European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Lebanon

Introduction

Of all of Syria’s neighbours, Lebanon has been the hardest hit by the exodus of Syrians fleeing their country’s violence. Since 2011, Lebanon has taken in 1.5 million Syrians and Palestine refugees from Syria, accounting for 30 percent of Lebanon’s population, the highest concentration per capita of refugees in the world. Since the enforcement of stricter regulations applied by the Lebanese government in 2015, access to Lebanon by those fleeing the conflict in Syria has become close to impossible.

What are the needs?

The 1.5 million Syrian and Palestinian refugees that now account for 30 percent of the population has added a major strain on Lebanon’s economy and infrastructure. Although Lebanon has shown remarkable generosity, increased competition for jobs and resources is fuelling tensions between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees.

Lebanon has banned the construction of formal camps for Syrian refugees, forcing refugees to live in substandard shelters such as garages, warehouses, tents, unfinished buildings, and animal sheds. An increasing number of refugees lack proper documentation, restricting their free movement and access to basic services, and exposing them to greater risk of harassment and exploitation. Refugees also face serious restrictions in obtaining healthcare and have to pay for food, rent, clothes, medicines, and other necessities. Child labour remains a concern, with 2.2 percent of Syrian refugee children aged 5 to 17 reported as working (VASyR 2018: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, UN, December 2018).

Violence and poor security along the Lebanon-Syria border, particularly in Akkar and the northern Bekaa Valley, make humanitarian access and the delivery of assistance challenging. The violence has also led to increasingly restrictive policies, including refugee evictions, police raids, mistreatment and restrictions of movement, resulting in heightened tensions between authorities and the refugees.
How are we helping?

Since 2011, the European Union has provided €580 million in humanitarian funding for Lebanon to respond to the Syria crisis. The humanitarian assistance has been aimed at refugees faced with dire levels of poverty, and who are living on the margins of society, often in substandard accommodation.

The EU humanitarian response to Syrian refugees in Lebanon has for the most part been in the form of cash assistance to help people with basic necessities, and providing healthcare, shelter, water and sanitation. In 2018, more than 375 000 Lebanese and Syrians benefited from EU-funded healthcare. The EU also provides protection assistance for refugees faced with legal concerns or for Syrians who have suffered violence and harassment. In 2018, more than 170 000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon benefited from EU-supported protection services. Additionally, EU funding in 2018, helped nearly 125 000 Lebanese and Syrian children to access education.

Considering the protracted nature of the crisis and the increasingly difficult living conditions refugees face in Lebanon, the EU is increasing its focus on improving access to protection assistance and improved quality services, such as legal assistance, counselling and case management.

The EU also set up an emergency “rapid response mechanism”, enabling the EU and its partners to respond quickly to sudden crises affecting refugees and the host communities. Furthermore, given the protracted nature of the Palestinian refugee crisis in Lebanon, other types of EU funding have continued to provide support to this population.