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Lebanon:

Difficulties continue for people displaced by successive conflicts

A number of displacement situations have persisted in Lebanon since the 1975-1990 civil war, invasions and an 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon by Israel, a 33-day war in July 2006 between Israel and Hezbollah, the destruction in 2007 of the Nahr el-Bared camp for Palestinian refugees, and localised sectarian violence in 2008.

Localised armed conflict in mid-2008 in the city of Tripoli led to the temporary displacement of thousands of families. Sectarian violence between Sunni and Allawi communities led to the displacement of many Sunni families within the city, while nearly all the Allawi families displaced fled to other parts of the country.

Three months of fighting in 2007 between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese army led to the displacement of 27,000 Palestinian refugees from Nahr el-Bared camp in Tripoli along with some Lebanese living in adjacent areas. By August 2009, 3,100 families displaced by the 2007 violence were living adjacent to the “old camp” and the remaining 2,000 or so families living mainly in neighbouring Beddawi camp. The reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared remained on hold due to financing problems, legal hurdles, political wrangling and the discovery of archaeological remains below the camp.

The 33-day war in 2006 displaced a million people, over a quarter of the population. Within four days of the ceasefire, around 90 per cent of internally displaced people (IDPs) moved back to areas of origin. However, at the end of 2008, more than one-fifth of families whose houses were damaged during the war had been unable to return to permanent housing or remained displaced elsewhere in Lebanon. Many others appeared to have been forced by economic circumstances into returning to severely damaged homes unsuitable for habitation. Unexploded ordnance from this conflict, and cluster munitions in particular, have also continued to affect returnee populations in southern Lebanon.

Over 800,000 people were displaced at the height of the Lebanese civil war. After cessation of military operations, there remained 450,000 IDPs in the country. Israeli invasions in 1978 and 1982 also added to the displacement. The outstanding issues for those displaced by the civil war relate mainly to compensation and in some villages to reconciliation.

Background

Lebanon is still facing the impact of four conflict events in two decades: the 1975-1990 civil war, the invasions and 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon by Israel, the 33-day war of July 2006, and the 2007 destruction of Nahr el-Bared Palestinian refugee camp.

Lebanon is religiously, culturally and politically diverse. There are six Muslim sects and twelve Christian sects in the country, which are largely geographically defined (CJPME, May 2007). A system of weighted political representation between sects was created in 1943 on the basis of a 1937 census, and rigidly maintained despite the dwindling numbers of Christians and increasing numbers of Muslims, in particular Shia Muslims (Shatzmiller, 2005, p.94).

This system contributed to Lebanon's descent into civil war in 1975 (Shatzmiller, 2005, p.95), while the presence of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees closely tied Lebanon to regional tensions. In a context of heightened Arab-Israeli conflict, clashes in 1975 between Lebanese and Palestinian factions set off the civil war and a series of events, including a Syrian intervention in 1976 and Israeli invasions in 1978 and in 1982, which led to the occupation of southern Lebanon until 2000.

From 1975 to 1990, hundreds of thousands of people were killed, wounded or disabled and over 800,000 made homeless (CRS, 23 November 2007). In 1989, the Charter of Lebanese National Reconciliation, known as the Taif Accord, paved the way for an end to the war. In the summer of 2000, Israel withdrew from Lebanon,

but maintained control over the Shebab farms on the border with Syria and Israel. Syria withdrew its forces in April 2005 following mass protests triggered by the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

In the years since the Taif Accord, the Shia Muslim population concentrated in the south has increasingly lent its support to Hezbollah, a Shia Muslim political party and armed movement. In 1992, Hezbollah formally entered the political arena by taking part in general elections (Al Jazeera, 8 June 2009). In May 2008, supporters of Hezbollah and the backers of a pro-western coalition brought Lebanon to the brink of a new civil war, as a period of tension which had begun in 2004 reached a climax after Hezbollah took over several Sunni Muslim neighbourhoods in Beirut and sought to control the Druze mountains in response to attempts to challenge its military status (ICG, 4 June 2009). These events acted as a catalyst for renewed violence in the northern city of Tripoli, where a series of localised battles occurred in June and July between the Allawi, an off-shoot of Shia Islam, and Sunni communities (Naba'a, August 2008).

