



## Lebanon Overview Mid-February 2019

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### Glossary

HTS	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham
IS	Islamic State
HH	House Holds
VASyR2018	The Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2018
NFI	Non-Food Items

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Locations	Risk Level	Comment	Forecast
Beirut, Mount Lebanon (ML) & South Lebanon north of Litani River	Low	<i>In addition to the regular criminal &amp; traffic threats faced in any major city, Beirut has the threats related to the religious &amp; ethnic divides that define Lebanon. The situation can change quickly &amp; there is the proliferation of small arms to fuel conflict. However, there are usually strong indicators prior to a major breakdown.</i>	<i>The creation of a new government is not guaranteed despite recent optimism. If a new government is formed, Lebanon's economic and social issues will not lessen.</i>
Beirut Neighborhoods Haret Hraik & Borjal Brajne, Tripoli, Zahle, Baalbek, South Lebanon south of Litani River	Moderate	<i>These neighborhoods in Beirut are prominently Shia &amp; dominated by Hezbollah. South of the Litani River is also controlled by Hezbollah &amp; requires permits to visit. Zahle &amp; Baalbek have a high level of crime. Tripoli has extremist elements &amp; frequent crime.</i>	<i>Hezbollah will continue to be a de-facto regime within Lebanon &amp; is actively targeted by Sunni extremists &amp; Israel. There are no indicators to suggest the security situation in Tripoli, Zahle &amp; Baalbek will improve.</i>
5km from all borders, north of Baalbeck, north of Tripoli, Borjal Brajne & Ain el Helweh Palestinian Camps	High	<i>Border areas in the north &amp; north of Baalbek have very high levels of crime including kidnap &amp; illegal drug production. The north east was occupied by extremist groups for several years until 2017. The southern border with Israel is volatile. Palestinian camps are unpredictable &amp; Ain el Helwah is particularly violent.</i>	<i>The situation in the north east has improved, &amp; is expected to remain stable, possibly dropping to moderate. All border areas are expected to remain high risk especially the border with Israel.</i>

## 1. Domestic News

### NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED

At the end of Jan 2019, 8 months after a general election, Prime Minister (PM) Hariri formed his cabinet after months of negotiation. Hezbollah benefitted the most when members of parties aligned with the paramilitary group were appointed to head the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance and Health. *Comment: Even though Hariri and other elements of the political establishment had resisted an increase in Hezbollah's influence in the government, ultimately they had to concede – Hezbollah is the single most powerful entity in the country. Despite this Hezbollah continues to be listed as a terror organisation by the United States, who are enforcing sanctions against its leading members.*

*The formation of a government will allow the PM to use \$11 billion of World Bank loans and grants; these were withheld until a new government was formed. However, Hariri faces a daunting challenge – Lebanon's economy is close to collapse, political infighting and self-interest will continue, and the numerous demonstrations across the country demanding jobs, better healthcare and an end to corruption are unlikely to stop.*

### US MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE LEBANESE MILITARY

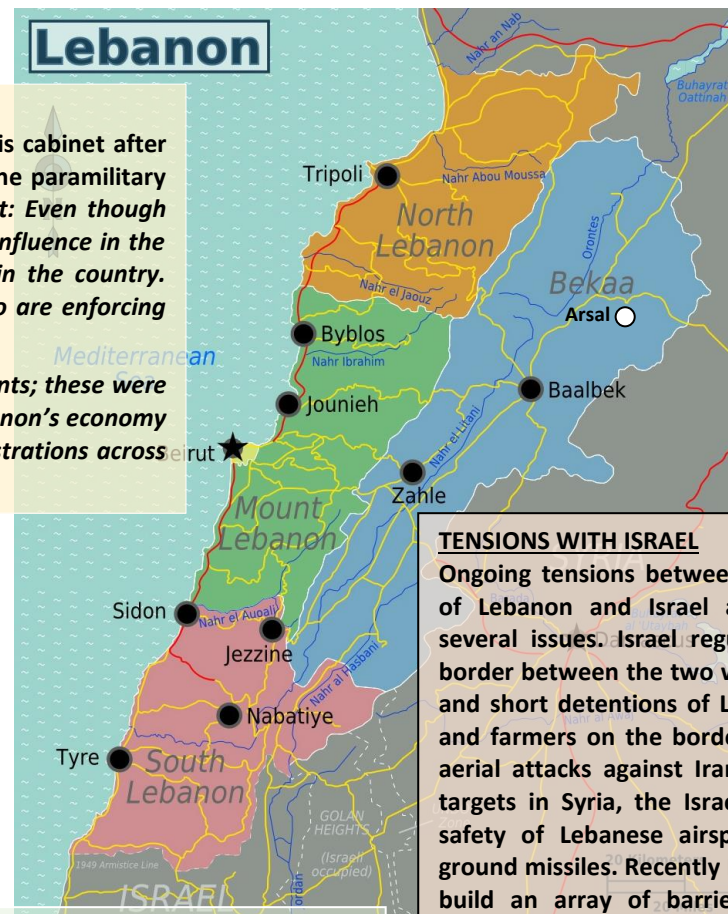
Since 2005 the U.S. has provided more than \$2.3 billion in assistance to the Lebanese military. In 2017 and 18 the U.S. government supplied several A-29 Super Tucano light attack aircraft. In Feb 2019 laser-guided rockets, valued at more than \$16 million, to be operated from the A-29s were delivered by the U.S. military. *Comment: Lebanon is in the middle of a proxy-war between the US and Saudi Arabia on one side, and Iran and Hezbollah on the other. The U.S. has to maintain Lebanon's military as a counter to Hezbollah's military strength in the country and to demonstrate it recognises Lebanon's military as the legitimate defender of the country. Should the U.S. stop its support Russia, and possibly Iran, will fill the vacuum and U.S influence in the region would be further depleted.*

