in 2023, with the Government estimating that 1.5 million Syrian refugees, including approximately 800,000 registered refugees, were living in the country. According to the 2022 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 90 per cent of Syrian refugees require humanitarian assistance in order to survive.



Residents carry what they have salvaged in their car as they drive past buildings destroyed during previous Israeli military fire on the southern Lebanese village of Aita al-Shaab, near the border with northern Israel on 29 June 2024. (Photo @AFP)

### Box 1. Internally displaced children and adolescents face increased vulnerabilities

One in every three IDPs in southern Lebanon is a child. Before 23 September 2024, over 37,000 children have been forced from their homes as a result of ongoing hostilities in the area.<sup>a</sup>

Children are particularly vulnerable to the direct and indirect consequences of the war, as they have less capacity to protect themselves and make informed decisions in dangerous situations. This makes them more susceptible to injury and trauma. Children in conflict areas face physical, psychological and developmental risks that can have negative lifelong consequences, ultimately jeopardizing their ability to reach their long-term potential.

Adolescent girls and young women face specific risks as a result of the conflict. A recent study<sup>b</sup> has found that displaced adolescent girls and young women in southern Lebanon are increasingly exposed to violence as well as experiencing learning deficiencies and economic losses.<sup>c</sup>

The impact of the conflict is even more severe on vulnerable children and adolescents who already face existing structural inequalities as a result of their disability, nationality and socioeconomic class. The compounded effects of the series of crises in the country have led to a further deterioration of economic and social conditions, resulting in a humanitarian crisis. Children and adolescents, along with other vulnerable population segments, are being hit the hardest.

Essential services, including health, water and education, have become less available and significantly more difficult to access, further worsening an already difficult situation for children and the community members responsible for safeguarding them.<sup>d</sup>

a United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2024a).

b UNICEF (2024b).

c UNICEF (2024c).

d Ibid.

**Table 1. Residential units damaged and demolished following Israeli attacks, 8 October 2023 – 18 September 2024**

District	Completely or partially demolished	Severely damaged	Moderately damaged	Total
Marjaayoun	1,960	10,586	12,402	24,948
Bent Jbeil	1,433	6,601	7,876	15,910
Tyre	619	2,212	2,930	5,761
Hasbaya	114	1,051	1,246	2,411
Nabatieh	51	80	514	645
Saida	14	57	280	351
Jezzine	1	5	143	149
Bekaa	8	0	19	27
West Bekaa	2	2	4	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,202</b>	<b>20,594</b>	<b>25,414</b>	<b>50,210</b>

Source: Government of Lebanon Council for South Lebanon, 18 September 2024.

## 2.3 Damage to housing and infrastructure

Damage to housing and non-residential infrastructure has been extensive, pushing many

inhabitants of villages and towns close to the border to relocate.

The border districts of Marjaayoun and Bent Jbeil have suffered the most from the conflict so far, with the greatest number of damaged and demolished



residential units (table 1). Tyre and Hasbaya districts have also incurred significant damage to residential units, as have Nabatieh and Saida.

Regarding non-residential infrastructure, the types of structures affected by the hostilities include public buildings (municipal and subnational authority offices), infrastructure (water facilities), religious places (mosques, churches, religious community centres), industrial/agricultural facilities (factories, warehouses, farms), commercial units (shops, offices), educational facilities (schools),

and other services (gas stations, rest houses etc.). Comprehensive, accurate and updated data does not yet exist.<sup>11</sup>

In a telephone-based assessment conducted by UN-Habitat in July 2024, all 30 civil defence centres in different areas of southern Lebanon identified one or more needs and challenges. These include the need for personal or emergency equipment, poor building conditions, vehicles in need of maintenance, and buildings requiring solar power.

### 3. Socioeconomic impact

The impact of the current hostilities on growth, inequality and poverty is mainly concentrated near the southern border, specifically the South Lebanon and Nabatieh Governorates. The increase in the number of displaced people fleeing the most-affected villages and towns, along with a complete absence of economic activity in some of those areas, will have a negative impact on the welfare of the people still living there.

