

THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Light-of-Hope

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

Bulletin Number 6 - July 9, 2026

THE HOPE THAT RETURNS WITH THE DISPLACED



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط
The Middle East Council of Churches

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The Hope That Returns with the Displaced

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:2)

Between the darkness of war and the light of return, hope is born anew. For humanity, no matter how burdened by hardships, continues to carry within its depths a yearning for life, for the land it loved, and for the home that has never left its memory. Returning to the homeland is not merely a transition from one place to another; rather, it is the return of the soul to its roots, and the restoration of the deep connection between a person and their land, between a family and the warmth of its home, and between the community and its mission in building life.

Here is Southern Lebanon, after months of suffering and displacement, opening its arms to its returning children. They return carrying the keys to the homes they left behind with the hope of reuniting, and hearts weighed down by the ordeal, yet which never lost faith that dawn always breaks after the darkest of nights. With every return, human testimony is renewed that life is stronger than destruction, that love is more firmly rooted than hatred, and that hope is not a postponed dream, but a power that helps us rise from the rubble.

However, the return is not the end of the road, but rather the beginning of a new responsibility. Wars do not only destroy homes; they leave scars on souls and sow anxiety regarding the future of families, children, and youth. Therefore, accompanying individuals on their journey of recovery becomes both a moral duty and a mission of faith, where service transforms into a living testament to the love that Christ called for.



From this faith, the Diakonia Department at the Middle East Council of Churches continues its mission, striving to stand alongside returning families through humanitarian and developmental initiatives that respond to their needs, enhance their resilience, and restore to them a sense of tranquility and dignity. For Diakonia is not merely a response to an urgent need, but an embodiment of a living faith that sees the image of God in every human being, and in every act of mercy, a seed for true peace.

In this issue of the Light of Hope newsletter, we celebrate stories of return because they bear witness to the triumph of will over fear, yet we do not ignore the challenges that await everyone. Rebuilding homes requires the rebuilding of the human being; the return of residents requires job opportunities, education, healthcare, and economic stability, just as it requires restoring trust between people and their land, between citizens and their institutions, and among the members of the same society. The question that accompanies this phase remains: How do we turn the return into a new beginning, rather than just another station of waiting?

Accordingly, the message of the Middle East Council of Churches, through its presence, partnerships, and initiatives, is to keep the light of hope shining in the heart of every person, and for service to become a bridge over which the suffering cross toward a future of greater dignity, justice, and peace. Ultimately, hope is not just a word we repeat, but a message we live by and a light we carry together, so that no one remains alone in facing the aftermath of war, and so that the South remains a witness that life, through human will and the grace of God, is always capable of prevailing.

Lea Adel Maamary



الرجاء الذي يعود مع العائدين

«الشَّعْبُ السَّالِكُ فِي الظُّلْمَةِ أَبْصَرَ نُورًا عَظِيمًا، الْجَالِسُونَ فِي أَرْضِ ظِلَالٍ الْمَوْتِ أَشْرَقَ عَلَيْهِمْ نُورٌ.» (إشعياء 9: 2)

ما بين ظلمة الحرب ونور العودة، يولد الرجاء من جديد. فالإنسان، مهما أثقلته المحن، يبقى يحمل في أعماقه توقًا إلى الحياة، وإلى الأرض التي أحبها، وإلى البيت الذي لم يغادر ذاكرته يومًا. والعودة إلى الوطن ليست مجرد انتقال من مكان إلى آخر، بل هي عودة الروح إلى جذورها، واستعادة العلاقة العميقة بين الإنسان وأرضه، وبين العائلة ودفء بيتها، وبين الجماعة ورسالتها في بناء الحياة.

ها هو الجنوب اللبناني، بعد أشهر من المعاناة والتهجير، يفتح ذراعيه لأبنائه العائدين. يعودون حاملين مفاتيح البيوت التي غادروها على أمل اللقاء، وقلوبًا أثقلتها التجربة، لكنها لم تفقد إيمانها بأن الفجر يشرق دائمًا بعد أحلك الليالي. وفي كل عودة، تتجدد شهادة الإنسان بأن الحياة أقوى من الدمار، وأن المحبة أرسخ من الكراهية، وأن الرجاء ليس حلمًا مؤجلًا، بل قوة تُعين على النهوض من بين الركام.

