



# Lebanon Situation Report

August 21, 2021

## Background

The immediate background to the current period of economic, political, and humanitarian crises is summarized in Anera's last [Situation Report \(August 6\)](#). Information on Anera's work on food insecurity in Lebanon is available in Anera's blog post, [Combating Food Insecurity in Gaza and Lebanon](#). The details of the dire humanitarian situation can be found in the blog post, [One Year Ago, Beirut Exploded. Now the Situation is Worse.](#)

## Overview

Early on Sunday, August 15, a fuel tank exploded in the Akkar region of northern Lebanon. Thirty-three people died in the explosion, and 79 other sustained injuries. According to military and security sources, the explosion occurred after the army seized a hidden fuel storage tank and began handing out gasoline to residents of Tleil. Eyewitness reports differ on whether gunfire or a lighter caused the explosion.<sup>1</sup>

Akkar is one of the poorest areas in the country, and as such, the hospitals near the explosion do not have burn units. Most burn victims received treatment in hospitals as far away as Beirut, which is a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Tleil. The Lebanese health sector faced difficulty treating the burn patients, and the ministry of health requested assistance from other countries. Hospitals lack the supplies necessary to treat burns, such as antibiotics and painkillers, bandages, and blood tests. Hospitals also face difficulty finding enough fuel to power the lights and machines. The Rafik Hariri University Hospital is only able to run two generators out of seven, and the hospital had to turn off most of its air conditioning.<sup>2</sup> Lebanese hospitals warned that power outages might force them to shut down operations.<sup>3</sup>

While the explosion in Akkar was an isolated incident, the explosion and its outcomes illustrate the larger challenges and ramifications associated with the economic crisis, political crisis, and shortages facing Lebanon.

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<sup>1</sup> [Lebanon: At least 20 people killed when fuel tank explodes | CNN](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Fuel shortages leave Lebanese hospitals in 'critical condition' | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Lebanon: At least 20 people killed when fuel tank explodes | CNN](#)

## Fuel Shortages

Residents of Lebanon receive only a few hours of electricity per day, if any. Fuel shortages intensified when Lebanon's central bank announced that it would soon cut its annual \$3 billion in fuel subsidies. The announcement caused distributors to hoard their fuel stock to sell at higher rates later on. Most of the population can no longer afford to buy fuel, and experts expect that the new reliance on diesel fuel for electricity will increase the operation costs for businesses.<sup>4</sup>

On August 21, the president, the central bank governor, and other Lebanese officials decided to change the exchange rate used for petroleum products. The exchange rate is now 8,000 pounds (LBP) to the dollar, which has increased from the previous rate of 3,900 LBP to the dollar. However, this decision is viewed as a compromise, as it still falls below the unofficial parallel market rate of almost 20,000 LBP. The government also decided to begin an "exception subsidy" for fuel oil, gasoline, and cooking gas, which will last through September. While these decisions were made to ease the burden of the Lebanese people, they will likely cause fuel prices to double and create additional hardships for those already lacking power and transportation.<sup>5</sup>

According to a statement by Najat Rochdi, UN humanitarian coordinator for Lebanon, thousands of families are at risk of losing essential health and water services due to ongoing fuel shortages. Without a reliable energy supply, Rochdi expects a "humanitarian catastrophe" to occur throughout Lebanon. Electricité du Liban, the country's chief electricity provider, halted the main service lines to water authorities. The decision to do so affects the ability of four million people to access clean and safe water.

Shortages of fuel and electricity forced the largest hospitals in Lebanon to curtail their activities. Public water supply and wastewater treatment systems are left to reduce their operations as well, which prevents millions of people in Lebanon from accessing water. The lack of water and wastewater treatment also has the potential to create an environmental and public health crisis.<sup>6</sup>

## Food Insecurity

According to the World Food Programme, 22 percent of Lebanese citizens, 50 percent of Syrian refugees, and 33 percent of all other refugees currently face food insecurity in Lebanon. Skyrocketing prices and shortages are expected to increase levels of food insecurity and vulnerability as subsidies are further reduced and affordable food items

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<sup>4</sup> [Fuel shortages leave Lebanese hospitals in 'critical condition' | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Lebanon to raise fuel prices in bid to ease crippling shortages | Reuters](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Fuel crisis in Lebanon means potential 'humanitarian catastrophe' | UN News](#)

and fuel become less accessible.<sup>7</sup> Women-headed households are more likely to face food insecurity than male-headed households, with rates of food insecurity at 27 percent and 21 percent, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

From June 2020 to June 2021, the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages in Lebanon increased by 222 percent. According to the Lebanon Crisis Observatory at the American University of Beirut, a family of five now pays 3.5 million Lebanese pounds each month for food, on average.

