

30 December 2010

## LEBANON

# No new displacement but causes of past conflicts unresolved

In 2009 and 2010 no new internal displacements took place but a number of displacement situations persisted following three periods of conflict or violence: the 1975-1990 civil war and the related interventions by Israel until 2000 and Syria until 2005; the 33-day war of July 2006 between Israel and Hezbollah; and the armed conflict that led to the destruction of the Nahr el-Bared camp for Palestinian refugees in 2007. Sectarian violence also caused significant temporary displacement in 2008.

Lebanon does not have a national internal displacement policy. In successive situations of displacement, the response has been undertaken by state institutions, national societies, political parties, local communities and the international community; however the lack of a national policy has led to differences in the assistance provided to different displaced communities.

The civil war and the 2006 war each caused the internal displacement of several hundred thousand people. Many of those displaced in the civil war ended up in new suburbs of Beirut and other cities; in 2006, the government reported that almost 17,000 people were still displaced from the civil war and Israeli invasions.

All sources reported that there were no remaining IDPs from the 2006 conflict; however, no information was found on IDPs who might have sought settlement options other than return, or on whether they had achieved durable solutions.

As of September 2010, out of almost 26,000 Palestinian refugees displaced from Nahr el-Bared camp, nearly 16,000 were living in the area adjacent to the camp. Over 10,400 of them were still living in temporary accommodation there. A further 10,000 people were still displaced elsewhere in Lebanon, most of them in the nearby Beddawi camp.

# Destruction levels of Nahr el Bared camp, including security marks and military regulations



## Facts and events

- 1949: Arrival of the Palestinian refugees to Nahr el Bared, Lebanon
- 20 May 2008: Start of the fighting between the Lebanese army and about 300 members of Fath el Islam, the majority of them are not Palestinian. The combat lasted 130 days and resulted in the displacement of 30,000 camp inhabitants.
- 12 October 2008: 40 days after the end of the fighting, the Lebanese authorities prohibit camp residents from returning except to restricted areas with an individual permit issued by the Lebanese army.
- 24 January 2009, 12 months after the end of the fighting:
  - Media entry to the camp still prohibited
  - None of the 2030 destroyed buildings were rebuilt
  - Only 29% of the original camp residents return to Nahr el Bared; thus about 20,000 residents still displaced
  - 28% of returnees are living in UNRWA temporary housing, while the others displaced still depend on international aid for assistance and shelter
  - Due to the fencing and army's checkpoints, only 24% of 1512 shops of the camp reopened
  - Nahr el Bared reported refugee income reduced by 40% as a result of the events

## Level of destruction of Nahr el Bared camp: Security and military posts

- Destroyed buildings
- Standing buildings
- Closed areas / Prohibited civilians
- Restricted areas / Military entry permit
- ⊘ Crossing point / Military checkpoint
- ≠ Barbwire
- Camp borders from Bared river
- 🏠 Military HQ
- 🚢 Prospective Navy HQ
- 🏖️ Nahr el Bared beach Partially considered for Navy deployment
- 📖 UNRWA schools

Source: <http://kharita.wordpress.com>  
 More maps are available at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

## The years of the civil war 1975-1990

Lebanon gained independence in 1943 after being a French protectorate. Most of the population are within six Muslim and 12 Christian confessional groups which were to become geographically well defined by civil war decades later. A system of weighted political representation between Christians and Muslims, known as the National Pact, was created in 1943 on the basis of a 1937 census.

This system contributed to Lebanon's descent into civil war in 1975 (Shatzmiller, 2005, p.95). The arrival of Palestinian refugees from the creation of the state of Israel and the presence of political groups, and particularly, from 1970, of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), closely tied Lebanon to the Arab-Israeli conflict. A series of external military interventions followed shortly after the start of the civil war, including a Syrian intervention from 1976 and Israeli invasions in 1978 and 1982.

The civil war formally ended with the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989. The Agreement transferred power away from the Lebanese presidency, traditionally held by Christian Maronites, and instead invested it in a cabinet divided between Muslims and Christians. The Agreement also declared the intention of asserting Lebanese sovereignty over southern Lebanon, which was still occupied by Israel. All militias were to lay down their arms, except Hezbollah, which was allowed to continue resisting Israel's ongoing occupation.