Disruptions to tourism and other economic sectors, in particular agriculture and trade, worsen economic prospects and limit opportunities for growth and development. Moreover, physical damage to infrastructure, including transportation networks and utilities, hampers access to essential services and impedes economic activity. The costs needed to repair damage to housing and to access alternative housing in the meantime will add an additional

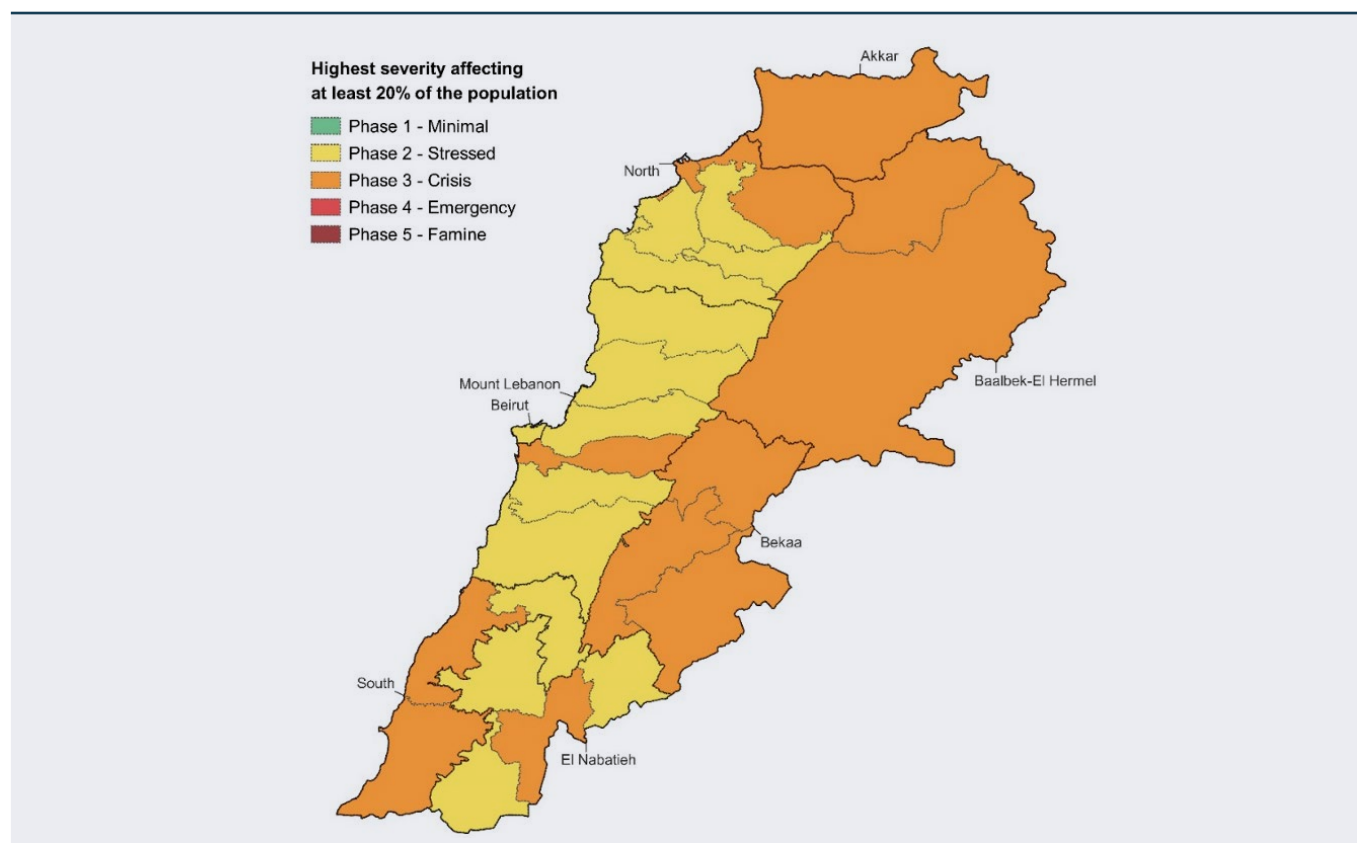
financial burden on households. The economic fallout of the current war will exacerbate poverty and perpetuate cycles of deprivation.

Around 1.26 million people are estimated to have faced high levels of acute food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 or above) between April and September 2024.<sup>12</sup> People classified in IPC Phase 3 or above require urgent humanitarian action to reduce food gaps and prevent acute malnutrition. With an escalation of the conflict, the districts along the border with Israel will experience higher levels of food insecurity. Furthermore, the population in southern Lebanon may be particularly vulnerable to increasing inequality in access to food as a result of the destruction or inaccessibility of farmland and other sources of livelihood.



A picture taken on 24 September 2024, shows the debris and destruction at the site of an overnight Israeli strike on a neighbourhood in the Lebanese city of Baalbeck in the Bekaa valley. (Photo @AFP)

**Map 2. Lebanon acute food insecurity projection update for April–September 2024**



**Source:** ESCWA, based on material from Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). Lebanon: Acute food insecurity situation for October 2023 – March 2024 and projection for April–September 2024.

**Note:** “Population” includes all residents.

## 3.1 Main economic sectors affected

### 3.1.1 Agriculture and tourism sectors

Southern Lebanon is a major agricultural area, with fertile soils and ideal agroclimatic conditions for growing a wide variety of produce, including olives, bananas, tobacco, figs and citrus fruits. The agricultural sector accounts for up to 80 per cent of the GDP of southern Lebanon, according to a December 2023 United Nations Development Programme report.

