

THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

# *Light-of-Hope*

MECC bulletin for the Middle East and Lebanon ordeal and rescue efforts

Bulletin Number 2 - March 18, 2026

## ONE MILLION PLUS DISPLACED IN LEBANON

Image Source: vdl.me



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط  
The Middle East Council of Churches

[www.mecc.org](http://www.mecc.org)

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# Between the Pain of Displacement and Life Among the Ruins... Is There Hope for Healing?

The elderly, children, and mothers wait anxiously for the next urgent message one that may arrive at any moment ordering them to leave their homes and move north or south, east or west, fleeing a machinery of destruction that spares neither people nor stone. In those moments, life is reduced to a single question: **Will we survive?**

The elderly, children, and mothers wait anxiously for the next urgent message one that may arrive at any moment ordering them to leave their homes and move north or south, east or west, fleeing a machinery of destruction that spares neither people nor stone. In those moments, life is reduced to a single question: Will we survive?

Before our eyes unfolds a scene that has tragically become familiar: the smoke of bombs rising into the sky and the rubble of collapsing buildings piling higher with each passing day. It is difficult to reconcile this devastation with the memory of a land once known for its beauty and sunlight, the fertile orchards of the South, and the shores of Tyre and Sidon, once walked by the feet of the Savior, now echoing with the sounds of conflict.

In the face of such a reality, one cannot help but ask: how can those who endure the harsh experience of displacement especially children ever recover from these repeated traumas? How can they find the strength to stand again and rebuild their lives in a reality that feels so uncertain and unknown?



In the days ahead, we will hear many stories of suffering, stories written with the tears of the wounded and the brokenhearted. Yet perhaps, through these voices, the cries of pain will reach the consciences of decision-makers and peacemakers around the world, urging them to challenge the interests and policies that sustain wars and instead nurture a culture of dialogue and peace. Perhaps then the world will remember that we are disciples of the One who redeemed humanity with His precious blood.

And yet, even amid the devastation, seeds of hope continue to emerge. Stories of compassion and resilience are written every day by the MECC staff and volunteers, who stand beside those in need, offering shelter to the displaced, medicine to the sick, food to the hungry, and above all a compassionate presence to those who feel forgotten. Through these acts of solidarity, hope is rekindled in wounded hearts and the strength to rise again slowly returns.

For even in the darkest moments, faith reminds us that despair is never the final word. As long as faith lives within us, we continue to believe that tomorrow can be better, because in Him alone we live, and move, and have our being.

**Samer Laham**

# بين ألم النزوح والعيش بين الركام .. هل من أمل للتعافي

الشيوخ والأطفال والنساء .. الجميع ينتظر الرسائل العاجلة لإخلاء منازلهم والتوجه شمالاً أو جنوباً ، شرقاً أم غرباً هرباً من آلة التدمير التي ستطال البشر والحجر. الجميع في حالة التأهب القصوى لمعرفة إن كانوا سينجون بحياتهم أو أن يجدوا من يأويهم من برد الشتاء ، فمراكز الآيواء امتلأت وأرصفت الشوارع افترشها ممن لم يجدوا مكاناً يأويهم والأعداد تتزايد كل يوم في بلد منهك اقتصادياً وغير مهياً للإستجابة لتلك الأزمات الطارئة التي شردت ولاتزال مئات الآلاف من العائلات التي لم يعد لديها أمل بأن الغد سيكون أفضل .

أمام هذا المشهد حيث دخان القنابل وركام الأبنية المتهاوية كل يوم الذي أصبح مألوفاً في بلد الجمال والشمس وبساتين الجنوب الملتهبة وشواطئ صور وصيدا التي وطأها أرجل المخلص .. نتساءل .. كيف يمكن لمن يعيش تجربة النزوح هذه خاصة الأطفال أن يتعافى من تجربة الصدمات المتعاقبة وأن يكون قادراً على الصمود للنهوض مجدداً على واقع جديد ومجهول .

سنسمع الكثير من قصص الألم التي ستكتب بحبر دموع المومجوعين علماً أن تصل صرخات قلوبهم المومجوعة للضمائر الحية من أصحاب القرار وفاعلي السلام في هذا العالم لمناهضة سياسات مصالح الحروب وارساء ثقافة الحوار والسلام فيعرف العالم أننا تلاميذ من افتدى هذا العالم بدمه المقدس.