A 1991 law provided amnesty to the warlords of the civil war, and disregarded the rights of victims. Some former warlords still hold high posts in the government. Between 1991 and 2005 assassinations and human rights violations continued, and parts of Lebanon remained under the military control of Israel and Syria. No measures have been

taken to properly address human rights violations and war crimes (ICTJ web site, accessed 8 December 2010).

Israel's occupation continued until 2000, and it still maintains control over the Shebah farms, a small area on the border between Lebanon and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Syria withdrew its forces in April 2005 following mass protests triggered by the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafic Hariri. As of 2010 the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, an international criminal court established to investigate the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, has not yet released any indictments. Relations between Lebanon and Syria have remained tense. As an example Syria only opened an embassy in Lebanon in 2009 and the Syrian president visited Lebanon in July 2010 for the first time since the withdrawal of its troops in 2005 (BBC, 30 July 2010).

### *Displacement patterns and figures*

During the civil war, an estimated 810,000 people, or 28 per cent of the Lebanese population, were temporarily or permanently forced from their homes (UNDP, 1997). Waves of displaced peasants from south Lebanon and the Chouf Mountains sought refuge in Beirut at different times during the war. The displacement of villagers from south Lebanon into the capital continued as a result of recurrent Israeli attacks (Sawalha, 2010, p.109).

During the war, both Muslims and Christians were forced to flee neighbourhoods in Beirut, until the city was divided between Christians in the east and Muslims in the west (Sawalha, 2010, p.109).

Palestinian refugees were also displaced within Lebanon, particularly in four situations: the "war of the camps" sub-conflict in the mid-1980s, in which refugee camps in Beirut were besieged by Shi'a Amal militias; the Israeli invasions of southern Lebanon; the destruction of Tel-al Zaatar refugee camp in 1976 due to clashes between Christian

forces and the PLO; and the massacre of residents of the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camp in 1982 (IDMC interview, October 2010; LMD, December 1997).

When the war ended in 1990, there was no agreement on the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) or even a common understanding of the definition of a displaced person. In 1996 the Ministry of Displaced (MoD) calculated the number of IDPs at 90,000 families, or slightly over 500,000 people given the average of 5.7 people per family (Sawalha, 2010, p.113).

The government offered compensation for IDPs to rebuild their homes, and set the end of 2002 as the target date for all returns. However, as of mid-2002, an estimated 300,000 people were still displaced (USCRI, 2004).

The majority of IDPs rejected the government's offer to support their return to their original homes. For example, in Beirut, many IDPs came from rural areas that lacked basic services and job opportunities. For IDPs from many parts of south Lebanon, it was for years impossible to return to their villages as they were occupied by Israeli forces; and IDPs, particularly their children who had lived most of their lives in Beirut, increasingly adopted an urban lifestyle, making it unrealistic for them to return to their villages of origin. Despite their desire to remain in Beirut, no support was provided either to integrate in Beirut or resettle elsewhere. Returns were also slowed by corruption and political rivalries between government officials, the insufficiency of compensation funds and security concerns including the presence of landmines in the south (USCRI, 2004).

After receiving compensation instead of returning to their pre-war homes, many of the displaced moved into often inadequate condition in the southern suburbs of Beirut (Sawalha, 2010, pp.125, 115). The difficult post-war conditions, economic decline and inadequate social development policies forced displaced families to move

steadily to more affordable new dwellings in the suburbs (Makhoul & Ghanem, 2009, p.54).

In 2006, the government reported that almost 17,000 people were still displaced from the civil war and Israeli invasions (MoD, 2006).

#### *National and international responses*

Lebanon does not have a national internal displacement policy and this has led to differences in the assistance provided to different displaced communities.

In 1992, the government established the MoD to address the large-scale displacement caused by the civil war. It also set up the Central Fund for the Displaced with the support of the international community. The MoD removed debris from conflict-affected areas, provided rebuilding assistance, initiated infrastructure projects and paid cash compensation to over 50,000 people to leave properties that they had illegally occupied (USCRI, 1999). At the time, critics warned that cash compensation was only a provisional solution, and that it was intended to support private investment projects without addressing the social problems related to post-war migration. They warned of future urban chaos caused by further relocation creating new slums and unplanned neighbourhoods (Sawalha, 2010, p.118). Research has since confirmed the poor social and economic conditions in the new Beirut slums (Makhoul & Ghanem, 2009).