لكن العودة ليست نهاية الطريق، بل بداية مسؤولية جديدة. فالحروب لا تهدم البيوت وحدها، بل تترك ندوبًا في النفوس، وتزرع القلق في مستقبل العائلات والأطفال والشباب. لذلك، تصبح مرافقة الإنسان في رحلة التعافي واجبًا أخلاقيًا ورسالة إيمانية في آنٍ معًا، حيث تتحول الخدمة إلى شهادة حية للمحبة التي دعا إليها المسيح.

ومن هذا الإيمان، تواصل دائرة الدياكونيا في مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط رسالتها، ساعيةً إلى الوقوف إلى جانب العائلات العائدة من خلال مبادرات إنسانية وتنموية تستجيب لاحتياجاتها، وتعزز صمودها، وتعيد إليها شيئًا من الطمأنينة والكرامة.



A returning resident to Nabatieh, in southern Lebanon, stands before the wreckage in the city on November 30, 2024, days after the start of a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah. © 2024 Fadel Itani/NurPhoto via AP

فالدياكونيا ليست مجرد استجابة لاحتياج طارئ، بل هي تجسيد لإيمانٍ حيٍّ يرى في كل إنسان صورة الله، وفي كل عمل رحمةً بذرةً لسلامٍ حقيقي.

وفي هذا العدد من نشرة Light of Hope – نور الرجاء، نحتفي بقصص العودة لأنها تشهد على انتصار الإرادة على الخوف، لكننا لا نتجاهل التحديات التي تنتظر الجميع. إعادة إعمار المنازل تحتاج إلى إعادة إعمار الإنسان، وعودة السكان تحتاج إلى فرص عمل، وتعليم، ورعاية صحية، واستقرار اقتصادي، كما تحتاج إلى ترميم الثقة بين الإنسان وأرضه، وبين المواطن ومؤسساته، وبين أبناء المجتمع الواحد. ويبقى السؤال الذي يرافق هذه المرحلة: كيف نحول العودة إلى بداية جديدة، لا إلى محطة أخرى من الانتظار؟

وعليه، إن رسالة مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط، من خلال حضوره وشراكاته ومبادراته، هي أن يبقى نور الرجاء مضيئاً في قلب كل إنسان، وأن تتحول الخدمة إلى جسرٍ يعبر عليه المتألمون نحو مستقبل أكثر كرامة وعدلاً وسلاماً. فالرجاء، في النهاية، ليس كلمةً نردها، بل رسالة نعيشها، ونورًا نحملة معاً، حتى لا يبقى أحدٌ وحيداً في مواجهة آثار الحرب، وحتى يبقى الجنوب شاهداً على أن الحياة، بإرادة الإنسان وبنعمة الله، قادرة دائماً على أن تنتصر.



MECC Work Updates - June 2026

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

Despite the ongoing humanitarian challenges across Lebanon, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) continued its emergency response throughout June, reaching displaced families and vulnerable communities with life-saving assistance and protection services. Interventions were implemented in **Beirut and Mount Lebanon**, serving both internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in collective shelters and families living outside formal shelter settings. MECC also succeeded in reaching **hard-to-access communities front-line villages in South Lebanon** through coordinated humanitarian convoys, ensuring that assistance was delivered to families facing some of the greatest barriers to humanitarian support.

I. Strengthening Protection Through Community Awareness

Protection remained at the heart of MECC's response. Community-based protection awareness sessions were organized to provide displaced women, and caregivers with practical information on personal safety, available support services, hygiene practices, and ways to reduce risks associated with displacement. These sessions also created safe spaces for participants to raise concerns, ask questions, and receive guidance from trained facilitators.



Recognizing that awareness must be accompanied by practical support, each participating household received a Family Hygiene Kit containing essential hygiene supplies to help families maintain dignity, reduce health risks, and improve daily living conditions during displacement.



II. Supporting Food Security Through Food Voucher Assistance

As economic hardship continues to affect displaced and vulnerable households, MECC distributed food vouchers that enabled families to purchase food according to their individual needs and preferences from local vendors. This approach not only allowed households to access fresh and culturally appropriate food items but also helped preserve dignity by giving beneficiaries the freedom to prioritize their own essential food requirements.

The food voucher assistance contributed to reducing immediate food insecurity while supporting local markets in the communities where assistance was provided.





III. Ensuring Access to Essential Medication

Access to healthcare remains a significant challenge for many displaced families, particularly individuals living with chronic illnesses. Through the Light of Hope response, MECC provided essential medications to vulnerable beneficiaries who were unable to afford or access their prescribed treatments – in and outside collective shelters.

By helping individuals continue their medical care without interruption, this intervention reduced the risk of worsening health conditions and alleviated one of the many financial burdens faced by families affected by the ongoing crisis.