أما قصص النجاح فسيكتبها العاملين في المجلس من خلال خدمتهم اليومية لمن هم بحاجة الى أيواء و دواء وطعام ومرافقة لأحياء الأمل في قلوبهم وتعزيز قدرتهم على النهوض مجدداً مؤمنين أن الغد سيكون دائماً أفضل طالما أنه لدينا الإيمان بأن به فقط نحيا ونوجد .

سامر لحام



## Summary of the “Light-of-Hope” Relief Operation Appeal 2026

As of March 12, 2026 (*Daily Situation Report – DRM*), the escalation of conflict which has so far inflicted **687 deaths and 1,774 injuries**, has forced many families to leave their homes in search of safety. A significant number of displaced people are currently staying in collective shelters such as schools, churches, and municipal buildings, often in overcrowded conditions and under-equipped, falling short of minimum standards required to ensure safe and dignified living conditions. These shelters face serious challenges related to sanitation, access to food, electricity, water, and other essential services. Up until March 12, **128,200 have been displaced to 596 shelters**. As for the total number of **self-registered IDP’s, it amounts to 822,600**. At the same time, Lebanon’s ongoing economic crisis has further weakened the capacity of public institutions and municipalities to respond to the growing humanitarian needs, placing additional pressure on humanitarian organizations and host communities.





The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) has launched the Light of Hope Relief Operation 2026 as an emergency response to the recent escalation of hostilities in Lebanon and the resulting large-scale displacement. The initiative aims to support crisis-affected families, particularly internally displaced persons and households hosting displaced relatives as well as those in hard-to reach-areas and in collective shelters. The response will primarily focus on Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon, while remaining flexible to respond to displacement in other areas of the country.

In response to the urgent humanitarian needs created by the current crisis and widespread displacement, MECC will provide an integrated package of emergency assistance to support affected families and help them maintain basic living conditions with dignity. The response will include the provision of core relief items such as food, hygiene supplies, and essential medications, along with support to collective shelters through diesel to sustain electricity and water services. In addition, multi-purpose cash assistance will be provided to help vulnerable households cover their most pressing needs and navigate the difficult circumstances caused by displacement

The intervention will be implemented through close coordination with municipalities, disaster risk management units, local churches, and humanitarian sector working groups to ensure complementarity with existing responses and to avoid duplication of assistance. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will include field visits, beneficiary feedback, and post-distribution monitoring to assess effectiveness and improve implementation.

Throughout the response, MECC will apply key cross-cutting principles including gender equality, protection of vulnerable groups, safeguarding standards, accountability to affected populations, environmental considerations, and a do no harm approach. Assistance will be delivered with neutrality and respect for human dignity to all people in need, regardless of their background or affiliation.



## MECC Work Updates

**MECC is mobilizing emergency assistance across Lebanon to support displaced families and vulnerable communities with lifesaving aid and essential services:**

*As displacement continues to affect communities across the country, MECC is preparing to deliver urgent support to families residing in collective shelters, households hosted within communities, and vulnerable residents in front-line villages in South Lebanon. The response aims to ensure that those most affected by the crisis receive timely and dignified assistance.*

MECC is currently mobilizing an emergency response to support internally displaced persons across Lebanon. The intervention will reach families residing in collective shelters in Beirut and Mount Lebanon (BML), South Lebanon, and Akkar, as well as displaced households hosted within communities outside formal shelters. The response will also extend to vulnerable households in front-line villages in South Lebanon who have remained in their homes despite extremely challenging conditions.

This response is being implemented in close coordination with national and local authorities, including the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Disaster Risk Management Unit (DRM), municipalities, and local churches, ensuring that assistance is aligned with national response efforts and reaches those most affected.

MECC teams have already initiated procurement and are finalizing logistical arrangements for distributions to begin in the coming days. Planned assistance includes family hygiene kits, winter blankets, diesel support for shelters and municipalities to maintain basic services, medications for patients with chronic diseases who have lost access to treatment during displacement, potable water, cleaning kits to support sanitation conditions, and multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to help vulnerable households meet their most urgent needs.



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## Casualties, Displacements and Level of Devastation in the ME:

### Lebanon

·**Deaths:** + 886 Injuries: + 2141.

·**Level of Devastation:** Unlike Iran or Occupied Palestine, no single total building-damage number yet exists due to ongoing war but 100+ towns and villages have been affected by strikes. Also hundreds of strike waves have been concentrated in: South of the Litani River ( $\approx 63\%$  of strikes) Beirut ( $\approx 17\%$ ).

