



**MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL ESCALATION
EMERGENCY RESPONSE
Situation Report #4**
26 March 2026

IN NUMBERS



312,000 displaced people assisted in **Lebanon** with food and cash to date.



58,000 displaced people received date bars at **Syria** crossings.

33,000 refugees in settlement supported with food and cash assistance in **Iran**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Almost a month into the escalation, hostilities continue to intensify and expand across multiple fronts, driving displacement, disrupting livelihoods, and placing mounting strain on humanitarian operations amid persistent access constraints and limited funding.
- In Iran, WFP continues to provide food and cash assistance to around 33,000 Afghan refugees in settlements to help them meet their immediate food needs and stands ready to scale up assistance in response to rising arrivals.
- In Lebanon, as evacuation orders widen and displacement accelerates, access remains unpredictable, severely constraining life-saving assistance in hard-to-reach areas in the south. Ensuring safe, reliable humanitarian access, including effective deconfliction mechanisms, is urgent to respond effectively to growing humanitarian needs.
- In Syria, WFP has provided date bars to over 58,000 Syrian returnees and Lebanese arrivals at Jdeidet Yabous and Jousieh crossings.

Situation Update

- Escalations across the region are driving a rapidly increasing humanitarian crisis. Intensifying violence continues to trigger large-scale displacement, disrupt livelihoods, and sharply constrain access to food for communities already weakened by years of economic strain, conflict, or displacement.
- Insecurity and damage to infrastructure are disrupting food supply chains and limiting civilians' physical access to food.
- Market disruptions are driving sharp food price increases in the region, particularly for fresh foods; even where access partially resumes, high inflation—such as in Iran—leaves households with little capacity to absorb further shocks.
- The escalation is unfolding in a region critical to global fuel supplies and shipping routes. The impacts extend beyond the immediate conflict zones: disruptions to the region's energy supplies, transport corridors, and trade routes are reverberating globally, quickly driving up the cost of transporting food, fuel, and agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and heightening hunger risks well beyond the Middle East.
- The number of acutely food-insecure people is [projected](#) to rise by 45 million (18 percent) from pre-crisis levels, mainly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Middle East and North Africa region could witness a projected 24 percent increase in food insecurity in relative terms, affecting an additional 5.2 million people. Globally, this would increase the total from 318 million before the Middle East conflict to up to 363 million people in 2026.

- WFP operational costs are projected to rise sharply, with shipping costs alone increasing by around 18–20 percent. Despite efforts to shift to alternative ports and overland routes, even an immediate end to the crisis would still require an estimated 4–5 months for maritime operations to stabilize.

WFP Response

- As hostilities intensify and spread, WFP rapidly recalibrated operations in Iran, Lebanon and Syria following the activation of the Corporate Focus emergency phase for nine countries¹, drawing on contingency planning and pre-positioned food stocks to deliver a swift, region-wide coordinated response to meet surging food assistance needs. Other affected country offices have strengthened preparedness efforts and are closely tracking cross-border movements to enable a rapid scale-up of assistance as needs evolve.
- However, with funding already constrained, many countries are struggling to cover current requirements, leaving little room to support newly displaced people or withstand additional shocks.