IV. First Aid Kits for Immediate Preparedness



To enhance household preparedness and support communities facing continued uncertainty, MECC distributed first aid kits containing basic medical supplies for the treatment of minor injuries and emergency situations.

These kits provide families with immediate access to essential first aid materials, increasing their capacity to respond safely to common health incidents while reducing dependence on already overstretched healthcare services.

Those were distributed in collective shelters – mostly needed – as well as municipalities in front line villages.





V. Diesel Support for Collective Shelters and Municipalities

Reliable access to electricity remains a critical concern for collective shelters and host municipalities supporting displaced populations. In response, MECC supplied diesel fuel to collective shelters and municipalities (mainly in front line villages) to ensure the continued operation of essential services.

The fuel support enabled shelters to maintain electricity for lighting, water pumping, refrigeration of medicines and food, and other critical infrastructure that contributes to safe and dignified living conditions for displaced families.

VI. Reaching Those Most in Need

Throughout June, MECC remained committed to reaching populations wherever needs were greatest. Emergency assistance was delivered both to displaced families living in collective shelters and to those residing in rented accommodation or with host communities in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.





In parallel, coordinated humanitarian convoys enabled MECC teams to reach hard-to-access villages in South Lebanon, where movement restrictions and security conditions have limited humanitarian access. These efforts ensured that vulnerable households in isolated communities were not left behind and continued to receive essential humanitarian support.

Through the Light of Hope emergency response, MECC remains committed to standing alongside crisis-affected communities with timely, dignified, and needs-based assistance while continuing to respond to the evolving humanitarian situation across Lebanon.





Audio Visual Media from Reality





actalliance

 **Norway**



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
actalliance



The Church of Scotland



ELCA



The United Church
of Canada

DANMISSION 

EVANGELISCH-LUTHERISCHE
LANDESKIRCHE HANNOVERS



**bijzondere
noden**
handen van de kerk

Tearfund



Casualties, Displacements and Level of Devastation in the ME:

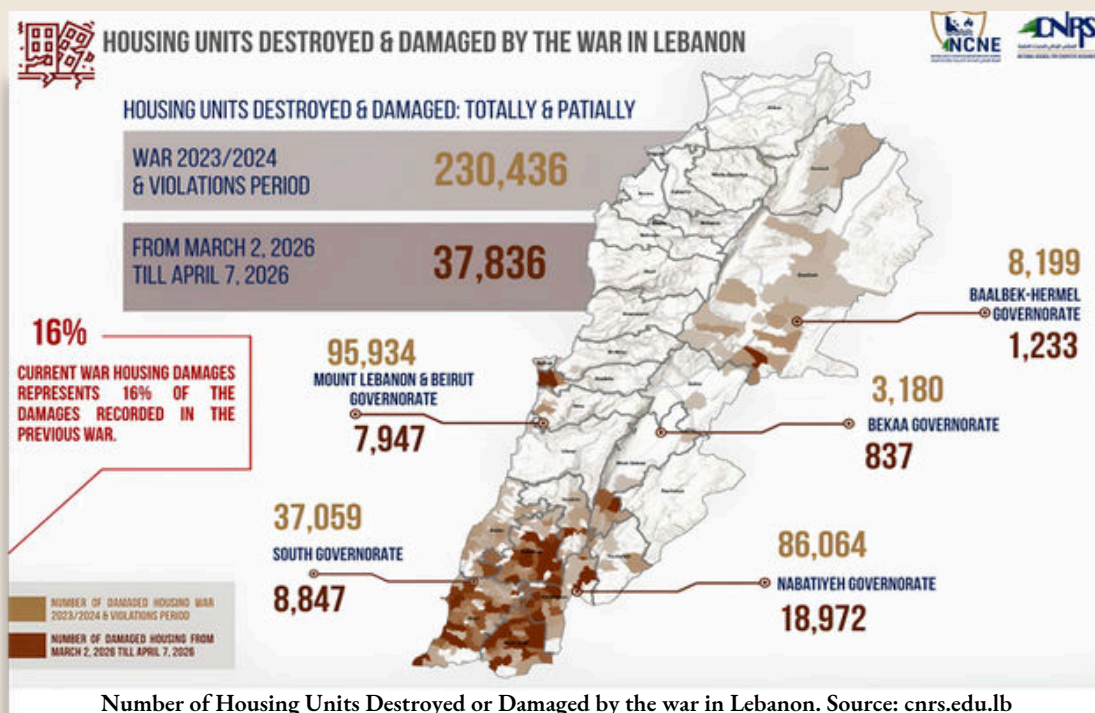
Lebanon

Deaths: + 4305 (among them are more than 130 healthcare workers and paramedics), 162 ambulances and healthcare facilities targeted

Injuries: + 12,203.

