



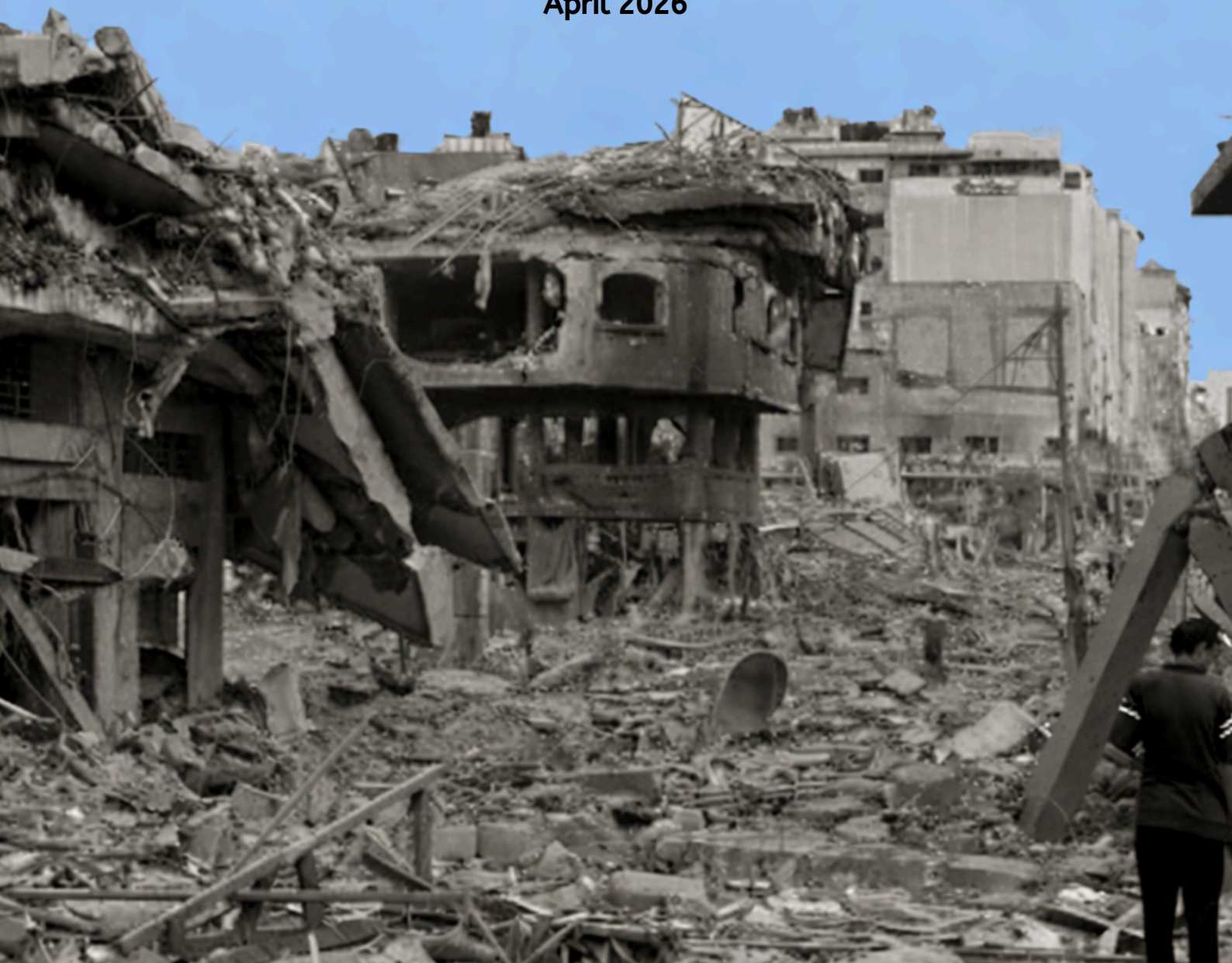
Statement- 3

Syrian Refugees Remain Acutely Vulnerable During Times of Crisis

Access Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)

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The intensification of Israeli hostilities across Lebanon – described as “the fastest growing and most severe displacement crisis” - continues to exact a devastating humanitarian toll, forcibly displacing more than 1.3 million people over the past month, including 350,000 children.¹ In April, illegal Israeli airstrikes have targeted expansive areas across Lebanese territory including heavily populated civilian areas and areas hosting Syrian refugees, with airstrikes concentrated in the southern regions, the Bekaa, and the southern suburbs of Beirut. Since April 13, such attacks have resulted in at least 2,089 people killed and 6,762 injured, with 648 children and 158 medical workers.² Since 16 April, a 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon took effect, but ongoing explosions are reported in southern Lebanon as Israeli troops blew up homes in border towns they continue to control.³ The Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) continue to monitor.