Experts worry that the lack of fuel in Lebanon will prevent farmers from irrigating their fields, which would limit food production. In response to fuel shortages, some farmers resorted to abandoning sections of their fields, while others ceased production. As fuel shortages continue and water systems face disruptions, concerns are rising regarding food safety. With more than four million people at risk of losing access to safe water, households may not be able to meet their water needs in order to clean and cook food.<sup>9</sup>

## WASH

In July, UNICEF warned that the water supply systems in Lebanon were on the verge of collapse and estimated that most water pumping would cease across the country in four to six weeks. According to an assessment from May and June, over 71 percent of people in Lebanon fell between critical and highly critical levels of vulnerability due to their limited access to water. The economic crisis exacerbates already strained water systems due to the cost of maintenance, water loss from non-revenue water, the collapse of the power grid, and the shortage of fuel. Losing public water access would severely limit the ability of families to meet their hygiene and sanitation needs. If they are forced to rely on other sources of water, prices could skyrocket by 200 percent a month.<sup>10</sup>

## COVID-19

As of August 23, there have been 592,156 infections and 8,011 coronavirus-related deaths reported in the country since the pandemic began.. Lebanon has administered 2,210,226 vaccine doses as of August 16,<sup>11</sup> which accounts for about 16.4 percent of the population. Over the past three weeks, the average number of daily new infections increased by more than 720.<sup>12</sup> As another wave of COVID-19 looms, the capacity of Lebanon's hospitals to deliver treatments continues to decrease amid shortages of fuel and electricity. As of August 17, intensive care unit beds for COVID-19 patients are a

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<sup>7</sup> [Lebanon Country Brief | World Food Programme](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Lebanon Vulnerability and Food Security Assessment | VAM](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Lebanon Food Security Portal- Food Security Brief #17 | American University of Beirut](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Water supply systems on the verge of collapse in Lebanon | UNICEF](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Lebanon: Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Dashboard | WHO](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Lebanon: the latest coronavirus counts, charts and maps | Reuters](#)

quarter full, and hospitals will not be able to provide necessary ventilator support if the shortages continue.<sup>13</sup>

## **Anera's Response**

### **Food Parcels & Hygiene Kit Distributions**

At the beginning of this month, August 2021, Anera launched a project with funding from OCHA to deliver food and hygiene items to 805 families in Beirut. Families will receive packages consisting of six rounds of food parcels and two rounds of hygiene kits, including items for the elderly and babies as needed. With the food, we are providing \$50 vouchers for local grocery stores, which will allow families to buy fresh produce.

### **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)**

In Palestinian refugee camps, Anera implemented a WASH program in partnership with UNICEF to improve the WASH practices of refugee camp residents. Anera implements community mobilization activities through local sub-partners that respond to the camps' health and environmental needs. During 2021, the program utilized mass media to promote COVID-19 precautionary measures and awareness of COVID-19 vaccine administration, environmental hygiene, and menstrual hygiene. To date, Anera distributed 2,900 COVID-19 prevention kits, 7,000 hygiene kits, and 8,500 cloth menstrual pads to camps in Lebanon.

To increase access to water in Beirut, Anera's team assessed water tanks in 17 neighborhoods following the 2020 explosion. Anera installed 189 new water tanks, repaired connections to water networks, and rehabilitated damaged plumbing in 155 buildings.

### **Livelihood Opportunities**

Due to the multiple crises affecting Lebanon, Anera refocused its existing cash-for-work programs to enable Lebanese youth to enter the business market and provide short-term paid employment opportunities for a period of one to three months. Anera's cash-for-work opportunities, adapted to meet the needs created by COVID-19 and the economic crisis, target students and graduates of Anera's vocational education programs. In 2020, Anera's employment programs created 2,600 paid-on-the-job training positions, through which Anera facilitated the preparation and delivery of 96,000 meals, production of 1.6 million face masks, installation of plumbing in homes, repair of homes damaged by the Beirut blast, and establishment of COVID isolation centers and sanitation gates at entrances to camps and towns. So far in 2021, Anera has supported 1,742 youth through cash-for-work opportunities in the sewing, healthcare, IT, construction, agriculture, and environmental and community mobilization sectors.

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<sup>13</sup> [Fuel crisis in Lebanon means potential 'humanitarian catastrophe' | UN News](#)

## **Education**

To address disruptions of youth education caused by the blast and COVID-19, Anera assessed the needs of two non-profit schools in the Beirut neighborhood of Burj Hammoud. With funding from the Ohrstrom Foundation, Anera provided tablets for the students and laptops for the teachers of these schools, enabling them to successfully conduct class virtually. In addition, Anera provided kits including notebooks, bags, pencils, pens, face masks, sanitizers, and cleaning products for the students and their families. The intervention was a great help to the schools' 1,400 students.

## **Solid Waste Management**

In order to address Lebanon's garbage crisis, Anera builds recycling facilities in different parts of the country, such as the two facilities Anera recently built in villages in the Bekaa Valley. Anera's solid waste management interventions also include installing a composting facility, implementing community awareness campaigns, distributing thousands of household and communal bins, providing the municipalities technical support, and rehabilitating dumpsites. In 17 communities, Anera's interventions have led to a 40 percent increase in municipal solid waste collection.

## **Nursing Scholarships**

Anera aims to address the increased migration of nurses to other countries by facilitating the training of nurses through one of its longest-standing vocational training programs in Lebanon. Anera partners with several local accredited institutes that provide three years of formal nursing education. All program graduates thus far have secured nursing or medical jobs assisting Lebanon's most vulnerable populations at humanitarian organizations. As the compounding crises continue to worsen, more and more nurses and health professionals flee the country. The graduates of Anera's nursing program and their contributions to the healthcare of vulnerable populations are now more crucial than ever.