

## Summary

The situation in Lebanon continues to deteriorate as more Israeli long-range attacks are occurring deeper within Lebanon in the Bekaa Valley. Civilians have already fallen victim as a result as many have been killed, wounded, or displaced. It is uncertain whether the situation will improve in the near future as Hezbollah hinges a potential peaceful resolution to a ceasefire in Gaza, while Israel demands that Hezbollah retreat its forces behind the Litani River further north.

## Recent events and developments

The situation in Lebanon continues to deteriorate as the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and Hezbollah engage each other in long-range attacks along the Israeli-Lebanese border since October. The situation has recently escalated with the IDF striking deeper in Lebanese territory. Since the beginning of the war in Gaza, the IDF has launched 4,500 missile and drone strikes mostly in Lebanon and some in Syria. Further strikes in other parts of Lebanon, primarily in the Bekaa Valley, have also been reported. Besides, on February 26 Israel targeted the city of Baalbek for the first time, thereby killing two Hezbollah fighters. Further attacks have been committed in other towns, such as Saraain, Chmistar, Shmestar, Tabyeh, Douris, and Taraiyya. Furthermore, on March 12 the remains of an Israeli missile and drone were found under the main highway in Hrajel to the north of Beirut. Since the hostilities on the border started, 316 people were killed in Lebanon, of which 53 were civilians. Additionally, 90,859 people are displaced. The French have proposed a peace plan in Beirut that aims to de-escalate the situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border. However, Hezbollah has reaffirmed its stance that no steps towards peace will be taken until a ceasefire is reached in Gaza. Furthermore, Israel has reaffirmed that it will not seek a settlement until the forces of Hezbollah are removed from southern Lebanon behind the Litani River, approximately 30km north of the border. The recent Israeli-Hamas ceasefire talks have not yet led to a resolution.

## Impact assessment

Israeli strikes inside Lebanon continue to intensify near the Israeli-Lebanese border and in the Bekaa Valley. Although discussions on a potential 6-week ceasefire in Gaza have been ongoing in Doha between Israeli and Hamas officials, it is uncertain whether they will succeed and whether they will de-escalate the current situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border. Both sides emphasize their commitment to avoiding war, yet several war threats have also been made. At the moment, an intensification of attacks in Lebanon is expected, primarily in urbanized areas in the Bekaa Valley which is considered to be a Hezbollah stronghold. As of March 12, 8 attacks have been performed in the region, as opposed to 5 attacks throughout February. Furthermore, a precision attack in southern Beirut has already transpired in January, and it is not unlikely that others may follow. These attacks may take place in important Hezbollah strongholds such as Haret Hreik in the Dahiyeh suburb, which is situated in the north of the Beirut Airport. Possible attacks could also cause damage to local infrastructure like the M51 highway, connecting Beirut with the airport, thereby disrupting movement. At the moment, the closest attack to Beirut transpired in Hrajel, which is around 40km to the north of Beirut. Additionally, the fighting in the south and its intensification will almost certainly create more displacement. With increased strikes, it is likely that this number will grow and will seek refuge in the north and near Beirut. This influx of people might impact Lebanon's fragile infrastructure and healthcare services.

## Advice from Forth Global

- Ensure that all employees travelling to Lebanon receive a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Do not travel to the South of Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley due to the intensity of the hostilities.
- Closely monitor the local and international media for updates on the situation.
- Ensure that contingency and security plans are up-to-date and that staff are aware of them.

## Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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