Individuals involved in land and property disputes resulting from the civil war did not receive government support, since there were no institutions to deal with such issues (IDMC interview, November 2010).

In 1992, the MoD also launched initiatives related to processes of return and reconciliation between Druze and Christian communities in the Chouf Montains (Kanafani-Zahar, 2004). These initiatives compensated for material losses and offered repa-

rations for human suffering, but did not necessarily promote returns or sustainable reconciliation (IDMC interview, November 2010). Although many families have received financial support to repair or rebuild their war-damaged houses, many people are still afraid to return, preferring to stay in locations where they are among their own communities. The lack of effective reconciliation or remedy for past human rights violations has stood in the way of people achieving durable solutions, and they do not trust that their situation will remain stable (IDMC interview, October 2010).

After the war little aid was channelled into Lebanon due to regional politics and the hostile position of many donors toward the country (Adwan, 2004, p.3). Nonetheless, the international community provided humanitarian assistance during and after the war. Most programmes supporting IDPs and returnees had ended by the end of 2003.

## The 33-day war in 2006

The 33-day war between the Israeli army and Hezbollah ran from July to August 2006. Israel bombarded southern Lebanon in retaliation for the capture by Hezbollah of two Israeli soldiers on Israeli territory. Israeli ground troops crossed the border for the first time in six years, and thousands of houses were destroyed or damaged, particularly in the Shi'a-dominated areas of Beirut's southern suburbs and in south Lebanon. While the conflict ended with the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1701 (UNSC, 2006), sporadic military confrontations have persisted along the border since the end of the war. In August 2010 three Lebanese soldiers, one Israeli officer and a Lebanese journalist were killed (The Guardian, 3 August 2010).

The actions of the Israeli army during the war were deemed to be in violation of international humanitarian law, and included direct and disproportionate attacks against civilians and civil-

ian objects (HRW, 5 September 2007). During the conflict, the Israeli Defence Forces dropped an estimated four million sub-munitions in south Lebanon, the vast majority over the final three days when the Israeli government knew a settlement was imminent (HRW, 16 February 2008). Around 1,200 Lebanese civilians were killed and an estimated 4,000 injured. The Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut, home to an estimated 850,000 people, suffered the heaviest bombardment (IRIN, 24 April 2008). Unexploded ordnance from the conflict, and cluster munitions in particular, still continue to affect returnees and other populations living in southern Lebanon.

Direct war damage amounted to an estimated \$4 billion, and indirect costs reached an additional \$6 billion (Hamieh & Mac Ginty, 2009). Infrastructure, factories, agricultural facilities and public utilities were targeted.

### *Displacement patterns and figures*

The war displaced a million people, over a quarter of the country's population. Around 750,000 were displaced within Lebanon and some 250,000 fled to other countries, primarily Syria. Approximately 600,000 IDPs out of 750,000 sought shelter with host families or in public buildings (OCHA, December 2006). Within four days of the ceasefire, around 90 per cent of IDPs moved back to their areas of origin, thus avoiding the need for humanitarian assistance associated with long-term displacement (Hamieh & Mac Ginty, 2009).

As of November 2010, all sources interviewed by IDMC, including UN agencies, national and international NGOs and independent researchers, reported that there were no remaining IDPs from the 2006 war. However, no information was found on IDPs who might have sought settlement options other than return, or on whether they had achieved durable solutions.

### *National and international responses*

In response to the 2006 war, the government

established the High Relief Commission to coordinate national and international humanitarian assistance. Following the end of hostilities, it launched a national reconstruction plan which aimed to ensure the prompt return of IDPs to their areas of origin. It set up two mechanisms to compensate people for damage to private property; however, these schemes were hit by funding delays (CRS, 15 September 2006).

The lack of a national internal displacement policy, also in this case led to differences in the assistance provided to displaced communities. Most of the humanitarian needs of the IDPs were met by local communities and organisations, particularly the social development committee of Hezbollah, the Sunni Future Current (*Courant du future*) movement, and the Lebanese Red Cross (IDMC interview, November 2010). As an example, in the municipality of Haret Hrek in Beirut's southern suburbs, a stronghold of Hezbollah, the Wa'd reconstruction project aimed to rebuild the homes of around 20,000 IDPs. This project was managed by Hezbollah's social institutions. In September 2007 the first building was handed over, and by July 2009 only ten projects of the 102 remained in the design phase (Al-Harithy, 2010, p.63).