The tobacco sector has been most affected by the conflict. Tobacco is the primary agricultural cash crop in the south, and 50 per cent of tobacco farmers are from villages and towns along the confrontation line from Naqoura to Shebaa. The annual tobacco yield of areas in the conflict zone is up to 25,000 tonnes, with a value of at least \$12 million. This is a significant portion of the country’s total tobacco exports, the annual value of which is around \$30 million.

Israeli attacks since October 2023 have had a severe impact on agriculture in Lebanon. There have been more than 5,600 strikes, many of them including the use of phosphorus and incendiary bombs. Between 7 October 2023 and 12 September 2024, approximately 1,879 hectares of prime farmland were damaged.<sup>13</sup> The destruction has led to 1,200 hectares of agricultural land being abandoned, more than 1,700 units of livestock and 390,000 units of poultry being lost, and more than 47,000 olive trees being destroyed. Additionally, 93 greenhouses and about 600 m<sup>2</sup> of feed warehouses have been destroyed. This catastrophic damage threatens to cripple the country’s agricultural sector. By 11 September 2024, the bombardment had led to the destruction of approximately 1,200 hectares of both dense and low-density oak forests. An agricultural census conducted in 2010 by the FAO and the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture<sup>14</sup> indicates that the production of olives and olive oil accounts for approximately 10 per cent of the total agricultural output value in Lebanon. This figure can vary from year to year due to the olive



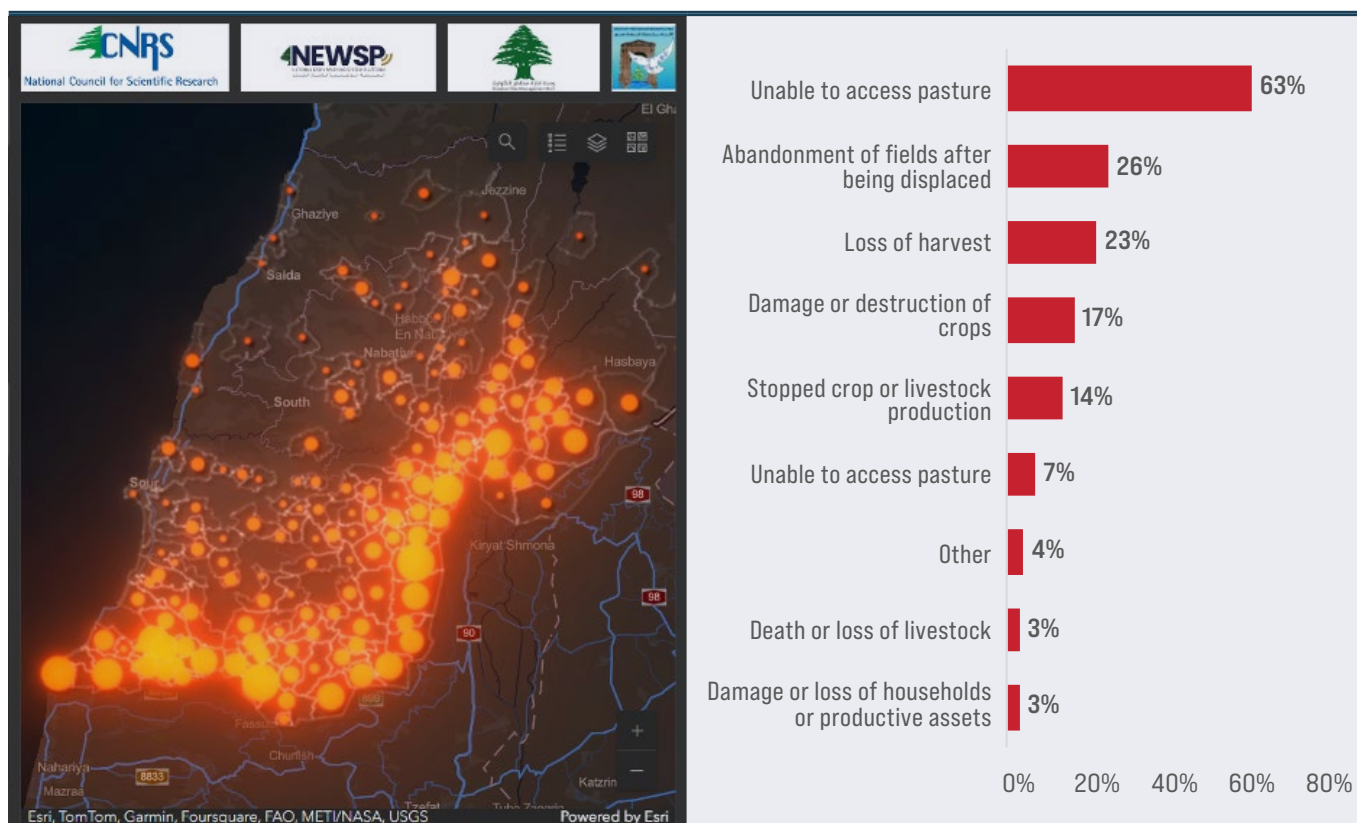
tree's high alternate bearing capacity. In South Lebanon, the region produces around 36 per cent of the country's olives.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the burning 121 hectares of olive trees and numerous large dispersed trees have also been burned.