### ARREST OF ISLAMIC MILITANTS

In early Jan 2019 security forces arrested 3 Syrians suspected of being Islamic State (IS) militants in Arsal. In Feb, authorities arrested a suspected member of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an extremist Syrian armed opposition group associated with al Qaeda. Reportedly, the suspect is a Syrian national and a prominent explosives and rocket manufacturer. *Comment: HTS and IS, had a significant presence in Lebanon's northeast around Arsal, Ras Baalbek and al-Qaa until August 2017, when they were driven out by the Lebanese Army and Hezbollah. However, the presence of extremist groups in these areas remains a concern.*

### WIDESPREAD DEMONSTRATIONS, PROTESTS AND STRIKES

Protests across the country continued throughout Dec 2018 and Jan 2019. As always Beirut was particularly effected. Most are peaceful, but occasionally can be violent with road blocks, burning tyres and clashes with police. Reasons for the protests include poor employment prospects, low wages, working conditions, inadequate electricity provision, unsustainable waste management, transport reforms, prolonged government deadlock and the poor economic situation in the country. *Comment: Protest activity is not expected to decrease despite the formation of a new government.*



### TENSIONS WITH ISRAEL

Ongoing tensions between the governments of Lebanon and Israel are maintained by several issues. Israel regularly infringes the border between the two with military patrols and short detentions of Lebanese shepherds and farmers on the border. When launching aerial attacks against Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria, the Israeli airforce use the safety of Lebanese airspace to fire air-to-ground missiles. Recently Israel has started to build an array of barriers on the border, including a wall, causing Lebanon the lodge a complaint with the UN Security Council. These issues are driven by the strong presence and influence of Hezbollah in Lebanon and its involvement in the Syrian civil war.

A growing issue is the disputed maritime border between the two in the Mediterranean Sea. The area is rich with oil and natural gas fields that are largely untouched. In Jan 2019, Israel licensed a company to drill for oil and gas near the disputed border, causing objections and criticism from the Lebanese government.

## 2. Humanitarian Situation

### FACTS AND FIGURES

Lebanon (est. pop. 5.9M) has the highest number of refugees per capita in the world.

Estimated number of Syrians: Over **1.5M**

Reg. Syrian Refugees: 948,849 / 216,028 HH

Reg. Palestinian Refugees: 278,000

Palestinian Refugees from Syria: 34,000

Reg. Iraqi Refugees: 14,322

Reg. Sudanese Refugees: 1,902

Other Refugee Population: 1,976

Syrian Refugees concentrated on 4 Locations:

1. Bekaa.: 36% / 340,512
2. North Lebanon: 26% / 248,380
3. Beirut: %26 / 245,960
4. South Lebanon: %12 / 113,997

### KEY PRIORITIES - VASyR2018

Food and rent prices have increased, competition for jobs has grown, and there is pressure on the health and education systems. In addition, refugees in Lebanon face significant protection issues, including lack of documentation, evictions, and discrimination. Although the pressure from the government and Hezbollah on Syrians to return to Syria has been increasing, the actual number of returnees remains unknown.

- » Continued access to safety and non-refoulement.
- » Civil status and legal documentation.
- » Shelter, water and sanitation to meet humanitarian standards.
- » Improving food security and ensuring food access
- » Addressing economic vulnerability.
- » Safeguarding children's well-being (education, health and protection).
- » Special attention to female-headed households and ensuring a gender lens in all programming.

Source:

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67380>



### FLOODS AND ADVERSE WEATHER

Floods, snow and heavy storms severely affect more than 23,000 Syrian refugees living in Bekaa, Akkar and Baalbek governorates. More than 70,000 Syrian refugees living in makeshift houses are at risk as new storms are expected. Adequate shelter and NFIs are priority needs. More than 360 refugee sites were severely damaged displacing 1,000 plus Syrian refugees. Access, especially in flooded informal refugee settlements in the Bekaa Valley, remains limited.

### KEY HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

**Protection:** Obtaining legal documentation, specifically legal residency and birth registration, continued to be a challenge for Syrian refugees. Overall, 73% of interviewed refugees aged 15 and older reported not having legal residency.

Child marriage remains a concern, with 3 in 10 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years currently married.

At least 180,000 children are thought to be working across Lebanon, many of them are Syrians.

**Education:** More than half of refugee children (aged 3 to 17) are out of school. The main reasons are related to the costs.

61% of Syrian refugees aged 15 to 24 were not employed, not in education, and not attending any training.

**Livelihood (HH):** Both men and women cited the need to take care of HH members, lack of skills and no experience, as reasons for not looking for work.

**Food Security:** 34% of Syrian refugee households still remained moderately to severely food-insecure.

**Health:** 1/3 HHs remained unaware of where to access medical services in case of an emergency. Need to strengthen communication on which health clinics are affiliated with the refugee response.

### KEY DOCUMENTS TO REVIEW:

- [https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20190111\\_acaps\\_briefing\\_note\\_storm\\_norma\\_lebanon\\_final.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20190111_acaps_briefing_note_storm_norma_lebanon_final.pdf)
- [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/LCRP2018\\_EN\\_Full\\_180122.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/LCRP2018_EN_Full_180122.pdf)