Level of Devastation: ~40,000 housing units damaged in just 35 days, this accounts for approximately 16% of the total damage recorded during the previous phases of the war. Most affected areas: Southern Beirut Suburbs — highest concentration of damage, Nabatieh, Bint Jbeil, Sour (Tyre)

IDPs: 36,213 scattered across 350 shelters. Ministry of Health designated 77 hospitals which treat IDPs free of charge. Hostile Actions so far: 26,782.





Key Developments:

- The Occupier launched a major escalation, conducting more than 120 airstrikes across southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley while ordering large-scale evacuations north of the Zahrani River. Lebanese authorities reported dozens of deaths. (May 27)
- Damage was sustained by Saint George Church and the Sacred Hearts School in Jdeideh Marjeyoun following Occupier attacks on the area. (May 29)
- The Occupier takes control medieval Beaufort crusader castle, a strategic site which it uses to deepen its incursion into Lebanese territory. This came after the occupier forces deepened their activities north of the Litani river between May 28 and May 30. (June 1)
- Occupier attacks in southern Lebanon reportedly killed at least eight people despite announcements of de-escalation efforts. Towns hit were Jebchit in the Nabatieh governorate where a plant nursery was targeted, Martyr Sabra Street in Toul, Dhi'at al-Arab neighbourhood of Ansar, village of Harouf, and a road linking the southern town of Marjayoun with the city of Nabatieh. (June 2)
- Three hospitals in southern Lebanon (Tebnine, Hiram, and Jabal Amel) were reportedly hit by Occupier strikes, causing 9 deaths, 150 injuries, and disruption of medical services. The WHO and Lebanese authorities condemned the attacks. (June 3)
- The Occupier issued evacuation orders for nine villages in southern Lebanon and conducted extensive air and drone strikes. The operations occurred while negotiations over a conditional ceasefire were ongoing. 1000's fled their homes. Some of the areas included Anqoun and Kfar Tebnit. (June 5)
- An Occupier strike killed three members of the Lebanese Army, including a brigadier general, in the Nabatieh area. Lebanon's military described the attack as undermining the truce. (June 6)



- The Occupier claimed that it launched a strike on Dahieh killing several people. (June 7)
- Occupier airstrikes struck the city of Tyre, killing at least eight people and injuring dozens. The Occupier also issued evacuation warnings for parts of the city's historic Christian quarter. Damage was reported near archaeological and heritage sites. (June 9)
- Occupier airstrikes in southern Lebanon reportedly killed 11 people, according to live coverage of regional developments. (June 10)
- Amnesty International published a report alleging the occupier had continued unlawful displacement policies, expanded evacuation zones and maintained military control over parts of southern Lebanon after the ceasefire, describing these as ongoing violations. (June 11- June 17)
- Occupier airstrikes reportedly killed at least 26 people in southern Lebanon according to Lebanese officials and regional media. (June 20)
- Occupier airstrikes targeted Majdal Zoun destroying a major underground tunnel. (June 29)
- Occupier drone strike in Nabatieh District reportedly injured two civilians, including a child. On the same day, Occupier Defence Minister announced that it would maintain an indefinite military presence in security zones inside Lebanon. (July 1)
- Occupier drone strike in Khalde killed one person and injured three. The IDF also conducted extensive airstrikes across southern Lebanon. (July 3)
- Multiple Occupier strikes in several locations. a house in Shebaa was hit injuring one. A vehicle near Bint Jbeil was struck killing one and injuring two. Another vehicle in Shaqra was struck injuring two. Another car in Bint Jbeil was struck injuring one (July 5)
- Occupier strikes hit multiple locations across southern Lebanon. Lebanese authorities reported at least four fatalities in Nabatieh and additional injuries elsewhere. (July 6)



- Occupier strikes hit a motorcycle in Bint Jbeil District killed one person. Another attack later the same day killed an additional person according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. (July 7)
- An Occupier drone strike was conducted near Nabatieh al-Fawqa killing two people,. (July 8)



Iran

Deaths: 2,000 to 2,500+ civilians. Injuries: +20,000.