On 8 April, Israel launched a massive wave of airstrikes across Lebanon, just hours after US and Iran agreed to a ceasefire.⁴ Over the course of ten minutes, Israel struck approximately 100 targets across the country without prior warning, triggering widespread panic, widescale destruction and mass displacement.⁵ According to Lebanese Civil Defense, more than 350 civilians were killed and at least 1,165 people wounded as a result⁶ with numbers continuing to rise as more bodies are recovered.

Under international law, indiscriminate attacks – which are those without a specific military objective and impact civilians or civilian objects without distinction⁷ - are prohibited. In previous military operations in Gaza and Lebanon, Israel has demonstrated a pattern of targeting civilians, including refugees, which may amount to indiscriminate attacks.⁸ For

¹ Al Jazeera – How Israel’s invasion of Lebanon created a humanitarian crisis, 07 April 2026. See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/4/7/how-israels-invasion-of-southern-lebanon-created-a-humanitarian-crisis>

² Lebanon Public Health Emergency Operation Centre Update, 13 April 2026. See: <https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/images/Prevention/PHEOC/Cumulative%20Emergency%20Report/13-4-2026.pdf>

³ Middle East Eye – Israeli troops blow up homes in southern Lebanon despite ceasefire, 18 April 2026. See: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/live-blog/live-blog-update/israeli-troops-blow-homes-southern-lebanon-despite-ceasefire>

⁴ UN News – US/Iran ceasefire announced; strikes continue in Lebanon, 08 April 2026. See: <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/news/2026/04/117443/middle-east-live-8-april-us-iran-ceasefire-announced-strikes>

⁵ Zones include Beirut, and its southern suburbs of Dahieyeh, Bchamoun, Aramoun, Zahle, Saida, Baalbak and Kayfoun.

⁶ [Lebanon’s Health Ministry website](#)

⁷ IHL database – Definition of Indiscriminate Attacks. See: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule12>

⁸ Lebanon Public Health Emergency Operation Centre Update, 13 April 2026. See: <https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/images/Prevention/PHEOC/Cumulative%20Emergency%20Report/13-4-2026.pdf>

instance, strikes have included 93 attacks on emergency medical services, 101 medical vehicles and 20 medical facilities have been impacted, and six hospitals have been forced to close after being directly struck or located in close proximity to unable to operate safely.⁹ Israeli attacks have also directly impacted the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) forces and positions with two Indonesian peacekeepers were killed and two others injured when a roadside explosion hit a UNIFIL marked convoy. The attacks on civilian infrastructure, including the intentional targeting of housing used by civilians, may constitute war crimes under the Fourth Geneva Convention.¹⁰ The use of wide-area effect and evacuation orders suggesting forced or permanent displacement may amount to unlawful forcible transfer and collective punishment and are all prohibited under international law.

Israel operations in Southern Lebanon

Israeli military operations have triggered mass displacement on an unprecedented scale with more than 600,000 people displaced from southern Lebanon.¹¹ Israeli airstrikes have repeatedly struck civilian homes and infrastructure, including bridges connecting areas south of the Litani River to the rest of the country with at least nine crossings impacted between mid-March and early April.¹² Most recently, strikes have rendered the last operational bridge over the Litani River unusable, effectively cutting off tens of thousands of civilians from access to humanitarian aid, food, healthcare, and safe shelter.¹³ These developments have also coincided with Israel ground invasion of southern Lebanon on 16 March 2026, where the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has deployed around 50,000 troops and have openly articulated plans to establish a “security zone” extending up to the Litani River – suggesting a possibility of permanent displacement of civilians and the entrapment of civilians in high-risk areas of the south.¹⁴ Israel’s Minister of Defence, Katz has further called for the destruction of “all houses” in border villages of Lebanon “in accordance with the model used in Rafah and Beit Hanoun in Gaza”. As practices observed in Gaza, where the widespread destruction of civilian housing - described by academics as domicide - has been used to systematically devastate

⁹ Lebanon Public Health Emergency Operation Centre Update, 13 April 2026. See: <https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/images/Prevention/PHEOC/Cumulative%20Emergency%20Report/13-4-2026.pdf>

¹⁰ IHL, Geneva Convention on Civilians, 1949. See: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-53/commentary/2025>