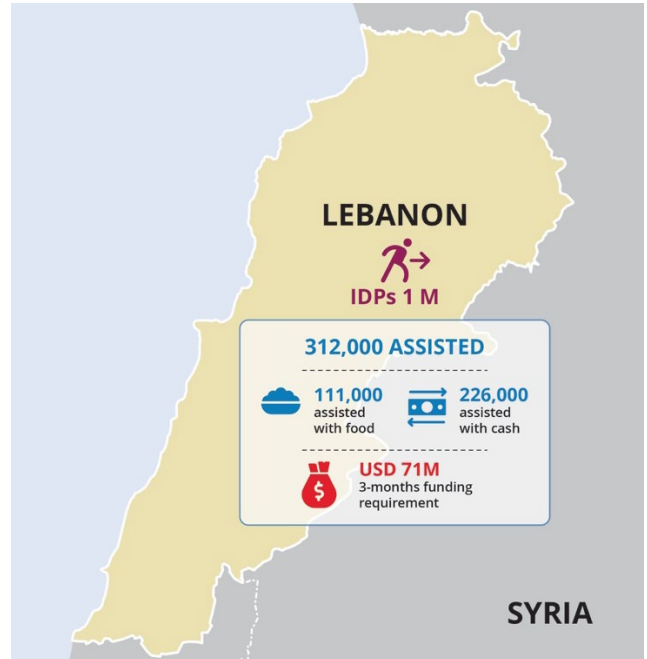
Iran

- Since the onset of conflict, large-scale population movements have been observed across Iran. Approximately 600,000 to one million households (around 3.2 million people) are estimated to be temporarily displaced due to the conflict., with many heading toward northern provinces.
- So far, markets remain functional in Iran with food availability stabilizing. However, a sharp increase in the prices of protein and vegetables has been observed. The price of chicken has risen by 40 percent, while the prices of some vegetables and fruits have increased by up to 45 percent.
- Internet connectivity across Iran has been largely disrupted. The national internet experienced a shutdown of approximately 600 hours, leaving most digital communication platforms inaccessible.
- WFP operations in the country continue without interruption, assisting approximately 33,000 Afghan refugees across 20 settlements with food and cash including daily bread through WFP-supported bakeries and wheat flour distributions supporting home-based baking in smaller locations.
- Although schools are currently closed due to the Iranian New Year holiday, the distribution

of school feeding items continues through take-home rations for around 9,000 school children.

- Under the recently launched three-month [UN flash appeal](#), **WFP requires USD 7.1 million, to assist 45,000 refugees living in Iran settlements** through monthly cash entitlements and wheat flour. In addition, 100,000 refugees living outside settlements will receive monthly cash-based transfers for three months, along with 100,000 individuals from host communities.

Lebanon



- As of 25 March, almost 136,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are staying in 660 shelters. Overcrowding is widespread, with many shelters reporting limited electricity, lack of heating, inadequate WASH facilities, and minimal privacy, heightening protection risks, particularly for women, girls, older people, persons with disabilities, and individuals requiring specialized care.
- WFP continues to swiftly respond to the urgent needs of people affected by the ongoing conflict. Since 2 March, **WFP has reached 312,000 conflict-affected people with food and cash assistance in shelters and across communities.**
 - In coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and under the Shock Responsive Social Safety Net (SRSN), WFP has reached 226,000 individuals with cash assistance.
 - Since 2 March, WFP has provided food assistance to around 17,000 conflict-

affected people staying outside shelters in host communities or hard-to-reach areas.

- Inside shelters, WFP provided food assistance to 94,000 displaced people in 373 shelters across Lebanon, covering more than 57 percent of the people staying in shelters. This included the distribution of 1.2 million hot meals, and thousands of light ready-to-eat (RTE), packs of bread, food parcels (dry rations) and snacks.
- WFP has surged support to the MoSA call center, expanding capacity by 30 percent through added equipment, improved connectivity, and targeted training, with surge recruitment ongoing. In parallel, WFP is supporting verification of IDPs' self-registered data via validation calls to enable timely payments and informed decision-making.
- Since the escalation began, the Food Security and Agriculture Sector's partners provided total of 1.8 million hot meals to IDPs in shelters. Partners also distributed 50,000 RTEs kits to support affected families with immediate food needs.
- The common storage facility at the Logistics and Telecommunication Cluster warehouse in Karantina is officially opened to partners, with storage capacity of 1,500 pallets. Discussions are ongoing to open the second consolidation point in Zahle to support convoys.
- Since 2 March, WFP has faced **rising denials and non-responses** to Humanitarian Notification System requests with the majority unanswered or denied (81 percent). WFP requires regular, urgent and unimpeded access to all areas across Lebanon, to ensure that assistance reaches those most vulnerable.
- The current emergency is unfolding against an already underfunded pipeline, with only 35 percent of requirements resourced, and

assistance already reduced or suspended due to funding shortfalls. As needs rapidly outpace available resources, **WFP requires USD 71 million to sustain the emergency scale-up over three months**, in addition to existing gaps, to avoid further disruption to assistance.

Syria

- As of 24 March, close to 164,800 Syrians and over 24,500 Lebanese have crossed into Syria. Among Syrians, nearly 47,000 have expressed intent for permanent return, reflecting both forced displacement and opportunistic returns.
- In response, **WFP distributed date bars to over 58,000 Syrian returnees and Lebanese arrivals** at Jdeidet Yabous and Jousieh border points so far.
- UNHAS flights remain suspended pending the reopening of Damascus airport.
- For the next six months (April–September 2026), **WFP Syria requires USD 186 million to sustain its regular operations.**

Afghanistan

- About 41,600 refugees have [returned](#) to Afghanistan from Iran since 28 February.
- WFP is prepared to scale up support for increased returns; however, severe funding shortfalls continue to constrain response capacity. In light of the intensified conflict along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border and the broader Middle East escalation, **WFP urgently requires USD 15.2 million to assist 320,000 people**—including 140,000 IDPs and 180,000 returnees from Iran—through food and nutrition assistance.

Contacts

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