

# Lebanon Crisis: Displaced Populations in Syria

Rapid Needs Assessment - November 2024

## Introduction

On September 23, 2024, Israel launched a large-scale military operation in Lebanon, leading to the most intense exchange of fire across the Blue Line since October 2023. This escalation displaced around 1 million people—20% of Lebanon's population—in just one week. Over 842,000 individuals were internally displaced, while 528,000 crossed into Syria (UNHCR, 2024). Most of the displaced are Syrian refugees, underscoring the staggering scale of this crisis.

In this context, i-APS and its local affiliate, building upon our long-term and established 9-year presence in Syria, conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) to identify urgent challenges, evaluate how the crisis is being managed, and identify critical areas for immediate intervention to ensure an effective and targeted humanitarian response.

The Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) employed in-depth interviews (IDIs) with key local authorities to gather critical insights into the displacement crisis, ensuring that vulnerable populations were not questioned directly. This qualitative approach allowed for an exploration of the evolving needs and challenges in ongoing relief efforts.

To provide a nuanced understanding of the situation, interviews were conducted with three authorities in Homs and Rural Damascus, supplemented by secondary data from humanitarian agencies and media sources.

## Profile of displaced population

The displaced population involves both Syrian returnees and Lebanese nationals. This information aligns with data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024).



(UNHCR, 13 November 2024)

According to the respondents, many of the displaced population have **kinship ties between Syrian and Lebanese families**.

Some Lebanese families already owned property in Syria or had relatives willing to provide them shelter. This has facilitated their initial accommodation. Some individuals arrived after the first days of the bombing and then returned to Lebanon after a few days.

## Arrival Timeline from Lebanon to Syria

The respondents estimated that displaced individuals began arriving in Syria between late August and mid-October 2024. This pattern was consistent in both Homs and Rural Damascus.

Local authorities provided estimates of the demographics of the displaced population in their respective areas, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics as estimated by respondents

Governorate	District	Women (%)	Children (under 18) (%)	Elderly (over 60) (%)	People with Disabilities (%)
Homs	Al-Qusayr	61-80%	21-40%	0-10%	0-5%
Homs	Homs	21-40%	41-60%	0-10%	0-5%
Homs	Homs	61-80%	61-80%	11-30%	0-5%
Rural Damascus	Rural Damascus	41-60%	21-40%	11-30%	0-5%




## Immediate needs


The responses from Syrian local authorities indicate several pressing needs across different categories, highlighting the complexity of the crisis.

Authorities consistently identified these necessities as essential across all regions.

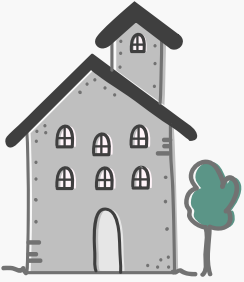
**Food**  
Essential food items, including baby milk.




**Non food items**  
Including hygiene products along with diapers and detergents, are urgently needed to sustain basic living standards.



**Shelter and housing**  
Considered critical, particularly for women and children as several families are currently living in inadequate housing conditions, which are not suitable for the coming winter season.



**Access to healthcare**  
Access to both basic and specialized healthcare is a significant need, including medications and specialized care for chronic diseases. Syrian local authorities noted the significant mental health and psychosocial support needs among a profoundly traumatized population.  
  
*“Syrian immigrants have been displaced twice, have lost their homes and are unable to secure food and clothing, which exposes them to psychological repression and social isolation”*  
Local authority in Homs





## Specific Needs



**Women** face significant barriers to accessing job opportunities and securing shelter, as many are acting the head of the household while the men in their families have remained in Lebanon. Without stable income or housing, Syrian authorities consider these women at increased risk of hardship and vulnerability.

**Children (under 18)** face significant protection risks, especially in overcrowded shelters where they are at increased risk of exploitation, abuse, and neglect.  
  
Overcrowded conditions also carry:

**Health Risks**  
due to the rapid spread of diseases.


**Barries to education**  
due to differences in curricula and a lack of identification papers.

  
**Unaccompanied minors** are in urgent need of support, especially when it comes to securing safe shelter, meeting their nutritional needs and ensuring protection.