A temporary truce was reached in Doha in 2008 on the formation of a new cabinet until parliamentary elections could resolve the political stand-off (ICG, 4 June 2009). These elections in June 2009 showed Lebanon's capacity to distribute political power without descending into violence (CFR, 7 June 2009), as the pro-western "March 14" coalition defeated the Hezbollah-led "March 8" coalition. The leader of the "March 14" coalition Saad Hariri was designated prime minister with the task to form a government.

However, repeated efforts to form a coalition government had been unsuccessful as of September 2009.

Lebanon has also been struggling to recover from the 33-day war which Israel declared against Hezbollah in July 2006; it devastated large areas of southern Lebanon, southern Beirut and parts of the Beka'a Valley (Al Jazeera, 8 June 2009). The conflict was triggered when Hezbollah launched a cross-border raid on Israel and Israel retaliated with a blockade and later attacks against Hezbollah sites and Shia-identified areas. The conflict ended in mid-August without a definitive victory, shortly after the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1701, which called for full cessation of hostilities and for additional troops of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to be deployed in the south and monitor a ceasefire (UNSC, 11 August 2006).

In August 2009, the UN Security Council voted to extend the mandate of UNIFIL for one year. The overall objectives of the resolution – a permanent ceasefire and a lasting solution – are yet to be achieved (UN News Service, 14 August 2009).

In the meantime the position of Palestinians has worsened significantly since the early 1990s, and they remain marginalised within Lebanese society (ICG, 19 February 2009). In 2001 Palestinians were denied property rights by a law prohibiting people “who do not carry a citizenship issued by a recognised state,” from securing legal title to housing and land in Lebanon (NRC, October 2008). In mid-2007, a battle between the Lebanese army and the militant group Fatah al-Islam led to the destruction of Nahr-el-Bared camp, and left thousands of refugees homeless

(HRW, 13 May 2009). Palestinian refugees are not internally displaced people or citizens of Lebanon, but IDMC monitors their situation as secondary displaced refugees within Lebanon.

Internal displacement: figures, impact and protection concerns

Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990 and Israeli invasions

The massive displacement caused by the 1975-1990 civil war had far-reaching and lasting consequences. In all, an estimated 810,000 people, or 28 per cent of the population, were affected by successive waves of displacement (UNDP, 1997). The main causes of displacement were the deterioration in security and political stability and the large-scale destruction of villages, towns and houses, which prolonged forced displacement for years after the end of military operations. 949 villages and towns were affected, of which 174 villages were totally or partially destroyed (UNDP, 1997). 86 per cent of IDPs originated from the western Mount Lebanon Governorate or from southern Lebanon (USCRI, 2001). IDPs endured a general deterioration in living conditions, with an estimated 50 per cent not being able to meet basic needs and 13 per cent living in absolute poverty (UNDP, 1997). Palestinian refugees were also displaced during the civil war, especially during the “War of the Camps”, a sub-conflict in which refugee camps in Beirut were besieged by a Lebanese militia in 1985.

Successive Israeli interventions added to the displacement. The 1978 invasion displaced about 200,000 Lebanese people (mostly Shia Muslims) and 65,000 Pales-

tinians from the south of the country (USCRI, 2003). Although most of this displacement was temporary, many people resettled indefinitely, particularly in the southern suburbs of Beirut. The Israeli invasion of 1982 and its prolonged aftermath also displaced between 225,000 and 300,000 people by 1986 (Lebanese NGO Forum, 2009).

After the cessation of military operations, some 90,000 families or 450,000 people were still displaced. Of these, 45,000 families were occupying other people's homes and another 12,000 were enduring very poor housing and living conditions (UNDP, 1997). The government offered compensation for IDPs to rebuild their homes, and set the end of 2002 as the target date for all returns, but as of mid-2002 an estimated 300,000 people remained displaced. Returns were slowed by corruption and political rivalries between government officials, lack of compensation funds and also security concerns including the presence of thousands of landmines in the south (USCRI, 2004). In 2006, the government reported that almost 17,000 people were still displaced from the civil war and Israeli invasions up to 2000 (MoD, 10 July 2006).

