



# CHILDREN DESERVE PEACE

PROTECTING CHILDREN'S RIGHT  
IN LEBANON AMID ONGOING CONFLICT



# CHILDREN ARE THE FIRST VICTIMS

The ongoing conflict in Lebanon has caused devastating damage to residential areas and civilian infrastructure, resulting in over 3,000 casualties, including 231 children, and nearly 15,000 injuries, with numbers continuing to rise (3,516 casualties and 14,929 injuries as of November 18, according to the Ministry of Public Health). This has led to widespread displacement, affecting more than 1.2 million individuals (according to the Government of Lebanon Disaster Risk Management unit), many of whom are forced to sleep in streets, parks, and beaches.

Children are suffering the most from this, often leaving their homes with only a few belongings, significantly disrupting their routines and impacting their psychological well-being and mental health.

Additionally, children face severe disruptions to their education, as the majority of public schools have been converted into collective shelters. Currently, more than 500 public schools (505, according to Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education)—around 50% of Lebanon's public schools—are now being used as shelters. With others being permanently closed due to their locations in conflict zones or becoming non-operational as a result of the ongoing conflict.

**Every child has the fundamental right to live in peace. This brief advocates for an immediate ceasefire and emphasizes the urgent need for humanitarian interventions focused on the protection, education, and well-being of children.**

## KEY ISSUES

- **Impact on psychological well-being and mental health :**

Both children and their families are experiencing severe psychological stress, which significantly affects their concentration and overall well-being and mental health. Children exposed to violence, bombings and the stress of living in overcrowded, unsafe shelters are at risk of developing long-term psychological trauma. Childhood is the most important period in a person's cognitive, physical, emotional, linguistic and social development. It is during this phase that the foundations of well-being and resilience are laid, which will influence the future adult's mental and physical health, learning ability and capacity to form and maintain relationships with others. The psychological traumas associated with physical injuries, deprivation, the alteration of family and social environment, exposure to bombings, and being confronted with prolonged and excessive activation of stress, all of this have effects on children development, with repercussions on their social and economic inclusion for the rest of their lives.

- **Impact on children's education :**

The school year, which officially began on November 4, is already facing numerous challenges. The majority of public schools have been transformed into collective shelters. While the Minister of Education has issued a decision to facilitate classes at schools that have been converted into shelters when possible, or to allow students to attend nearby schools and institutions that are facilitating classes, many children fled without essential school supplies, such as books and stationery, and are not in a psychological state that enables them to concentrate.

Additionally, those receiving education online encounter challenges such as slow internet access and a lack of electronic devices, such as laptops or tablets, needed to attend classes.

Furthermore, overcrowded shared homes and shelters fail to provide suitable study environments, hampering children's ability to sleep and focus on their studies.

Moreover, ongoing escalations threaten educational stability. Attacks are increasing in both frequency and scope, with many occurring during the day. This has led to distress and fear among students, causing a loss of concentration and raising concerns about their safety and well-being. On November 5, an airstrike targeted the Jiyeh area, causing damage to a school located in the area. The damage was primarily material and no injuries were reported. On November 12, another airstrike hit the Hadath area, causing distress among children attending nearby schools. Similarly, on November 14, an airstrike struck the Choueifat area. Ongoing airstrikes and sonic booms present an additional challenge to children's education.

Beyond the immediate loss of learning, the lack of access to school and education deprives children of safe, child-friendly spaces that provide a sense of normalcy and security. They lose access to essential support services, as schools serve as entry points for psychological and psychosocial support services, child protection services, and other essential services, such as drinking water or regular food. In the absence of an adequate support system, children become more exposed to protection risks such as forced labor, early and forced marriage, exploitation and various forms of violence, including gender-based violence.

**Displacement risks :**

The displacement of families has resulted in increased protection risks, including family separation, which heightens the risk of exploitation and abuse for children. Additionally, the living conditions in overcrowded shelters expose families to heightened health risks, including the spread of diseases due to inadequate hygiene. Another significant displacement risk is the financial instability faced by displaced families, which increases children's vulnerability. As families struggle to meet basic needs, children are often left without access to essential services.

**Inclusive humanitarian response :**

In the current crisis, some populations are more fragile and at risk of being left behind. These include non-Lebanese populations, such as Syrian and Palestinian refugees and migrants. It is essential to ensure that the right to assistance is respected for all. Humanitarian assistance must be delivered impartially, based on need and vulnerability rather than nationality or legal status. All displaced individuals—regardless of their background—must have equitable access to essential services such as shelter, water, healthcare, education, and food. This inclusive approach is essential to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** Immediate ceasefire by all parties to the conflict: A call for all parties to the conflict to immediately implement a lasting ceasefire, with the international community acting swiftly to support this effort in order to prevent further civilian casualties and ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- 2** Adherence to international law: All parties to the conflict must comply with International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure (such as hospitals and healthcare facilities, schools, airports, and other essential services).
- 3** Increased funding: Emergency funding must be enhanced to meet the rising needs of affected populations.
- 4** Inclusive humanitarian assistance: Humanitarian assistance must be inclusive of all displaced populations, regardless of nationality or legal status. Non-Lebanese populations, especially Syrians and Palestinians refugees, migrants must be granted equal access to essential services, including shelter, water, food, healthcare, and education.
- 5** Safe humanitarian access: All parties to the conflict should permit safe and unobstructed access for humanitarian operations. This includes the protection of humanitarian workers, medical teams, first responders, and humanitarian sites, as well as the facilitation of humanitarian operations. Ensuring the safety of aid workers and medical personnel is critical to maintaining the delivery of essential services to vulnerable populations.
- 6** Psychological support: Ensure psychological support for children and their families to help them cope with trauma and the challenges of displacement.
- 7** Focus on education: Ensure access to education to uphold children's right to learn, providing stability, support, and hope during this critical time.
- 8** Protection measures for displaced children: Implement measures to protect displaced children from separation, exploitation, and abuse, including ensuring the safe reunification of families. Provide unaccompanied minors with appropriate protection, and psychosocial support. Additionally, address the financial instability faced by displaced families by ensuring children have access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and nutrition. Strengthen living conditions in shelters to reduce health risks, particularly through improved hygiene and sanitation.

Children in Lebanon are enduring unprecedented hardship due to the ongoing conflict and instability. It is essential to uphold their right to live in peace. A coordinated international effort is needed to establish a ceasefire, deliver humanitarian aid, and ensure access to essential services. Protecting Lebanon's children is vital for safeguarding both their future and the future of the country.

**The time to act is now.**