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator supported the government's response. By October 2006, UN humanitarian operations were phased out and responsibilities for recovery passed to government and other international agencies (OCHA, 28 September 2006).

The Stockholm Conference for Lebanon's Early Recovery in August 2006 elicited pledges of \$900 million in reconstruction funds from Arab countries, EU members, and Japan (Hamieh & Mac Ginty, 2009, p.106). The major donors were the Gulf states. In the years that followed the 2006 war, states outside the West maintained this primary support role, with Iran, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia playing key roles in Lebanon's reconstruction (Hamieh & Mac Ginty, 2009, pp.106-107).

## Armed conflict and destruction of the Nahr el-Bared camp in 2007

Nahr el-Bared camp is one of the 12 remaining official refugee camps established in the late 1940s and 1950s to host Palestinian refugees. It is located near Tripoli in northern Lebanon and falls under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). The so-called "adjacent area" outside the camp boundaries developed as the Palestinian population from Nahr el Bared camp increased and purchased land to construct new houses. Before the destruction of the camp in 2007 no major distinction was made between the camp and the adjacent area; the refugee population of both the camp and the adjacent area have always been registered with UNRWA.

In May 2007, the Lebanese army besieged and bombarded the camp after members of the Fatah al-Islam militant group had spread into Nahr el-Bared. As a result an estimated 95 per cent of all buildings and infrastructure were either destroyed or damaged beyond repair (UNRWA, September 2008).

Neither the Palestinian leadership nor the Lebanese government acted to ensure the security and safety of the Palestinian refugees in the camp. The Palestinian leadership initially supported the army's bombardment of the camp, while the Lebanese political establishment held the residents of the camp responsible for the presence of Fatah al-Islam (Abboud, Arab Studies Quarterly; Winter 2009; p.31).

### *Displacement patterns, figures and protection concerns*

As the Lebanese army laid siege to the camp, approximately 27,000 Palestinian refugees were displaced from Nahr el-Bared and its adjacent areas. Hundreds of Lebanese households were also displaced. Most Palestinian refugees fled to the nearby Beddawi Palestinian refugee camp.

More than three years after the siege, only 20 per cent of the secondary displaced Palestinian refugees had returned to their former place of habitual residence, all of whom had lived in the adjacent area and had repaired or rebuilt their houses. However, even in the adjacent area many buildings were still totally destroyed and their occupants had not been able to move in. The rest were waiting for the camp to be reconstructed or for their homes in the adjacent area to be repaired or reconstructed (IDMC interview, October 2010).

As of September 2010, out of over 5,700 families (or almost 26,000 people) registered by UNRWA as refugees resident in Nahr el-Bared, over 3,400 families (or nearly 16,000 people) were living in the adjacent area of Nahr el-Bared. Out of these people, fewer than 1,100 families (or 5,400 people) had returned to their former place of residence. The remaining 2,360 families (over 10,400 people) were still living in temporary accommodation in the adjacent area. Some were renting accommodation, while others were in collective centres or UNRWA-constructed temporary shelters. A further 10,000 people were still displaced elsewhere, mainly in the Beddawi camp.

The Lebanese army has continued to cordon off the adjacent area. All non-Lebanese citizens, including the Palestinian refugees residing there, need special permits to enter the adjacent area and the camp. Lebanese citizens have to deposit their ID cards and have their names registered in order to enter. This restriction of movement, and the perception of an isolated "security island" has discouraged interaction between the refugee population and neighbouring communities. Not only have the possibilities of reconciliation been limited, but economic recovery has also been delayed. The majority of the displaced families will continue to depend heavily on UNRWA and international support for the foreseeable future (UNRWA, June 2010, p.4; IDMC interview, October 2010)

The destruction of Nahr el-Bared was a big backwards step in the process of building tolerance between Lebanese and Palestinian communities. Lebanese observers considered the inhabitants of the camp responsible for the conflict, as their security apparatus was not capable of stopping militants settling in the camp. Resentment within the Palestinian community has also remained high: the conflict rendered them homeless again, and they fear that the reconstruction of the camp will not take place (IDMC interview, November 2010).