¹¹ Katz says Israel will demolish Lebanon border villages, 31 March 2026. See: https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/katz-says-israel-will-demolish-lebanon-border-villages-create-gaza-style-buffer-zone/

¹² Human Rights Watch – Israeli strikes kill hundreds, damage vital bridge, 10 April 2026. See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/04/10/lebanon-israeli-strikes-kill-hundreds-damage-vital-bridge>

¹³ Human Rights Watch – Israeli strikes kill hundreds, damage vital bridge, 10 April 2026. See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/04/10/lebanon-israeli-strikes-kill-hundreds-damage-vital-bridge>

¹⁴ IDF expands offensive in Southern Lebanon, 16 March 2026. See: <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2026/03/16/targeted-ground-operation-idf-expands-offensive-in-southern-lebanon/>

residential areas and make return impossible, Israeli authorities have further indicated that the displaced may not be permitted to return to their homes until security conditions are met, fuelling fears of a new illegal occupation of southern Lebanon create a “buffer zone” along the border.¹⁵

Impact of Israel operations on refugees

Syrian refugees constitute a substantial proportion of the displaced population in Lebanon, particularly in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa. While no reliable data is currently available due to ongoing movement and registration gaps, strikes have repeatedly impacted locations where refugees live and work, including farms, residential areas, camps, and public roads. Syrian refugees are acutely exposed to harm with limited access to safe alternatives or viable pathways to protection.

The Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) field team has documented a series of incidents throughout this period specifically impacting Syrian refugees. On 28 March, seven Syrian refugees were killed and eight others injured in an airstrike on the town of Al-Hanniyah in the Tyre district. On 1 April, four Syrians were killed following an airstrike on the Maaroub road in southern Lebanon. On 3 April, a series of airstrikes targeted multiple towns, including Shaaitiyeh (Tyre district), Sahmar (West Bekaa), and Al-Ramadiyah, resulting in several refugees killed. One Syrian refugee was killed and four injured in Shaaitiyeh, while five refugees were killed in Al-Ramadiyah, alongside additional casualties reported elsewhere. On 8 April, twelve Syrian refugees, including children, were killed in strikes on buildings sheltering refugees in Beirut. On 11 April, four members of a Syrian refugee family were killed in an airstrike in southern Lebanon. The following day, a Syrian refugee was killed in a strike in the Nabatieh area, and on 13 April, seven Syrian workers were killed in an airstrike on the Abbassiyeh forest area in the Tyre district.

Based on these documented incidents and likely significantly underreported, the number of Syrian refugees killed by Israeli airstrikes stands at a minimum of 41 killed and more than 23 injured. However, given the constraints on available data, the actual death toll is likely to be significantly higher.

Humanitarian and economic crisis following Israeli attacks

Within the span of a month, the humanitarian and economic situation in Lebanon has significantly deteriorated into a nationwide state of emergency. As noted by the United Nations, “needs in Lebanon exceed the available capacity,” with available shelters severely

¹⁵ Le Monde – What is Israel’s military objective in Lebanon?, 4 April 2026. See: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2026/04/04/what-is-israel-s-military-objective-in-lebanon_6752111_4.html

overcrowded and nearly half of the country's public schools now repurposed as reception centers for displaced populations.¹⁶

Syrian refugees continue to face acute barriers in accessing these already strained emergency services that are primarily Government led. Many are forced to rely on independent shelters run by local organizations and remain outside formal government led shelter system, where access to basic services is more limited. The insufficient capacity and inadequate shelter conditions has resulted in undignified living situations and heightened protection risks and is forcing families to return to damaged homes and unsafe areas in the South and the southern suburbs of Beirut for lack of safe and affordable housing alternatives.¹⁷ For instance, in the Bekaa region, only a limited number of shelters in Bar Elias and Ghazze, have been established under the supervision of local associations, despite the high concentration of displaced families and Syrian refugees in need. These shelters accommodate only a few hundred individuals, while food assistance and essential supplies remain insufficient relative to the scale of needs.

The ACHR field team has documented further cases of Syrian refugees being excluded from collective shelters run by the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), Many refugees displaced from southern Lebanon, Beirut, and the Bekaa report a lack of assistance and discrimination on the basis of their nationality or perceived political affiliation. Refugee families describe being denied entry to shelters or asked to leave after arrival, leaving them with no viable alternatives. Attempts to seek support from UNHCR have, in several cases, gone unanswered, forcing displaced families to relocate to other governorates and rely on already overstretched informal networks of relatives and acquaintances.

