

DISPLACED PERSONS IN LEBANON

General

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) began military actions to force the Lebanese authorities to curb Hizbollah activities in Southern Lebanon on Wednesday 10 April 1996 in the Baalbeck area, Iklim Toufah and United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Area of Operation (AO) south of Tyre. Next day, Thursday 11 April, helicopter-borne rocket attacks were carried out in the southern suburbs of Beirut and around Beirut airport, as well as in the Baalbeck area, Tyre, Jiyeh and UNIFIL AO, including artillery shelling of Iklim Touffah and several locations in the UNIFIL AO and north of the Israeli self-declared security zone. Another helicopter attack took place in the afternoon of Friday 12 April in the Beirut area. Warnings were issued by the IDF on Thursday 11 April to the population of 50 villages in Southern Lebanon to leave within 18h00 hours that day. Some 300,000 people were affected by the threat and large numbers left their homes streaming north of the conflict area, although it is estimated that about 15% still are in the villages in question.

Present situation

The casualty number officially registered is now 21 killed and 60 wounded. The number of displaced persons so far was presented as 200,000 - 250,000 and the Lebanese authorities have appealed for international assistance. All schools are now open for emergency housing of the displaced.

The greatest number of displaced is now in the Tyre area, but large numbers have fled to Saida, Chuf, Iklim Kharoub and Beirut as well. However, many people are leaving the Southern Suburb of Beirut, a traditional area for refugees, since it has been targeted by helicopter rocket attacks.

Lebanese Red Cross Action

The President of the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), General George Harrouk, attended an emergency meeting in the High Commission of Emergency on 12 and 13 April. The LRC was requested to provide blood service and first aid service in the confrontation area and support as required, including assistance for transport of relief materials since Red Cross cars are the only vehicles not fired upon. They were charged to distribute 1,000 blankets and 300 mattresses in Tibnin during the afternoon of Saturday 13 April.

The LRC is operating in close co-ordination with the Ministry of Health.

The National Society has put 35 first aid centres under continuous operation 24 hours a day. In the South, the normal number of 200 first aid workers has been increased to 600.

All 8 LRC blood banks are operating on a 24 hours a day basis.

First aid workers and the LRC Youth organisation have been organised for providing information regarding location/number of displaced people and problem areas.

Redeployment of mobile clinics, professional staff, medicines and other resources are under consideration, pending detailed information.

LRC request for Federation support

The Federation delegation in Lebanon has provided immediate support in the form of CHF 50,000 from the Secretariat's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund. The funds are to be used for assisting displaced persons with relief materials (blankets, food, medicines, etc.) and for keeping the LRC vehicle fleet operating. The Federation will closely monitor the situation of the displaced to see if an appeal will be necessary in the coming days. For further information please contact the MENA department.

Robert Watkins
Acting Director
Middle East and North Africa Department