The work of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) set up by the government in 2005 has yet to convince Palestinians that the government is genuinely committed to improving their situation. Their main challenge is to influence certain politicians to support the idea of granting Palestinian refugees social and economic rights. Genuine tolerance and acceptance remain elusive (IDMC interview, October 2010).

#### *National and international responses*

As of November 2010, the Lebanese government, UNRWA and the PLO were continuing to cooperate on the reconstruction of the camp. The government has established a specialist recovery and reconstruction cell attached to the Prime Minister's office to support the technical aspects of reconstruction in coordination with the LPDC. Meanwhile, it has emphasised that Nahr el-Bared will be within Lebanese jurisdiction in the future, unlike all the other camps (IDRC, 15 June 2009). How the Palestinian leadership will deal with this, and the impact for refugees displaced by the 2007 conflict, are yet to be determined.

The reconstruction of the camp started in December 2009, and its completion is expected by 2012 (UNRWA web site, accessed 8 December 2010). It is estimated that the first families will move into the camp at the beginning of 2011 (Daily Star, 28 October 2010). UNRWA has received sufficient funds to cover 36 per cent of the reconstruction of the homes that were destroyed. The

process of reconstruction depends not only on funding but also on overcoming complex administrative, juridical and political hurdles. This is the first time that a destroyed Palestinian refugee camp is being rebuilt in Lebanon. In the area adjacent to the camp, housing has been repaired by international NGOs, mainly with European Commission funding. Reconstruction outside the camp is also complicated by legal and political issues related to the housing, land and property rights of Palestinians (IDMC interview, October 2010).

Since 2007, UNRWA has been the main provider of shelter, food security, water and sanitation, health, and education support to people displaced from the camp. Since Palestinian refugees in general have very limited social and economic rights in Lebanon, and UNRWA is the only UN agency mandated to work with them, UNRWA would have to continue providing these services until durable solutions are found. Palestinian refugees in other camps in Lebanon are also heavily dependant on assistance.

## Sectarian violence in 2008

In June and July 2008, political tensions in Beirut fanned localised armed conflict in Tripoli between Sunni fundamentalist groups and Allawi communities with long-standing grievances. Tripoli is a Sunni-majority city largely supporting the “March 14” coalition, while the Allawis support the Hezbollah-led opposition and have ties to the Allawi ruling class in Syria (IRIN, 29 July 2008). The epicentres of the violence were in the Allawi-dominated Jebel Mohsen and Sunni-dominated Bab al-Tabbaneh neighbourhoods. The Lebanese army was deployed to both neighbourhoods, and a ceasefire at the end of July 2008 allowed many of those displaced to return. The Allawi and Sunni communities agreed to reconciliation in September 2008 (Reuters, 17 October 2008), but tensions and regular fighting have persisted until 2010.

The tensions between the two groups reflect relations between Sunnis and Shiites on the one hand, and between Lebanon and Syria on the other (ICG, 2 August 2010).

The tensions in Beirut that had triggered the localised sectarian violence in Tripoli came to an end when a temporary truce was reached in Doha, so that a new cabinet could be formed until parliamentary elections could resolve the political stand-off (ICG, 4 June 2009). In June 2009, Saad Hariri, the leader of the “March 14” coalition, was elected as Prime Minister. In November 2009, after repeated attempts, a coalition government, with representation of all Lebanese parties, was formed and Hariri took office.

### *Displacement patterns*

The localised conflict in mid-2008 led to the temporary displacement of up to 6,000 families. Sunni families from Bab al-Tabbaneh were displaced within the city, where they were hosted in state schools; nearly all the displaced Allawi families fled north to Akkar, one of Lebanon’s poorest regions, or crossed the border into Syria (IRIN, 5 August 2008).

### *National and international responses*

The government and civil society responded to the temporary displacement. The Future Current party set up tents and distributed free meals to Sunni families, while the government set up a fund to provide health care to IDPs (IRIN, 5 August 2008). UNICEF, the Lebanese Red Cross and local NGOs also provided assistance in the form of hygiene kits and medicines.

**Note:** This is a summary of IDMC’s internal displacement profile on Lebanon. The full profile is available online [here](#).



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## About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people.

In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

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