



Escalation of hostilities in Lebanon

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– Call to parties to the conflict and member states put the protection of all civilians in the region at the center of their action

Humanity & Inclusion is appalled by the rapid escalation of violence in Lebanon and continued airstrikes by the Israeli military across Lebanon's south, Bekaa valley, northern areas of Hermel, as well as parts of Beirut. The unprecedented Israeli airstrikes have so far killed 558 people, including at least 50 children, and injured 1,835 on Monday, September 23rd alone. Lebanon's Ministry of Health reports that the death toll presently stands at 560, with the number of casualties expected to rise. Lebanese authorities report widespread panic and mass exodus from affected areas, with key roads being blocked as people are trying to find safety elsewhere in Lebanon.

This latest uptick in violence between Israel and Lebanon is an evident spillover of the war waged on Gaza over the last 11 months, with the two countries frequently exchanging fire across the border ever since and causing widespread displacement of people on both sides of the border. The attacks come at a time when Lebanon is still reeling from mass explosions of communication devices in the week prior, and on top of the multiple crises that had adversely affected the population over the last few years. Before October 2023, 3.2 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, including 1.5 million Syrian refugees and 200,000 Palestinian refugees according to OCHA. The instability since October 7th, the continuation of hostilities in border areas, the challenging socioeconomic situation, and reduced humanitarian funding have impacted all residents across Lebanon, who were already facing a dire humanitarian situation. In addition, Israeli strikes have particularly impacted water infrastructure, healthcare centers, and educational facilities. Previous calculations by UNOCHA estimated that damages in southern Lebanon stand at \$1.7 billion, however, the cost is increasing daily. At the same time,

humanitarian funding remains critically low, with sectors like food security under the response funded at only 5%, despite the country's acute needs. The hardest hit are those marginalized and most vulnerable, particularly persons with disabilities, elderly, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and hosting communities.

HI provides assistance to those most vulnerable and affected by multiple crises. Since October 2023 and in addition to regular programming, HI has been working to enhance the preparedness of health facilities for mass-casualty intake by enhancing both capacities of medical staff and increasing stocks of medical equipment. HI also provided additional support for people living in displacement, with a particular focus on addressing the urgent needs of persons with disabilities and their caregivers. Should the hostilities continue, and the crisis become prolonged, humanitarian needs are going to increase drastically and deployment of a massive emergency response will likely need to be done along with long-term, continued support for the affected communities, all amidst the dwindling funding for Lebanon that had already been insufficient to cover the basic needs.

Humanity & Inclusion calls on all parties to immediately cease all hostilities in the region, to allow for immediate and unconditional assistance to the affected communities and to prevent further deterioration of the situation. Furthermore, an immediate ceasefire in occupied Palestinian territory, unimpeded humanitarian access and the release of hostages and prisoners is needed to de-escalate. Forging an immediate, unconditional, and definitive ceasefire is the only way to end the suffering of civilians and save lives in the occupied Palestinian territory, Lebanon, and across the region. There must be a timely and transparent process to ensure unconditional adherence to international humanitarian law by all parties, and a call for accountability for violations and justice to ensure an end to the cycles of violence.