2006 Israel-Hezbollah war

The 33-day war between Israel and Hezbollah began on 12 July 2006 and ended on 14 August following the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1701 (UNSC, 11 August 2006). The actions of the Israeli army during the war were deemed by humanitarian agencies and the UN to be in violation of international humanitarian law, and included direct and disproportionate attacks against civilians and civilian objects (HRW, 5 Sep-

tember 2007). 125,000 housing units, hundreds of schools and businesses, and scores of hospitals, clinics, bridges and roads were extensively damaged (UNDP, 2009). Many towns and villages were left without electricity, running water and the basics for survival (UNHCR, 15 November 2006). The Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut, home to an estimated 850,000 people, suffered the heaviest bombardment (IRIN, 24 April 2008). During the conflict, the Israeli Defence Forces dropped an estimated four million sub-munitions on south Lebanon, the vast majority over the final three days when the Israeli government knew a settlement was imminent (HRW, 16 February 2008).

Direct targeting and damage to civilian infrastructure forced an estimated million people to flee their homes in July. In a country of fewer than four million people, more than 25 per cent were internally or externally displaced. 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 the IDPs moved back to their areas of origin. Many of the displaced returned to destroyed homes and communities, and some families were displaced for a second time after finding their homes uninhabitable (OCHA, August 2006). The cost of the reconstruction was estimated at \$2.8 billion, with compensation for damaged or destroyed housing estimated at \$1.4 billion (Reuters, 9 July 2007).

The prevalence in residential areas, public spaces and farmlands of unexploded ordnance (UXO), especially cluster sub-munitions, represented a significant threat to returnees, although it was restricted mainly to southern regions. Their presence severely restricted freedom of movement within the south and hampered return and the re-establishment of livelihoods (UNHCR, 15 November 2006). In April 2009, UNIFIL noted that UXO, particularly cluster munitions, was still causing an average of two civilian casualties per month (UNIFIL, 4 April 2009).

At the end of 2008, UNHCR was reporting that between 40,000 and 70,000 people remained displaced, with the main obstacles to return including uncleared UXO and delays in payment of compensation for housing damage (USDoS, 25 February 2009). According to a study released at the end of 2008, more than one-fifth of families which suffered housing damage during the July 2006 war had been unable to return to permanent housing and remained displaced within Lebanon. Many others appeared to have been forced by economic circumstances into returning to severely damaged or partially destroyed homes which were not suitable for habitation, and while compensation was provided it was still rarely sufficient to rebuild homes (NRC/PRDU, December 2008).

Sectarian violence and temporary displacement in Tripoli

In June and July 2008 localised armed conflict, fanned by political tensions in Beirut, occurred in Tripoli between Sunni 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 the Allawi-dominated Jebel Mohsen and Sunni-dominated Bab al-Tabbaneh neighbourhoods.

According to officials, the violence injured hundreds and temporarily displaced up to 6,000 families. Sunni families displaced from Bab al-Tabbaneh were hosted in state schools and supported with food and medicine, while nearly all displaced Allawi families fled north to Akkar, one of Lebanon’s poorest regions, or crossed the border into Syria (IRIN, 5 August 2008).

No Allawi families from Jebel Mohsen sought shelter in schools in Tripoli (IRIN, 29 July 2008). The primary need of displaced Allawi families within Tripoli was access to food but they received only a small amount of bread each day (Naba’a, August 2008). According to UNICEF, the Allawi who had fled to Akkar were living without basic necessities and had not received support from international or local agencies by the end of July 2008.

The army was deployed in Jebel Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh and a ceasefire at the end of July 2008 allowed many of the displaced to start returning home. The Allawi and Sunni communities agreed to a reconciliation in September (Reuters, 17 October 2008).