The bombings in southern Lebanon are a serious threat to the livelihoods of thousands of farmers and agricultural workers. Even those farmers whose land has not been damaged by the attacks have halted their harvests or abandoned their land out of fear for their

safety. A survey conducted in early 2024 has found that up to 26 per cent of farmers cannot access their fields. An additional 63 per cent cannot do so safely. About 23 per cent of farmers have reported a decrease in yields, 85 per cent have faced difficulties in transporting their produce, and 72 per cent have reported income loss.<sup>16</sup>

The severe harm inflicted upon olive groves will have enduring consequences on farmers, given that rebuilding and replanting will take significant amounts of time and resources.

**Map 3.** Distribution of strikes in the southern governorates (left). Percentage of households reporting damage to crops and livestock production (right)



Source: Estimates by the National Center for Natural Hazards and Early Warning, July 2024.



Fire sweeps over the Marjaayoun plain in southern Lebanon near the border with Israel after the area was hit by Israeli shelling on 16 August 2024. (Photo by RABIH DAHER/AFP)



## Box 2. Impact of the conflict on the environment

The Ministry of Environment has recently detected elevated levels of heavy metals and toxic compounds in the soils of the affected areas, and up to 900 times more phosphorus than average, which decreases soil fertility and increases soil acidity. Phosphorus is a serious hazard to people, animals and the local environment.<sup>a</sup> By 12 September 2024, according to the National Center for Natural Hazards and Early Warning, it was estimated that there had been 290 hits by phosphorus missiles: 169 in Marjaayoun, 54 in Tyre, 45 in Bent Jbeil, 19 in Hasbaya and 3 in Nabatieh.

The forest fire season in Lebanon started earlier than usual this year, which may be due in part to the apparent use by Israel of white phosphorus in southern Lebanon.<sup>b</sup> White phosphorus is an extremely flammable substance, which continues to burn until it is fully consumed. It can spontaneously reignite weeks after being extinguished. White phosphorus is known to spread fire to vegetation. A policy brief by the American University of Beirut highlights that white phosphorus deployment in southern Lebanon has increased the risk of forest fires in the region, with 134 forest fires reported by October 2023.<sup>c</sup> Air pollution resulting from the intense bombardment and its health impacts can be fully assessed through specialized, detailed sampling, which is not possible under the current circumstances.

Soil infiltration of white phosphorus and consequent leaching into water and aquifers pose severe health risks to humans, animals and the environment. When used for irrigation, this water can contaminate agricultural land, putting crops and livestock at risk. The build-up of phosphoric acid can also reduce soil fertility and increase erosion. Additionally, the spread of white phosphorus can disrupt ecosystems and threaten local food security. Contaminated water streams can harm nearby communities relying on these sources for drinking and other uses, while local fisheries face contamination risks that can affect human health.<sup>d</sup> Its impacts may be huge, particularly since southern Lebanon is one of the country's major agricultural zones.

Given the country's economic and political crises, the war will also have cascading impacts on ongoing efforts to improve environmental conservation in Lebanon. For example, the Ministry of Environment was in the process of establishing a natural reserve in Naqoura in southern Lebanon. This area has sustained terrestrial damage during the war.<sup>e,f</sup>

Thousands of buildings in southern Lebanon have been destroyed, generating millions of tons of debris. In some villages and towns, preliminary satellite image analysis suggests that around a quarter of structures have been damaged.

The environmental impacts of conflict are not limited to the location of actual conflict. For example, forced displacement puts additional pressure on a country's natural resources and disrupts public services, such as solid waste management, degrading the environment and causing public health hazards. Another example is transboundary air pollution and the carbon emissions resulting from conflict. Recent research suggests that projected emissions from the first 120 days of the Israel–Gaza conflict, which also affects southern Lebanon, are greater than the annual emissions of 26 individual countries and territories. There have been calls for military emissions reporting to be made mandatory under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).<sup>g</sup>

a Barazy (2024).

b Abou Aljoud (2024).

c Kallab, A. and others (2023).

d Ibid.

e Ministry of Environment Lebanon representative. 10 July 2024. Protecting Water Quality and Biodiversity for Improved Water Management. ESCWA and World Bank Mashreq Water Series Workshop. Beirut.

f United Nations Development Programme (2023).

g Otu-Larbi and others (2024).



