



Lebanon Situation Report

May 31, 2023

Background

Information about the ongoing economic crisis and resulting protests in Lebanon are summarized in Anera's last [Situation Report \(April 2023\)](#).

Overview

Political gridlock has prevented the Lebanese Parliament from addressing the country's multi-layered crisis through economic and political reform. Political divisions have also led to an increase in anti-refugee sentiment and deportations in recent months. With one of the largest per capita refugee populations in the world, refugee policy is one of the most contentious and pressing issues in [Lebanon](#).¹ Several countries have urged Lebanon to elect a president immediately and pass necessary legislation that addresses the needs of vulnerable communities.²

Political Instability

The economic crisis was partially caused by government corruption and mismanagement. Political instability in Lebanon continues to pose a challenge to addressing the economic crisis and other interrelated issues. Economic instability limits access to needed health, nutrition, and sanitation services. The parliament has been unable to fill the presidency since President Michel Aoun left office in October 2022. The governor of Lebanon's central bank, Riad Salameh, is facing several charges for financial crimes, including money laundering, fraud, forgery, and embezzlement.³ Germany became the second country to issue an arrest warrant for Salameh, following France. Salameh failed to appear at his hearing in Paris and six European countries are currently investigating him for similar charges.⁴ Criticism of government corruption and the Lebanese banking system has contributed to current civil protests and calls for the resignation of prominent Lebanese politicians. The ongoing political and economic crises have challenged efforts to combat corruption and elect new leadership. Tensions with Israel have also flared in recent weeks. On May 25th, Hezbollah responded to the

¹ [Lebanon Emergency Response Plan 2023 | UNOCHA](#)

² [US presses parliament in Lebanon to elect president | The Hill](#)

³ [France seeks arrest of Lebanon's Riad Salameh after no-show for corruption probe | Al-Monitor](#); [Double trouble: Lebanon's Salameh gets second arrest warrant from Germany | Al-Monitor](#)

⁴ Ibid.

killing of 30 Palestinians in Gaza by Israeli forces with a demonstration of simulated raids and drills along the southern border between Lebanon and Israel.⁵

Economy Crisis, Food Insecurity & Poverty Alleviation

As of May 18th, 2023, Lebanon has the highest food inflation rate in the world with a nominal inflation rate of 352% year-over-year (YoY) and a real inflation rate of 89% YoY.⁶ Following the rapid devaluation of Lebanon's currency and the near collapse of its banking system in 2019, the economic crisis and deteriorating living conditions continue to escalate the need for humanitarian assistance. The World Bank recently approved \$300 million to provide direct cash payments for vulnerable Lebanese families.⁷ The funding will provide \$140 in assistance to 160,000 households for 24 months.⁸ The Lebanon Ministry of Social Affairs and the World Food Program (WFP) will oversee the cash disbursement.

Humanitarian needs are most visible within refugee communities. Food insecurity rates are higher among refugee populations in Lebanon which are more likely to experience food insecurity and less likely to have access to basic necessities such as shelter, water, and sanitation facilities.⁹ Women-headed households, individuals in temporary housing, households with a member with disability, and households with no working members are particularly in need of financial assistance.¹⁰ Pressure from Lebanese government officials halted the United Nations and WFP's plan to offer cash assistance to refugee households in USD rather than Lebanese pounds. They argued the increase in cash payments from \$80 to \$125 would encourage the long-term presence of Syrian refugees.¹¹ Anti-refugee rhetoric, especially toward Syrian refugees, has been on the rise since the beginning of the economic crisis.¹² At the same time, unequal access to the dollar may increase poverty rates among vulnerable communities that continue to rely on the devalued Lebanese pound.¹³

Refugees in Lebanon

Recent deportations of Syrian refugees from Lebanon have caused concern among refugee communities and human rights and humanitarian organizations.¹⁴ Lebanon has a high percentage of people in need, with Syrian refugees accounting for 1.5 million of

⁵ [Hezbollah conducts wargames near Lebanon's border with Israel | Al Jazeera](#)

⁶ [Food Security Update May 18 2023 | World Bank](#)

⁷ [World Bank approves \\$300 million financing to help poor people in Lebanon | ABC News](#)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ [Escalating needs in Lebanon 2023 overview | OCHA, UN RC/HC Lebanon](#)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ [Facing pushback from Lebanese officials, UN walks back plan to give aid to Syrian refugees in USD | ABC News](#)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ [Lebanon adopts 'dollarization' as currency, economy crumble | AP News](#)