Secondary Displacement of Palestinian refugees from Nahr el-Bared

In May 2007, violent clashes in Tripoli between the Lebanese army and the Fatah

al-Islam militant group spread into Nahr el-Bared refugee camp (ICG, 19 February 2009). As the Lebanese army laid siege to the camp, approximately 27,000 Palestinian refugees were displaced from Nahr el-Bared, while hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese households in neighbourhoods adjacent to the camp were also displaced within and outside Tripoli. As a result of the conflict, an estimated 95 per cent of all buildings and infrastructure were either destroyed or damaged beyond repair (UNRWA, September 2008) and 40 per cent of houses in Lebanese municipalities adjacent to the camp were reported damaged (UNDP, January 2009).

Nahr el-Bared, referred to as the “old camp” since the 2007 conflict, is one of the 12 official refugee camps established in the late 1940s to host Palestinian refugees. The camp falls under the mandate of UNRWA. The adjacent area, referred to as the “new camp”, developed as Palestinians from Nahr el-Bared purchased land and constructed houses. As the result of the conflict the old camp was completely destroyed, while the “new camp” was partially destroyed (NRC, October 2008).

A year later, a study by UNRWA showed that IDPs from Nahr el-Bared were scattered in Beddawi camp and other areas of northern Lebanon; while a UNDP analysis revealed that less than two per cent of Lebanese living in proximity of the camp remained displaced. The majority of Palestinian families were in rented apartments and 23 per cent continued to share living space. The declared income of Nahr el-Bared households had dropped by around 40 per cent and unemployment stood at 40 per cent among the returnees and 26 per cent among the displaced

(CRI, November 2008). Only a quarter of businesses had started up again, and most of these were functioning at reduced capacity. The income of the Lebanese households however had only been minimally impacted by the conflict (UNDP, January 2009).

The trauma of the conflict and prospect of protracted displacement were having a damaging impact on the psycho-social health and well-being, especially of children and young people. Dependence on aid remained high (UNRWA, September 2008).

By August 2009, about 3,100 families or 57 per cent of Nahr el-Bared’s official count of 5,449 families had moved to the “new camp”. Many of them were former inhabitants of the “old camp” who were renting accommodation in the “new camp”. Another 756 families (around 14 per cent) were living in temporary, one-room housing units erected by UNRWA in the “new camp” (Daily Star, 12 August 2009).

A number of problems persisted for the secondary displaced refugees, with the worst situation facing those in the temporary housing units, which lacked an adequate supply of drinking water and electricity. Their situation was further exacerbated by the financial crisis which hit the informal economy, where the majority work due to restrictions on Palestinian employment (Al Jazeera, 28 May 2009).

National and international response

Lebanon does not have a national IDP policy, but has responded through various means to the plight of IDPs. In successive

instances of displacement, the response has been undertaken by state institutions, national societies, and the international community. The lack of a national policy has at times led to differences in the assistance provided to different displaced communities.

In 1992 the government created the Ministry for the Displaced to address the large-scale displacement caused by the civil war. The government with the support of the international community focused on the return of IDPs and a national fund was established to finance the return process.

The Ministry for the Displaced paid over 50,000 people compensation to leave properties that they had illegally occupied, removed debris from conflict-affected areas, provided rebuilding assistance and initiated infrastructure projects (USCRI, 1999). UNDP, which played a leading role in supporting the government's approach, also underlined the lack of a broad strategy to promote sustainable development in areas of displacement. For UNDP, the return strategy disregarded the many social and economic changes that Lebanon had undergone over two decades, such as rural-to-urban migration, which would have taken place even in the absence of war (USCRI, 2000).

In response to the 2006 war, the government established the High Relief Commission to coordinate national and international humanitarian assistance. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator supported the government response through the cluster approach. By October 2006, the UN's humanitarian operations were phased out with a transition to government and inter-

national agencies responsible for recovery (OCHA, 28 September 2006).

The international humanitarian community was caught unaware by the scale and intensity of the conflict and the rate of return following the end of hostilities. Most of the humanitarian needs of the IDPs were however met through the response of local communities and organisations, particularly the social development committee of Hezbollah, through the ability of UN agencies already in the country to divert existing resources, and due to the short duration of the conflict.