Regarding medical care, refugees face significant obstacles in obtaining medical services due to cost barriers, and even when fees are relatively low, many remain excluded from formal health response programs due to a lack of funding, pressure on health system and the inability of refugees to pay fees or meet the legal registration requirements which results in some of them being excluded from basic coverage.

Economically, Israeli attacks are unfolding in a country already facing severe socio-economic challenges after years of compounded crises, including economic collapse, political instability, and previous conflict-related displacement. These conditions have significantly weakened public services and community coping capacities, leaving large segments of the population in a state of heightened vulnerability. Within this context, Israeli airstrikes have further destabilised local economies and directly disrupted income-generating activities, particularly in the agricultural and service sectors where many Syrian refugees and migrant workers are employed. In the South for instance, the sudden loss of income for large numbers of workers,

¹⁶ Press briefing of the UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric, 10 April 2026. See: <https://press.un.org/en/2026/db260410.doc.htm>

¹⁷ Protection Working Group – Emergency response meeting, 7 April 2026.

has also impacted refugee and migrant workers with many left behind by employers, in some cases in unsafe areas in the South and Nabatieh.¹⁸ This has had a direct and severe impact on livelihoods, with many losing their jobs or having their wages suspended, while others have not been paid due to employers' security concerns. In parallel, the cost of living has risen sharply, impacting the cost of food, heating, rent, and transportation forcing refugees into further debt and into homelessness.

As one refugee working in delivery services described:

"I stopped working due to fear of airstrikes... I am no longer able to secure an income, and I sent my family to Syria despite the dangers of the road, because (Syria) has become safer than staying under bombardment (in Lebanon)."

Moreover, ongoing Israeli airstrikes and additional security measures by Lebanese security actors at checkpoints have significantly restricted freedom of movement within Lebanon. Local-level restrictions have also intensified with several municipalities adopted arbitrarily measures directed towards Syrian refugees, including curfews, requirements to carry specific identification documents, and limitations on housing and movement. For example, the municipality of Tamnin al-Fawqa issued a notice prohibiting all Syrian residents from moving between 6 pm and 6 am. These restrictions have contributed to an increasingly hostile environment, discrimination and exclusion of Syrian refugees with ACHR field teams documenting incidents of physical assaults against Syrian refugees in multiple areas and reports of arrest and detention, and further allegations of financial extortion in exchange for release.

Movement and return

Israeli attacks continue to drive cross-border movements from Lebanon into Syria. According to the UNHCR, more than 277,000 people crossed into Syria through three official border points between 2 March and 12 April, including the vast majority of around 234,000 Syrians (among them refugees who had previously sought safety in Lebanon), as well as approximately 43,000 Lebanese fleeing intense Israeli bombardments.¹⁹ Of note, these figures do not account for many displaced crossing through unofficial routes.

However, movement along the Lebanon-Syria border has become increasingly complex and unpredictable. On 4 April, warnings were issued by the Israeli military to evacuate the Masnaa official border crossing, prompting the Lebanese authorities to evacuate the area and

¹⁸ Protection Working Group – Emergency response meeting, 7 April 2026.

¹⁹ UNHCR Syria, Flash Update #2, 13 April 2026. See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-syria-flash-update-2-middle-east-situation-13-april-2026>

temporarily close the crossing due to security threats before it was later reopened.²⁰ This disruption placed additional pressure on other crossings, particularly the Al-Qaa crossing which complicated already precarious in Syria. The Arida crossing had reopened on 7 March but remained limited to pedestrian traffic due to a damaged bridge.²¹ The rising cost of transportation to Syria, with individual fares reaching approximately 150 dollars, has also made return an increasingly heavy financial burden for families already facing harsh living conditions.

In Syria, many returning families report feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. New arrivals face urgent needs, including food, shelter, healthcare, and psychological support and conditions in Syria continue to remain unsafe and not durable.²² As Israeli bombardments continue to affect civilian areas, these movements are likely to increase in the coming weeks, and the difficult and often coerced pressures faced by displaced populations, many of whom are returning to conditions and circumstances that fall short of standards of safety, dignity, and voluntariness.

²⁰ AFP – Israeli says will strike Lebanon-Syria border crossing, 4 April 2026. See: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2026/04/israel-says-will-strike-lebanon-syria-border-crossing>

²¹ UN Geneva – Press briefing, 31 March 2026. See: <https://www.unognewsroom.org/teleprompter/en/3076/un-geneva-press-briefing-31-march-2026>

²² UN Geneva – Press briefing, 31 March 2026. See: <https://www.unognewsroom.org/teleprompter/en/3076/un-geneva-press-briefing-31-march-2026>



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