¹⁴ ['State of terror' hangs over Syrians in Lebanon amid deportations | Al Jazeera](#)

the 3.9 million needing assistance, and Palestinian refugees accounting for another 210,000.¹⁵

The Lebanese Armed Forces deported hundreds of Syrian refugees following raids of refugee camps in April.¹⁶ Activists and human rights organizations are critical of these deportations and argue that the Lebanese government is putting Syrian refugees at risk of harm.¹⁷

The presence of Syrian refugees has been highly politicized in recent years, leading Lebanese governmental officials to take strong stances on refugee management. Anti-refugee politicians argue that Syrian refugees are responsible for worsening economic conditions, while pro-refugee advocates argue that refugee populations are disproportionately harmed by the economic crisis and that Syrian refugees are unfairly targeted. Differing views on whether displaced Syrians should be designated as refugees or economic migrants have resulted in further polarization.

Many Palestinian and Syrian refugees endure poor living conditions in deteriorating refugee camps and settlements throughout Lebanon.¹⁸ Palestinian and Syrian refugees have limited job and educational opportunities due to their legal status which makes the already difficult economic situation even more challenging.¹⁹

Anera's Work in Lebanon

Livelihoods

In these increasingly dire circumstances, Anera continues to prioritize projects and assistance that ensure long-term development among Lebanon's vulnerable communities.

Youth Program

In 2021, Anera launched a program with UNICEF to promote youth development through professional and vocational training. The program continues to evolve to connect more young people with cash-for-work opportunities while expanding into new and essential job sectors. In January 2023, the program expanded to provide an additional 4,449 youth with support packages and an additional 938 youth with cash-for-work opportunities. This project helps alleviate economic challenges faced by vulnerable youth while advancing long-term employability.

¹⁵ [Escalating needs in Lebanon: A 2023 overview | UNOCHA](#)

¹⁶ [Lebanon: Halt summary deportations of Syrian refugees | Amnesty International](#)

¹⁷ [Lebanon deports dozens of Syrian refugees amid spike in racist rhetoric | Al-Monitor](#)

¹⁸ ['State of terror' hangs over Syrians in Lebanon amid deportations | Al Jazeera](#)

¹⁹ [Palestine Refugees in Lebanon Teeter on the Edge of Existence | UNRWA](#)

UNHCR Fast Track Digital Skills and Awareness

The economic disparities in Lebanon and the COVID-19 pandemic have widened inequalities among youth in Lebanon, leading to a digital divide. Unequal access to technology, language constraints, and limited awareness of the digital markets prevent youth from entering the digital economy.

Anera, which has more than a decade of experience and proven expertise in youth-based programming, is supporting refugees and vulnerable host communities in enhancing their digital skills, increasing their awareness on safe digital use, and facilitating their linkage to digital-related employability through a comprehensive package of activities implemented within community development centers in partnership with UNHCR. The activities include:

- Training of 100 volunteers and community group members to disseminate information on digital risks awareness and the digital economy to 2,000 refugees (50% are women/girls and 15% persons with disabilities) with focus on parents, youth and female headed households.
- Training 1,200 youth in basic, intermediate and advanced computer skills (at least 50% women/girls, 50% persons with disabilities and the majority being youth aged 15-24 years old).
- Linking 1,200 youth to Arizona State University's self-paced English courses and Microsoft's Learning Passport which is a platform powered by Microsoft providing online complementary courses on the safe use of digital tools.

Anera's programming continues to adapt to crises, market trends, and youth needs.

Food Security

Rooftop gardens

To address food insecurity in refugee camps, Anera builds rooftop gardens and provides agricultural training to ensure the nutritional needs of food-insecure families are met. The innovative rooftop garden project combats the intersecting challenges of arid soil, limited space, and water scarcity in Lebanon's refugee communities and beyond. With 50 rooftop gardens currently being built or renovated, additional families will be able to grow healthy produce to meet their needs and sell excess produce for additional income.

WFP 2023 Food Distribution Lebanon

Anera is responding to the critical need for food among Lebanese communities in the Bekaa by distributing food parcels to 5,366 beneficiaries in Western Bekaa, Rachaya, and Zahle over a period of 12 months (January 2023 to December 2023). Anera's

extensive experience with food assistance allows the effective implementation of food parcels distribution, while maintaining the dignity and safety of recipients. Anera has selected neutral and impartial distribution points that do not have any political affiliation which will allow efficient food distribution.