Smoke billows in the area of the Lebanese village of Kfar Kila during Israeli shelling on 14 January 2024. (Photo by Rabih DAHER @AFP)

**Table 2. Total visitor arrivals to Lebanon**

May 2023	May 2024	Yearly change (percentage)
143,208	116,477	18.7-

Source: Brite indicators and trends, Blominvest Bank.

Tourism as an economic sector has also been affected. Visitor arrivals in May 2024 were 18.7 per cent lower than in the same month of 2023.<sup>17</sup>

There are nearly 600 medium-sized and large restaurants in southern Lebanon, in addition to 150 restaurants within the border area that have been forced to close.<sup>18</sup> There are nearly 60 hotels in southern Lebanon, most of which are currently closed. Guesthouses have completely closed. The ongoing crises have caused a major blow to the economy of southern Lebanon, which is heavily reliant on tourism.<sup>19</sup> According to the Secretary-General of the Lebanese Tourist Association, the losses of the tourist sector for the 10 months since October 2023 are greater than \$3 billion.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.1.2 Access to utilities

The war has significantly affected the provision of safe water to people living in the south of Lebanon.<sup>21</sup> The Israeli air strikes since 23 September 2024, have severely damaged the water infrastructure in the Bekaa and South Governorates, cutting off access to clean water for at least 30,000 people. This in addition to the 16 water stations previously damaged. This will further exacerbate the region's water access crisis and heighten humanitarian concerns,

according to UNICEF.<sup>22</sup> A definitive assessment of the damage to transmission and distribution networks will not be possible before a ceasefire.

As a result of the damage, access to electricity and water has become scarce. Water fee collection has fallen to nearly zero in the South Lebanon and Nabatieh Governorates, posing increasing challenges to the South Lebanon Water Establishment's capacity to provide services.<sup>23</sup> This has hindered access to basic water services in the Governorates of South Lebanon and Nabatieh by at least 5 per cent. Displaced children, particularly those living in informal settlements, face heightened risks of outbreaks of water- and sanitation-related diseases as a result of overcrowding and inadequate sanitation facilities. Those remaining in targeted villages and towns also risk having limited or no access to water until damage to water facilities is repaired.<sup>24</sup>

A recent study<sup>25</sup> indicates that the repeated use of white phosphorus ammunition in southern Lebanon has brought a high risk of contamination of water sources, with potentially severe public health consequences (box 2).

Electricity infrastructure has also been damaged during the war. In some border villages, shelling

**Figure 1.** Power station damaged by an Israeli strike in Marjaayoun



Source: Xinhua News Agency.

has destroyed key public electricity infrastructure, such as the power station located in Marjaayoun. Transformers and distribution power cables have also been damaged.

### 3.1.3 Access to health services

Between 8 October 2023 and 30 June 2024, 45 instances of violence against or obstruction of health care provision by the Israeli army were recorded in Lebanon. These incidents resulted in the deaths of at least 39 health workers, as well as damage to 12 ambulances and health facilities. Incidents took place in the Nabatieh and South Governorates, particularly the Bint Jbeil, Marjaayoun and Tyre districts. Catering to the health-care needs of the residents of the villages along the Israel-Lebanon border is being made increasingly difficult by the hostilities. Increasing levels of need resulting from the arrival of large numbers of IDPs and refugees are also causing strain, as is a lack of funds needed to keep health facilities operational.<sup>26</sup>

The availability of health services has declined in affected areas. The reasons for this are various; they include a lack of security, limited resources and a lack of medication. Many health facilities are either closed or struggling to operate. Essential services

and emergency care are becoming increasingly inaccessible, exacerbating the vulnerabilities of children, who require regular immunization against preventable diseases, and treatments for various conditions whose prevalence and severity are being exacerbated by the direct and indirect effects of the conflict. In April 2024, it was estimated that more than 4,000 children were in need of essential services such as immunization, access to critical medications, maternal health care, and pre- and post-natal care.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, an estimated 16,000 children under 5 years of age and 17,000 adolescent girls were living in areas where primary health-care facilities had closed or faced major disruptions, limiting their access to vital health and nutritional services.<sup>28</sup>

The severe shortage of health services is only partially mitigated by the existence of 28 primary health-care satellite units. With support from the Government of Lebanon and partners, these units offer integrated primary health-care services, including childhood vaccinations, reproductive health consultations, sexual and reproductive health awareness sessions, and psychological support.<sup>29</sup>

Lebanon is among the 51 countries which display the global risk criteria for large and disruptive measles outbreaks.<sup>30</sup> In such a context, if routine immunization is not guaranteed, the chances of a





A father and child who have been forcibly displaced find shelter in a school. (Photo @UNICEF)

measles outbreak significantly increase. A measles outbreak would have deadly consequences for children in Lebanon.