·**IDPs:** 1,049,328 of which 132,742 scattered in 622 shelters. Ministry of Health designated 77 hospitals which treat IDPs free of charge.

### Iran

·**Deaths:** + 1,348 civilians. Injuries: + 17,000.

·**Level of Devastation:** 4,000+ civilian buildings damaged or destroyed, at least 13 hospitals hit, 3 hospitals forced out of service, 14 health centers damaged, at least 20 schools damaged, a desalination plant destroyed which cut water to 30 villages, at least 30 fuel depots destroyed, electric infrastructure damaged caused blackouts and service disruptions in major cities.

·**IDPs:** 1,049,328 of which 132,742 scattered in 622 shelters. Ministry of Health designated 77 hospitals which treat IDPs free of charge.



## Occupied Palestine

·**Deaths:** ~15–17. Injuries: ~15–17.

·**Level of Devastation:** 9 buildings completely destroyed, 6,586 claims of damaged buildings, 1,044 for contents/equipment damaged, 1,485 for vehicles damaged, A major hospital (Soroka) was directly hit and severely damaged.

·**IDPs:** No mass displacement.

## Syria

·**Deaths:** 4.

·**Damage is limited** in geographic scope compared to Lebanon or Iran

## Iraq

·**Deaths:** 2 injured: 4.

·**Level of Devastation:** Unknown number Residential areas struck by drones and missiles in multiple regions, reports of fires, structural damage to buildings including hotels, diplomatic sites, airports, oil fields, and telecommunication towers. So far more than 200 attacks have been recorded.



## United Arab Emirates

**Deaths:** 6 Injuries: 145.

**Level of Devastation:** homes, cars hit by debris. Limited but real civilian property damage. Dubai International Airport damaged leading to fuel tank fire and temporary shutdown of flights, Fujairah oil facilities damaged, Shah gas field operations disrupted, ports such as Jebel Ali damaged, a few government buildings .

**IDPs:** 1,049,328 of which 132,742 scattered in 622 shelters.

## Kuwait

**Deaths:** +1 injuries: ~32 .

**Level of Devastation:** Some damage to Kuwait International Airport, 6 power lines damaged, debris from intercepted missiles fell on some residential areas damaging some buildings.

## Oman

**Deaths:** +3 injuries: ~5.

**Level of Devastation:** Oil storage tanks at Salalah port were hit, causing large fires and structural damage, Port of Duqm and Salalah Port damaged, 2 damaged oil tankers.



Map Source: Institute for the Study of War & AEI Critical Threats Project

## Bahrain

**Deaths:** +2 injuries: ~40+.

**Level of Devastation:** Residential neighborhoods and commercial buildings in Manama were hit or damaged by debris, an office tower in the Seef District was struck, causing structural damage, Bahrain International Airport damaged, Mina Salman Port damaged, desalination plant was damaged, fuel depot in Muharraq Governorate was damaged.

## Saudi Arabia

**Deaths:** +2 injuries: ~12.

**Level of Devastation:** Residential building hit in Al-Kharj, Other potential civilian structures and neighborhoods have experienced debris and proximity damage, debris caused a localized fire and minor damage to Saudi Aramco's Ras Tanura oil refinery.



## Humanitarian Response in Lebanon:

- On the first day of the war Secretary General Guterres launched the Lebanon Flash Appeal alongside Prime Minister Salam. The Appeal calls for USD \$308.3 million to provide lifesaving assistance and protection to one million affected people for three months.
- UNICEF expand its operation to reach 130 shelters in Lebanon, to ensure children and families receive the protection and life-saving support they need.
- Caritas Lebanon declared a state of emergency and activated its Emergency Response Unit. The organization is coordinating with national authorities, mobilizing volunteers, and expanding operations
- In its first emergency distribution since the escalation of conflict on March 2nd, CARE staff dispense 450 bottles of water to internally displaced people in Beirut.
- Relief International, deployed emergency mobile medical units to shelters in Beirut, Bekaa, West Bekaa, and Baalbek.
- Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) medical teams in Lebanon are scaling up activities to respond to the growing humanitarian needs.
- WFP and Government of Lebanon launched cash assistance to conflict-affected people amid spiraling needs and mass displacement
- World Vision New Zealand is calling for urgent international action as renewed conflict in Lebanon has forced more than 94,000 people, including thousands of children, from their homes.
- The EU has mobilised emergency humanitarian aid consisting of food and medical kits, shelter materials, recreation kits and winter clothing kits, to meet the urgent, rising humanitarian needs in Lebanon.
- The WFP will deliver 404 metric tons of food assistance to more than 90,000 people. The operation is funded by a flexible EU-WFP funding modality that allows for faster mobilisation of pre-positioned food stocks and rapid provision of cooked meals in the Middle East.



