



**MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL ESCALATION
EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Situation Report #11

21 May 2026



IN NUMBERS



702,670 displaced people assisted in **Lebanon** with food and cash to date.



125,274 displaced people received date bars at **Syria** crossings.



33,820 refugees in settlement supported with food and cash assistance in **Iran**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- As the Strait of Hormuz crisis deepens amid persistent uncertainty, regional escalation continues to disrupt food systems, trade routes and humanitarian access, with rising fuel and food prices reinforcing each other across the region, further constraining access to food in crisis-affected settings and undermining vulnerable households' access to basic needs.
- In Iran, WFP assistance supports more than 33,000 refugees across 20 settlements while inflation, and pressure on household food affordability continue to intensify.
- WFP has reached 702,670 conflict-affected people in Lebanon since 2 March, while also supporting access through convoys and the Jordan-led humanitarian corridor despite major security and deconfliction constraints.
- In Syria, WFP border distributions remain suspended pending reassessment, while in Afghanistan alternative routes have tripled transport costs due to longer distances and additional transshipment points, placing even greater pressure on WFP Afghanistan's already underfunded operations.

Global Food Insecurity Impact

- The Middle East escalation continues to unfold in a highly volatile and uncertain environment, marked by a fragile ceasefire alongside heightened tensions across key regional flashpoints. While diplomatic efforts have opened a narrow window for de-escalation, instability in the Strait of Hormuz and across the Gulf continues. The crisis – now in its third month - continues to disrupt critical energy and trade routes, driving up fuel and food prices, constraining supply chains, and placing sustained pressure on humanitarian operations and access to food and other basic services across the region and beyond.
- Humanitarian logistics operations are adapting under a challenging environment, with disruptions to key corridors, and intermittent port access increasing transit times and costs. Despite these constraints, diversified routes, strengthened coordination and stock prepositioning are helping sustain the delivery of critical assistance, although fuel volatility and rising food prices continue to exert pressure on operations.
- Food inflation remains acute in crisis-affected settings, and is increasingly visible in staple markets. Food Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) cost has increased most sharply in Gaza (+77 percent), while wheat flour price has surged to around 52 percent since the onset reflecting severe market disruption and rapidly eroding access to basic food. More moderate wheat flour increases in Egypt (10.2 percent) and Iraq (11 percent) are nonetheless tightening affordability for vulnerable households heavily dependent on bread.
- Since the escalation, while sharp fuel price rises - particularly in Lebanon (+62.3 percent) and Yemen (+44 percent) - are driving higher transport and production costs, accelerating the spillover of inflation into food markets.

WFP Response

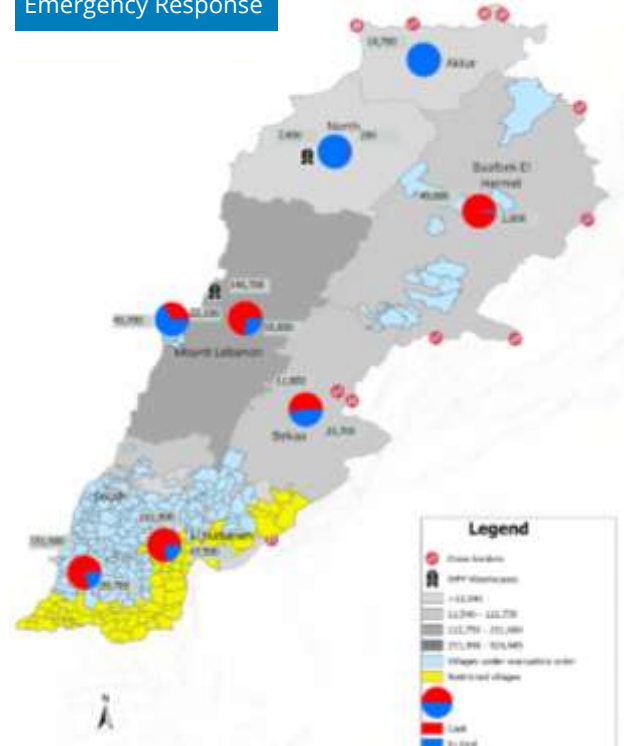
WFP continues to support affected people across the Middle East, leveraging contingency planning and pre-positioned food stocks; amid escalating needs, critically low funding and pre-existing unmet humanitarian demands.

Iran

- According to the Government of Iran, approximately [3.2 million people](#) (around 800,000 households) have been internally relocated, one of the largest internal movements in the country in recent decades. An estimated 75 percent are in Tehran, currently accommodated in temporary facilities, including schools, guesthouses, and sports halls. In some locations, nearly 17 percent of the population lacks access to clean water due to overcrowding.
- Cross-border movements have returned to pre-conflict levels, including daily crossings by traders for commercial purposes.
- Essential foods remain available and markets are operating, but food and beverage inflation reached 115.4 percent in April–May. The main problem is no longer supply, but rapidly eroding purchasing power. Increases were broad and severe: 43 of 53 tracked items rose faster than urban inflation, and 85 percent of essential items exceeded the crisis threshold. The steepest year-on-year rises included solid vegetable oil (+374.9 percent), liquid oil (+308 percent), and premium imported rice (+208.8 percent).
- WFP assistance in Iran remains uninterrupted, assisting 33,818 refugees across 20 settlements. As part of the ongoing inclusion of 7,000 newly referred refugees in WFP assistance, 829 refugees were added to the wheat flour recipient list in April, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 1,600 since March 2026, with additional eligible individuals expected to be incorporated progressively.
- In May, 544 refugees from 138 households were added to WFP's cash-based transfer (CBT) programme and received cash assistance, expanding support to newly eligible vulnerable families.
- Beneficiaries receive food and cash including daily bread through WFP-supported bakeries and wheat flour distributions (9 kg of wheat flour per person per month) supporting home-based baking in smaller locations. Due to prevailing insecurity and the shift to remote learning, school feeding continues through take-home rations for around 9,000 school children.
- WFP Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) to support a coordinated response. Progress on the Field-Level Agreement continues, with the draft now pending final review by IRCS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. WFP will also engage the MFA on the proposed partnership with IRCS.
- For the next six months (May – August 2026), WFP requires USD 20.7 million to sustain its regular operations and emergency response in Iran.