### 3.1.4 Education sector

The disruption of learning caused by the conflict, compounded by the multiple crises affecting the country in recent years, has a mutually reinforcing negative effect on children's ability to develop foundational literacy, numeracy and life skills. This ultimately leads to long-lasting consequences for their well-being and future opportunities.

The conflict is putting immense pressure on the already fragile education sector. By August 2024, 72 schools (public and private) in the South Lebanon and Nabatieh Governorates were either partially or fully closed, affecting around 23,000 students and 2,500 teachers.<sup>31</sup> Students who have relocated to other areas face significant commuting difficulties amid the escalating situation. A recent study found that half of adolescent girls and young women in shelters reported that their learning had been affected by the crisis.<sup>32</sup> Continued disruption to learning heightens risks such as child labour and early marriage for the most vulnerable children and adolescents.

The Government of Lebanon, with the support of development and humanitarian partners, has established seven school hubs and host schools in existing facilities for Lebanese children. Displaced non-Lebanese children are learning remotely online, with the quality of learning remaining variable.<sup>33</sup> The school hubs receive funds to cover the basic operational costs of students; however, they remain inaccessible for many displaced children and to children enrolled in private schools.

According to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, by 17 April 2024, 232 internally displaced pupils had been enrolled in hub schools and 1,263 in host schools, while 8,246 internally displaced children were learning online. Online learning is constrained by unreliable Internet service and power cuts, among other factors. The anticipated dropout rate of children attending online classes is 90 per cent.<sup>34</sup>

## 3.2 Multidimensional deprivation

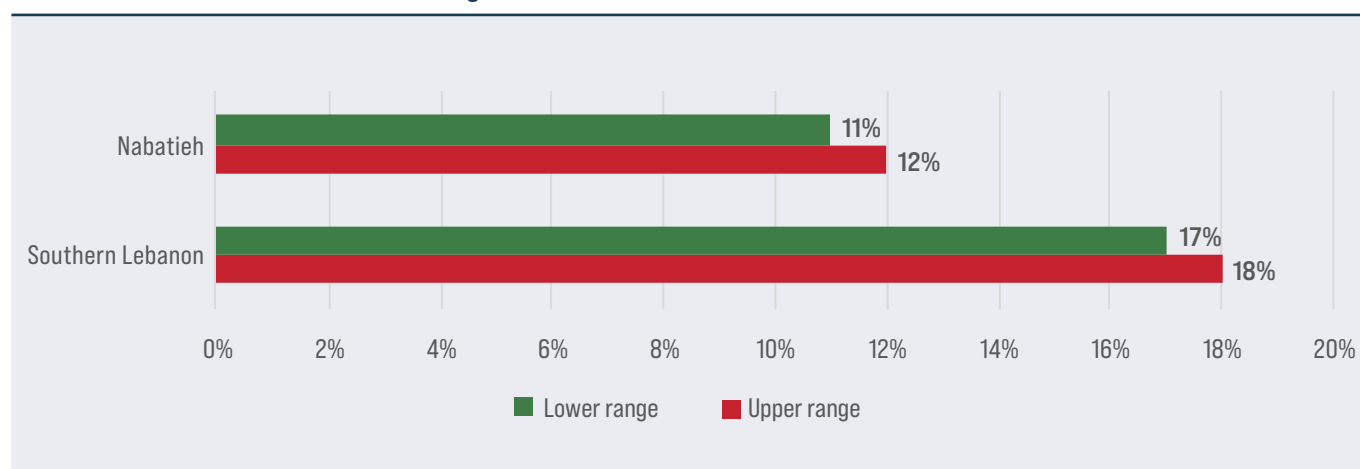
Measuring multidimensional poverty across several welfare indicators can provide a comprehensive deprivation profile of the population and

shed light on the effect of the ongoing war in Lebanon. ESCWA has drawn up a framework for estimating multidimensional poverty.<sup>35</sup> According to that framework, and using the most recent comprehensive and representative survey available in the country, covering all geographical areas, the multidimensional poverty rate in Lebanon was estimated to be 42 per cent in 2019.