## Humanitarian Response in Lebanon:

- UNIFIL peacekeepers helped about 80 civilians move out of UNIFIL's area of operations in accordance with its protection of civilians mandate and in coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces.
- Qatar dispatched urgent humanitarian aid to more than 40,500 displaced families affected by the escalation. This will be achieved through the distribution of more than 12,000 food baskets, along with a range of essential non-food items such as blankets, mattresses, hygiene supplies, diapers, and essential household items. In addition, hygiene kits containing essential personal and household sanitation supplies will be distributed, helping to maintain public health and reduce health risks in overcrowded shelters.
- Canada announced more than \$37.7 million in funding to provide critical assistance in Lebanon, including food, medical and health services, shelter and clean water.
- The International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched a \$19 million appeal to bolster its emergency response in Lebanon, where the number of people forced to flee has risen to nearly one million following a sharp escalation of hostilities since March 2.
- The ICRC has provided medications and medical supplies (weapon-wounded kits), to ensure the continuity of essential medical care. In addition, the hospital received 15,000 liters of fuel, two new generators, plumbing spare parts, oxygen cylinders and drinking water filters.
- At the Tebnine Government Hospital, the ICRC provided medicines and medical supplies (kits for treating gunshot wounds) to ensure the continuity of essential medical care. In addition, the hospital received 15,000 liters of fuel, two new generators, plumbing spare parts, oxygen cylinders, and drinking water filters.



Image Source: UNICEF/UN1652760/Dar al Mussawir - Ramzi Haidar



Image Source: Ahmed Nour, Peter Ball and BBC World Service Visual Journalism team



Image Source: UNICEF/Dar al Mussawir/Ramzi Haidar  
A man climbs over a destroyed building in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon.

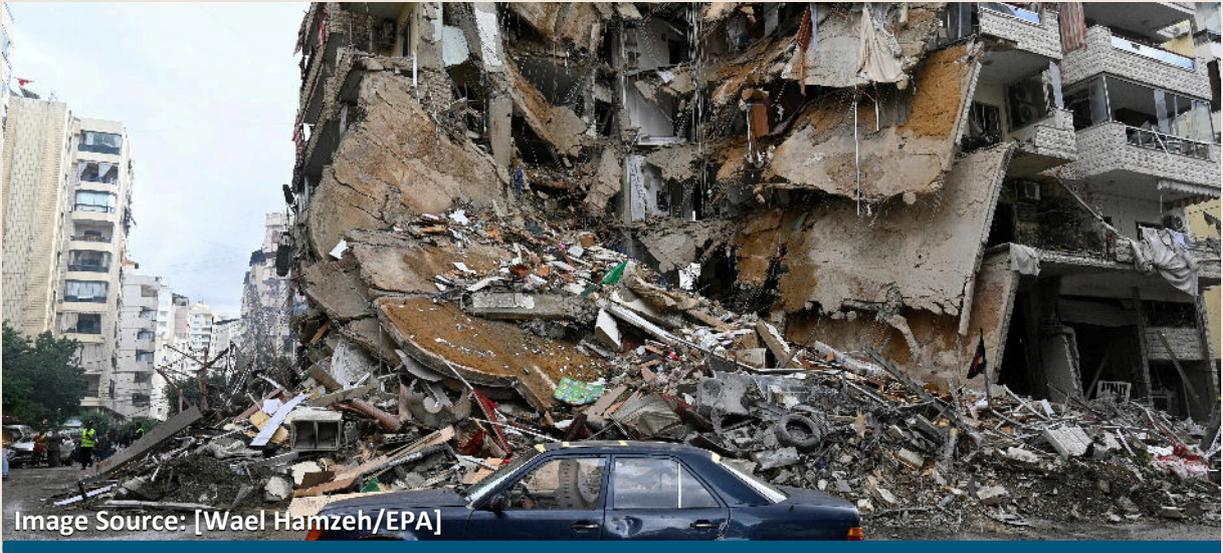
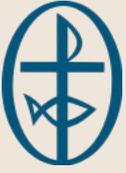


Image Source: [Wael Hamzeh/EPA]



Image Source: [Ibrahim Amro/AFP]



Image Source: Mohammad Abushama/Anadolu via Getty Images)