Lebanon

Emergency Response



- A third round of Lebanon–Israel talks on 14–15 May extended the ceasefire by 45 days, but hostilities continue, with Israeli airstrikes in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa and reported Hezbollah retaliatory activity maintaining a volatile security environment. In recent days, violence has escalated to its highest level since the 17 April ceasefire, as sustained military activity by both sides continues despite diplomatic efforts, underscoring the gap between political dialogue and realities on the ground.
- Displacement remains highly fluid after the ceasefire, with more than 1.05 million internally displaced people nationwide. The number of people staying in shelters continues to rise, reaching 129,500 across 634 shelters, while expanded evacuation warnings are driving repeated movements. Although some households have made temporary “go-and-see” visits, most displacement persists because of insecurity, infrastructure damage, Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) contamination, movement restrictions, and limited access to basic services.
- Since 7 May, a Jordan-led humanitarian corridor has provided a regional cargo route into Lebanon. In coordination with Jordanian authorities and partners, the WFP-led Logistics Cluster is supporting access and shared convoy movements on a cost-recovery basis to make cargo flows more predictable and efficient. On 21 May, a regional convoy traveled from Jordan to Lebanon via Syria, including 10 trucks to Tyre on behalf of UNHCR and WFP, carrying ready-to-eat rations, shelter kits, and kitchen kits. The assistance is expected to support 2,600 households, or nearly 10,400 conflict-affected people.

- Since 2 March, WFP has reached 702,670 conflict-affected people in Lebanon with food and cash assistance in shelters and communities, including 215,200 with food assistance and 544,800 with cash assistance (*modality figures overlap because some people received more than one form of support*).
 - WFP provided food assistance to 214,000 displaced individuals in 496 shelters across Lebanon. This includes the distribution of 5 million hot meals, 36,000 light Ready-to-Eat (RTEs), and more than two hundred thousand packs of bread, food parcels (dry rations) and snacks.
 - In coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, WFP's support through Shock Responsive Social Safety Net (SRSN) cash assistance reached 435,800 conflict-affected Lebanese people. A separate horizontal expansion of the cash assistance programme also supported 109,000 conflict-affected Syrian refugees.
 - WFP is scaling up its school meals response, focusing on high-displacement areas in the north and aiming to reach all functioning schools nationwide. Between 4 and 8 May, WFP reached 58,189 students (75 percent Lebanese and 25 percent refugees). Take-home rations have also reached 23,692 students in 60 public schools, helping families keep children in school.
- With WFP support, the Logistics Cluster facilitated three convoys of 23 trucks on 7, 12 and 14 May to Marjaayoun, Zifta and Sarba on behalf of partners and WFP, delivering humanitarian assistance to 7,297 households (29,220 conflict-affected people).
- Since the escalation began, 22 convoys have reached nearly 106,400 people (26,600 households) in hard-to-reach areas. However, due to negative or absent responses on deconfliction requests, 21 out of 43 convoys being planned have not been completed (48 percent).
- Based on WFP's latest emergency planning assumptions for May–August 2026, the response requires USD 44.1 million per month to sustain cash, food, and fuel assistance for conflict-affected populations, with funds received so far for the emergency, the total gap is USD 110 million.

Syria

- Cross-border flows into Syria remain high. As of 19 May, more than 448,582 people crossed into Syria from Lebanon since the escalation, including over 367,000 Syrians and 81,000 Lebanese. Among the Syrians, 25 percent have expressed an intention to return permanently (UNHCR). Most crossings occurred through Jdeidet Yabous (Rural Damascus) and Jousieh (Homs) crossings. Priority humanitarian needs have included food supplies, due to the lack of food at the border crossings, safe drinking water, shelter and non-food items (NFIs) and transportation.
- WFP border distributions remain suspended pending reassessment. For the next six months (June–November 2026), WFP Syria requires USD 190 million to sustain its regular operations.

Afghanistan

- About 162,300 refugees have [returned](#) to Afghanistan from Iran since 28 February.
- The conflict in Iran has suspended the Dubai-Iran pipeline, increasing pressure on WFP's nutrition support programmes. This is further compounded by ongoing Afghanistan–Pakistan border closures and funding shortfalls.
- In response to disruptions on the Dubai–Iran route, WFP Afghanistan has activated alternative supply corridors, including the Türkiye–Iran rail route and the Lapis Lazuli Corridor through Türkiye, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, and Turkmenistan, to transport food commodities sourced from Europe, Asia, and Türkiye. The first 700 mt of biscuits and vegetable oil are currently in transit via the Lapis Lazuli Corridor and are expected to arrive by the end of May. An additional 6,000 mt of SNF from Europe is planned for delivery over the next two months through northern and western corridors.
- However, these alternative routes have tripled transport costs due to longer distances and additional transshipment points, placing even greater pressure on WFP Afghanistan's already underfunded operations.

Contacts

For further information, please contact menaero.oim@wfp.org