The economic crisis and the ongoing war have had a significant impact on most of the indicators and dimensions of the multidimensional poverty index. The impact of the war has been most strongly felt in

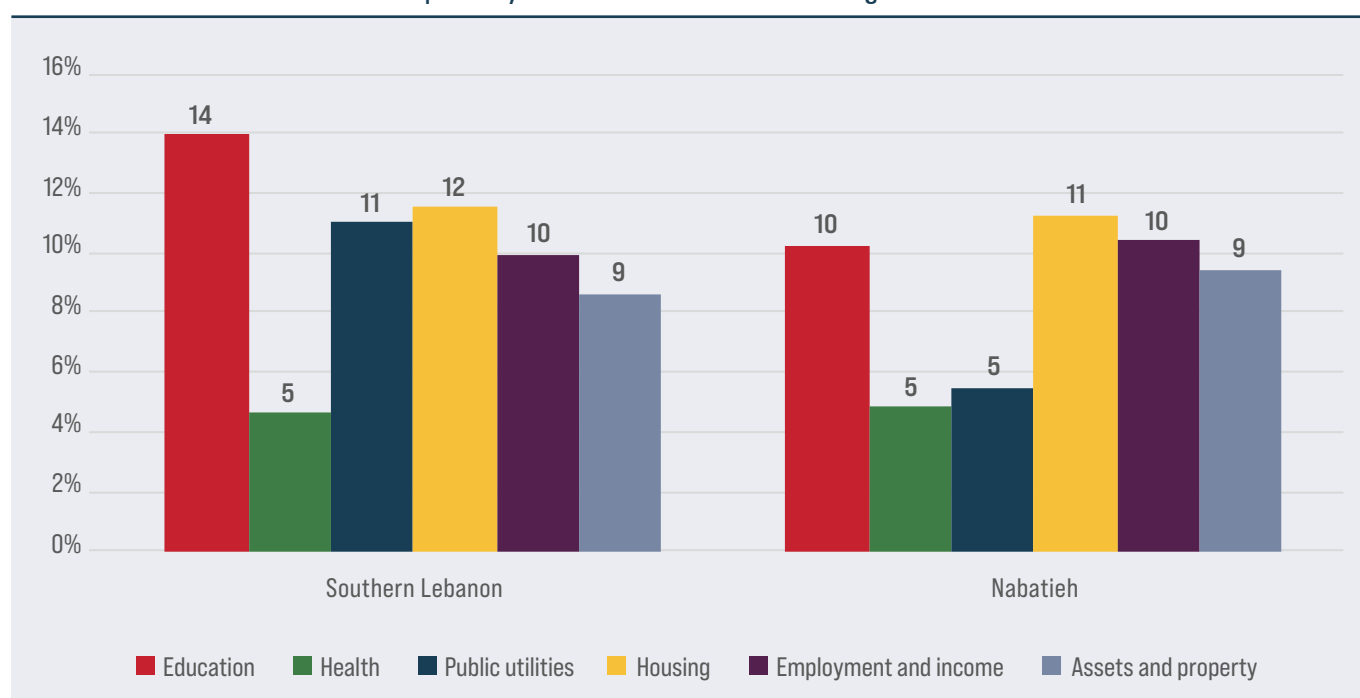
the southern governorates of Lebanon. The number of people living in multidimensional poverty is estimated to have increased by 11 to 12 per cent in the Nabatieh Governorate and by 17 to 18 per cent in the South Lebanon Governorate compared to pre-war levels (prior to October 2023)(figure 2; for information on the assumptions that led to these estimates, see annex 1). As a result, the multidimensional poverty headcount percentages have reached 94 per cent and 87 per cent, respectively. The increase in poverty has been most visible in the education, housing, assets/property, employment, and income dimensions in both governorates (figure 3, as well as figure A1.4 and figure A1.5 in annex 1).<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 2.** Increase in the number of people living in multidimensional poverty (October 2023 to August 2024) as a result of war in southern governorates



Source: ESCWA estimates based on LFHLCs survey data from 2019, and simulated using ESCWA assumptions for 2024.

**Figure 3.** Increase (October 2023 to August 2024) in the proportion of people who are deprived according to at least one multidimensional poverty indicator across southern governorates



Source: ESCWA estimates based on the LFHLCs in Lebanon for 2018–2019.

## 4. Policy recommendations

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Most pressingly, a cessation of all hostilities is urgently needed, and the root causes of the recurrent conflicts affecting southern Lebanon need to be resolved on the basis of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. What follows is a non-exhaustive list of policy recommendations addressed to government entities, humanitarian organizations and development partners.

### 4.1 Immediate humanitarian assistance and protection

**Expand access to critical services:** Prioritize and expand access to essential services, especially health, education and psychological support, for vulnerable populations, including children and adolescents. Establish mobile service units to reach remote and high-risk areas.

**Enhance protection mechanisms:** Robust child protection frameworks should be deployed to mitigate the risks of violence, exploitation and psychological trauma among displaced children and adolescents. These frameworks should include training for local caregivers and educators on trauma-informed care and psychosocial support.

