

Summary

Deadly clashes have taken place in the Palestinian refugee camp in Saida following Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah's unfruitful meeting with Hamas representatives in Egypt. According to the UN, 11 fighters have been killed and over 2000 people have fled the camp. Also, Hezbollah and other Muslim authorities have called for protests following the Quran burning in Sweden and Denmark. Other demonstrations are expected to take place across the country due to the financial and political gridlock.

Recent events and developments

A Fatah commander and 4 of his guards were killed in an ambush on 30 August. As a result, intense clashes in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain El-Helwe in Saida, South Lebanon, erupted between various Hamas-affiliated groups and Fatah, the largest political faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In the clashes, 11 fighters from both groups were killed, and more than 50 people in the camp were injured. Moreover, the 3rd anniversary of the Beirut explosion comes in 2 days. Monthly demonstrations have been taking place in front of the justice palace as well as other parts of Beirut in protest of the judicial impotence. Additionally, with the 30-year term of the Lebanese Central Bank governor ending on 31 July, Lebanese depositors are still storming banks almost on a daily basis, to demand their trapped savings. Guns, gasoline, and even grenades have been employed as threats in such raids. Lastly, countrywide protests have been called on by Hezbollah leader Nasrallah and other Muslim clerics on Friday 21 July in response to the recent Quran burning in Sweden and Denmark.

Impact assessment

In light of the failed reconciliation talks between Palestinian factions, different Lebanese parties have called for the intervention of armed forces and disarmament in Ain el-Helwe camp. Meanwhile, others have pushed for a ceasefire agreement between the Palestinian militias. Although clashes are still ongoing, it is highly unlikely that the violence will spread to Lebanese areas due to the intercommunal nature of the conflict. However, confrontations could still occur in other camps, and stray bullets as well as shrapnel could bypass the conflict zone peripheries. On another note, due to the politicization of the judicial process and the absence of real accountability, demonstrations in Beirut are likely to take place on August 4, especially around the port area and the justice palace. Amidst the 9-month presidential vacuum and considering the plummeted local currency, Lebanon's critical economic situation is likely to persist. An increase in the level of petty crime and violence is thus likely, especially around financial and governmental institutions.

Advice from Forth Global

- Constantly monitor local news and liaise with local contacts to stay up to date with major developments in Lebanon.
- Advise staff to avoid all kinds of protests and demonstrations areas.
- Ensure staff travelling to Lebanon plan their trip ahead, especially to remote areas and outside of Beirut. Make sure emergency plans are updated and appropriately distributed to employees on the ground.
- Refrain from making political statements in public.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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