Nevertheless the response faced numerous challenges and limitations. The principal protection challenges included threats to the safety of civilians due to uncleared UXO, and access restrictions on delivering assistance (OCHA, December 2006). In other instances, the UN prioritised assistance to IDPs without taking into account the highly sophisticated local mechanisms in place, while it was at times impossible to trace whether assistance delivered at local hubs reached IDPs (OCHA, December 2006).

Following the end of hostilities, the government launched a national reconstruction plan, which aimed to ensure the prompt return of IDPs to their areas of origin. However, two compensation mechanisms created by the government for damaged private property were hit by funding delays. Hezbollah, meanwhile, provided compensation for shelter reconstruction through its social institutions (CRS, 15 September 2006). The international community convened a conference for Lebanon's reconstruction, which led to the establishment of the Lebanon Re-

covery Fund to channel donor financing. The Fund is administered by UNDP, projects are approved by the Lebanese government and carried out by participating UN agencies (UNDP, September 2009).

In September 2009, work to clear UXO from the July 2006 war was still ongoing and suffering from a shortage of funding. Since the war, the number of demining agencies had reduced by more than half (Daily Star, 5 September 2009), and they were appealing to donors for several million dollars, warning that agricultural land would not otherwise be cleared for eight years or more (IRIN, 14 May 2009).

The government and civil society also responded to situations of displacement in Tripoli that arose during the political crisis in mid-2008. Local officials registered around 700 Sunni families displaced by the violence who had found shelter in schools. The Sunni Future Movement party set up tents and distributed free meals to the families while authorities set up a fund for medical needs of the displaced (IRIN, 29 July 2008). UNICEF, the Lebanese Red Cross and local NGOs also provided assistance in the form of hygiene kits and medicines to the displaced families from Bab al-Tabahnee (Naba'a, August 2008). However questions lingered as to whether such assistance was impartial, or failed to take note of the concerns and political sensitivity that surrounded the conflict.

Delivery of humanitarian support in Tripoli to people from Nahr el-Bared camp during the siege was limited by restrictions in access to civilians fleeing the conflict and those remaining inside. The level of destruction by the Lebanese army showed disregard for civilian life and

property, and allegations have persisted of looting and vandalism immediately following the conflict, and subsequent restrictions in access.

National and international efforts were as of September 2009 addressing reconstruction, with cooperation between the Lebanese government, UNRWA and the PLO ongoing. The government has emphasised that Nahr el-Bared will be within Lebanese jurisdiction in the future, unlike all the other camps (IDRC, 15 June 2009). 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 Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. The government also called upon the international community for funding to support reconstruction and economic recovery.

UNRWA's efforts have been hampered by bureaucracy and inadequate funding to meet the basic recovery needs of the displaced refugees and begin reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared (IDRC, 15 June 2009). Following the conflict, it appealed for \$445 million to rebuild the camp (IRIN, 30 September 2008). The "old camp" fell under its responsibility and the "new camp" under that of Lebanese authorities who asked UNRWA to assist (IRIN, 22 June 2008). By August 2009, UNRWA had received \$92 million from donors and \$10 million from the Multi-Donor Trust Fund administered by the World Bank, sufficient for one-third of the camp's reconstruction.

As of mid-2009, over 90 per cent of the rubble had been removed from Nahr el-Bared but reconstruction has been de-

laid by legal hurdles, political wrangling and the recent discovery of archaeological ruins below the “old camp” as well as by the funding shortfall (IRIN, 17 August 2009). The reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared also presents a conundrum for the government as it has not previously recognised Palestinians’ land and property rights (NRC, October 2008). The first part of a rebuilding effort, to house 500 families, is scheduled to take

about a year to complete (Daily Star, 12 August 2009). However, despite repeated promises that reconstruction would begin, former Nahr el-Bared residents remained deeply sceptical (ICG, 19 February 2009).

Note: This is a summary of IDMC’s new 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.

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