**Elderly and People with Disabilities** require specialized healthcare, which is currently in short supply. The lack of adequate healthcare resources places these groups at even greater risk, particularly those with chronic conditions needing ongoing medical attention.

## Recommendations

Respondents provided a final recommendation at the end of the interview, which can be summarized as follows:

**Increase support from international organizations**

International donors and organizations should provide more direct support, with greater leniency towards displaced individuals who cannot afford to endure lengthy periods of coordination and approvals. **Emergency support** is crucial, especially in anticipation of the upcoming winter season, which will significantly increase the need for shelter, heating, and basic supplies. Immediate interventions are needed to cover **educational needs**, secure **housing**, address **food** insecurity and distribute basic **non food items (NFI)**. This includes ensuring **permanent sources of food**, particularly for children, and expanding efforts to secure **drinking water and water for daily use**. Involving **local Syrian organizations** more extensively will help ensure a faster and more targeted response.

**Rehabilitation and housing solutions**


Rehabilitating homes for displaced individuals is a priority. Local authorities recommend renovating existing housing and health facilities to accommodate both Syrian returnees and Lebanese nationals. This is essential to create stable living conditions, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

**Provide Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services**

Local authorities stressed the importance of allocating resources to meet the MHPSS needs of the displaced population, highlighting that mental well-being is essential for successful social integration and for preventing tensions within host communities.

**Strengthen child protection mechanisms**

For example, creating safe spaces and delivering protection training for frontline workers to address the specific vulnerabilities of children, particularly unaccompanied minors, who face heightened risks of exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

**Support Education for Children**

Authorities have stressed the need to ensure that school-aged children can continue their formal education without interruption.


## Social dynamics

Displaced vulnerable groups have varying impacts on host communities, influencing social dynamics, resources, and community relations. Despite challenges, positive interactions and resilience are evident. Local communities play a crucial role in accommodating displaced populations, mitigating crises, and addressing resource shortages.


The **impact on host communities** differs by region, with some facing more challenges than others. In many **border villages**, displaced individuals are seen as a part of the community fabric, as these areas have long experienced movement between Lebanon and Syria.

Many displaced families have relatives in Syria, which has facilitated their integration, with positive interactions reported. In these communities, Syrian hosts are described as **hospitable and open-minded** welcoming the displaced without significant tension. The presence of established familial ties has helped prevent potential conflicts, creating a supportive environment.

The presence of displaced, vulnerable groups in Syria is exacerbating **an already fragile context**. Many regions are still dealing with the severe impacts of years of the ongoing crisis, including:



Limited resources

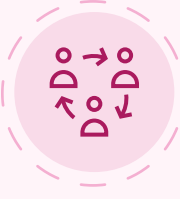


Weakened infrastructure


This has resulted in significant pressure on the provision of basic services, aid availability, and social stability.

### Social dynamics

between



Displaced groups



Host communities

are shaped and mediated by a combination of historical ties, cultural values of hospitality, as well as the collective resilience of the Syrian people.

While challenges such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and unmet needs persist, the host communities have generally embraced the displaced populations, focusing on cooperation rather than conflict.

## Recommendations

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**Create livelihood opportunities**

In a longer-term perspective, providing **job opportunities** for displaced individuals is essential for fostering self-reliance. Economic opportunities will help stabilize displaced families and reduce their dependence on aid while also promoting integration into the local community.
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**Enhance coordination mechanisms**

Improving coordination between local authorities, civil society organizations, and international partners is crucial for an effective response. Establishing a dedicated field office will enhance the ability to manage resources efficiently and coordinate aid efforts among the various stakeholders in a more decentralized and streamlined manner.
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**Recognize and sustain the fundamental role of the local community**

Sustain the role of the local community and community-driven efforts in bridging the gaps and addressing the tensions that arise during this crisis. As a mayor from Homs governorate poignantly stated:

*"I hope that love will always exist between the Syrians and the Lebanese, as they are one family. What befalls them befalls us, and what befalls us befalls them. Let us not forget that the local community has a fundamental role in absorbing any gaps, gaps, or tensions, as awareness is the basis of a safe life."*