Level of Devastation: The Iranian Red Crescent over 100,000 buildings have been damaged or destroyed in Iran since the start of the attacks, including residential, commercial, medical, and educational facilities, 300 medical, health, and rescue centers hit, more than 850 schools damaged or destroyed, a desalination plant destroyed which cut water to 30 villages, at least 30 fuel depots targeted four of which have been confirmed to be destroyed, electric infrastructure damaged caused blackouts and service disruptions in major cities.

IDPs: Between 3.2 million and 4 million.

Palestine

Deaths: ~25–30. Injuries: ~4,400 to 6,000.

Level of Devastation: 5,000+ buildings damaged or destroyed, 10,946 claims of damaged buildings, contents/equipment, vehicles, a major hospital (Soroka) was directly hit and severely damaged, at least 1–3 schools damaged, 3 planes parked at Ben Gurion Airport damaged.

IDPs: 6,000+.

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 (e.g., Royal Tulip AlRasheed Hotel), diplomatic sites (Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center near Baghdad International Airport), airports, oil fields, and telecommunication towers.

United Arab Emirates

Deaths: 9 Injuries: 178.

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 and Port of Fujairah damaged, a few government buildings, damage near Palm Jumeirah, Burj Al Arab, and residential/commercial zones, a tower in Dubai Marina.

Kuwait

Deaths: 6+ injuries: 100+.

Level of Devastation: Some damage to Kuwait International Airport including radar system and fuel tanks, 2 Power generation and desalination damaged, oil refineries damaged, 6 power lines damaged, debris from intercepted missiles fell on some residential areas damaging some buildings.



Oman

Deaths: +7 injuries: +16 .

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

Bahrain

Deaths: +2 injuries: ~50+.

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, Aluminium Bahrain (Alba) confirmed an attack on its facilities.

Saudi Arabia

Deaths: +2 injuries: ~12.

Level of Devastation: Residential building hit in AlKharj, 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 and AramcoExxon refinery in Yanbu.



Humanitarian Response in Lebanon: (May 26 – July 9)

- The World Food Program scaled up its response in Lebanon as displacement crisis persists and rising costs push food out of reach.
- An alliance of international and local humanitarian non-governmental organizations in Lebanon have launched a global fundraising campaign to help families across the country recover from the compounded impacts of conflict, displacement and economic crisis.
- Life for Relief and Development has initiated an emergency response program in Lebanon, alongside its ongoing “Khair Wajbah” (Best Meal) campaign aimed at strengthening food security.
- UK Development Minister Jenny Chapman, announced a new £13m humanitarian package to Lebanon to help deliver vital assistance to people affected by the crisis.
- UNICEF warned that delays in rehabilitating 340 schools which were either damaged or destroyed by the war, will threaten 100,000 children's education, safety, and futures in a country exhausted by years of crisis.
- Amnesty international warned that the Occupier is committing grave human rights violations by wiping out whole families and therefore must be investigated.



Church Response in Lebanon: June 2026

- The Metropolitans of Tyre sent an urgent appeal to all concerned officials including the President, the Prime Minister, and the Defense Minister to take immediate and serious action to spare the Old Quarter of Tyre the scourge of destruction and humanitarian tragedy.
- The Bishop George Iskandar of Tyre held a mass in which he raised prayers towards the protection of all civilians, and that sparing Tyre, the South, and Lebanon from the ravages of war and destruction.
- The "Aid to the Church in Need" foundation has expressed deep concern regarding the deteriorating security situation in the city of Tyre, southern Lebanon, warning of grave consequences for the civilian population and the historic Christian quarter, which bears witness to a continuous Christian presence dating back to the time of the Apostles.

From the South to Amchit... A Gathering of Love and Hope





Stemming from our faith that love unites what circumstances have divided, parishioners from several of our churches in the South gathered at Our Lady of Amchit Church. There, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated for the intention of peace in Lebanon, the restoration of tranquility for all its people, and the safe return of our families to their land.

Following the Mass, everyone came together for a shared meal of fellowship in the church square. This fraternal gathering embodied the unity of the Lebanese family, carrying a message of hope and solidarity with the people of the South.

Parishioners from the following villages participated in this gathering:

Debel, Qaouzah, Ain Ebel, Rmeish, Tyre (Sour), Tebnine, Baraachit, Alma el Chaab, Safad El Battikh, Qlayaa.

All thanks and gratitude to everyone who contributed to this blessed day, and to all who offered their time, effort, support, or love. You were true partners in sowing hope, bringing smiles to faces, and cementing a culture of encounter and brotherhood.

May the South remain deep in our roots, may Lebanon remain in our prayers, and may our homeland be blessed with the grace of peace.