### 4.2 Comprehensive damage assessment and reconstruction

**Holistic recovery and reconstruction plan:** After hostilities cease, damage to residential and non-residential infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and public utilities, should be comprehensively assessed. This assessment, along with multisectoral, area-based profiles (at different geographic scales), should be the foundation for an integrated, evidence-based recovery and reconstruction plan that emphasizes sustainable rebuilding, using eco-friendly materials and climate-resilient infrastructure design. Issues related to housing, land and property rights or challenges should also be taken into consideration. In urban contexts in particular, this process should be aligned to urban recovery principles. It should be undertaken in a coordinated manner, in close collaboration with local authorities and communities – including the enhancement of their capacities to ensure sustainability.

**Debris management and environmental safety:** Based on a comprehensive assessment, a coordinated debris management strategy should be developed and implemented, with provisions covering the safe disposal of hazardous materials and explosive remnants of war. International expertise and funding should be used to ensure compliance with environmental safety standards.

### 4.3 Reduction of multidimensional poverty

**Rebuild health and utilities infrastructure:** The rapid restoration of health services and public water and electricity provision, along with other basic services, should be made a priority. Emergency financial assistance should be provided, and international partnerships established to this effect. Contingency plans should be established to maintain service provision during future conflicts, including the decentralization of services to reduce vulnerability.

**National and local infrastructure resilience:** Long-term national plans should be drawn up for the restructuring of critical infrastructure, ensuring that local solutions are aligned with national strategies. These plans should take into account the potential of alternative energy sources, such as solar power, to mitigate the impact of electricity shortages.



## 4.4 Recovery of the agricultural sector

**Targeted support for agriculture:** Programmes should be put in place to provide immediate financial assistance to farmers, including grants, subsidies and low-interest loans. Such programmes would help farmers to recover from losses and restore agricultural productivity. Support measures should target high-impact areas such as tobacco, olives and other staple crops, with an emphasis on rebuilding local agricultural value chains.

**Environmental restoration and soil recovery:** Long-term environmental recovery projects should be put in place to address soil contamination, restore lost agricultural lands and rehabilitate damaged ecosystems. Sustainable farming practices should be encouraged, and the use of indigenous crops that are more resilient to environmental changes should be promoted.

## 4.5 Long-term social and economic stability

**Social protection and safety nets:** Social protection programmes should be expanded to cover displaced populations, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as children, women and older people. These programmes should be well funded and accessible to those most in need.

**Economic recovery and job creation:** Targeted investments should be made to support job creation, with a view to promoting wider economic recovery. This is particularly important in sectors hardest hit by the conflict, such as agriculture, tourism, and small and medium-sized enterprises. Steps should be taken to encourage private sector engagement and public-private partnerships to stimulate economic growth and reduce unemployment.



Damage resulting from Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon. (Photo @Ali Alloush)

# Endnotes

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- 1 The United Nations has adopted several resolutions concerning southern Lebanon, primarily focused on maintaining peace and security in the region and promoting respect for the country's sovereignty. However, many of these resolutions, from 425 to 1701, remain mostly unimplemented.
- 2 World Bank, 2021.
- 3 OCHA, 2024c
- 4 OCHA, 2024b.
- 5 IOM, 2024b.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 OCHA, 2024b.
- 8 UNHCR, 2024.
- 9 UNRWA, 2024.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 UNICEF, 2024c.
- 12 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2024.
- 13 Based on data from the National Center for Natural Hazards and Early Warning, which uses Sentinel S2A MSIL2A images to compare the situation at the beginning and end of this period.
- 14 FAO Agricultural Census, 2010
- 15 Investment Development Authority of Lebanon, 2010
- 16 FAO, 2024.
- 17 Blominvest, 2024.
- 18 Dahshi, 2024.
- 19 Zoughaib, S. and others, 2024.
- 20 Lebanon24.com, 2024.
- 21 In the post-2023 era, the number of households that do not have access to improved drainage system is expected to rise to about at least one-third. Recent studies reveal that less than 10 per cent of all generated wastewater undergoes tertiary treatment, with the remainder being discharged untreated into watercourses and the sea. Similar to potable water issues, the problem with wastewater treatment is due to high costs associated with operations and maintenance, as well as lack of treatment capacity in some areas.
- 22 OCHA, 2024b.
- 23 UNICEF, 2024c.
- 24 OCHA, 2024c.
- 25 Kallab, A and L.R Mouawad, 2023.
- 26 Insecurity Insight, 2024.
- 27 UNICEF, 2024a.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 UNICEF, 2024c.
- 30 UNICEF, 2024a.
- 31 OCHA, 2024a.
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- 35 ESCWA, 2021.
- 36 For more information, see annex 1.

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