



SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL ESCALATION EMERGENCY RESPONSE Situation Report #1 8 March 2026

IN NUMBERS

	200,000 displaced people assisted in Lebanon with food and cash to date.
	17,000 displaced people received date bars at Syria crossings.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- WFP is gravely concerned about the impact of the regional hostilities in the Middle East on vulnerable populations already facing acute food insecurity as well as supply chains and humanitarian access in a region long affected by multiple, protracted conflicts and economic instability.
- Across the region, WFP remains operational and scaling-up life-saving assistance for the growing humanitarian needs. However, WFP operations in the affected countries are already under severe strain due to significant funding shortfalls. Predictable access, protected infrastructure and sustained funding are critical to scale up emergency response efforts and reach those most in need.
- In Lebanon, within just five days of the escalation, WFP reached more than 200,000 conflict-affected people with food and cash assistance, demonstrating strong operational agility by ring within less 24 hours of mass displacement within the country.

Situation Update

- Since 28 February, the Middle East has been engulfed in a series of military escalations, triggering widespread internal displacement and cross-border population movements, extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure, including energy and port facilities and broader spillover, felt beyond the region. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the hostilities, facing loss of life, and deteriorating humanitarian conditions.
- Disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz, a transit route for around 20 percent of global oil and gas shipments, have led to transit warnings, reduced shipping traffic, heightened naval risks, and the diversion or suspension of commercial cargo. These developments are already increasing fuel and inland transport costs and affecting global shipping, energy and fertilizer markets.
- WFP is gravely concerned about the conflict's impact on commercial shipping and air travel placing increased pressure on global humanitarian supply chains that WFP operates, which are vital for the food security of millions of people globally. As of 6 March, WFP successfully negotiated to waive the emergency surcharges from core Shipping carriers, Maersk and CMA CGM, to alleviate financial burden on WFP and other humanitarian partners.
- A potential escalation involving both the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea would create an unprecedented dual chokepoint scenario for global trade and energy flows. Should the present scenario last, the increase in oil prices is expected to lead to higher food prices globally.

WFP Response

- At the onset of the emergency, WFP adjusted its operations and remained ready to respond rapidly as needs grow. Operations across the region, including Lebanon, Iran, Türkiye, Iraq, Armenia, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Yemen, have updated their emergency preparedness and contingency plans to address evolving risks, and maintain operational continuity.
- WFP's foremost priority has been the safety and wellbeing of its staff, with duty-of-care measures actively prioritized and continuously monitored across the region as the situation continues to evolve.
- As the conflict intensified, WFP has activated the Corporate Focus emergency phase for the Middle East Regional Escalation across nine of its operations in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe region (Iran, Armenia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, State of Palestine, Syria, Türkiye, and Yemen). WFP is prepared to rapidly deliver a flexible mix of assistance modalities, including in-kind food, hot meals, and cash-based transfers, to ensure timely and tailored support to affected populations.
- As airspace closures and contested maritime routes continue to constrain operations, WFP and its partners are rapidly adapting supply chains to maintain continuity of assistance. This includes increased reliance on suppliers and transit routes in Türkiye, Egypt, Jordan, and Pakistan, as well as the use of overland corridors between the UAE and the Levant where feasible. Egypt's fully operational ports and the Suez Canal remain critical logistical hubs supporting regional operations.

Iran

- While no large-scale cross-border outflows have been confirmed, UNHCR [estimates](#) that approximately 100,000 people reportedly departed major cities in Iran, moving toward rural and peripheral areas. Population movements may increase should the situation further deteriorate.
- WFP continues to **assist around 33,000 refugees with food and cash assistance**. Of the 20 refugee settlements supported by WFP, **eight have fully operational WFP-supported bakeries producing around 25,000 loaves daily** and supporting

75 percent of the refugee population. In the smaller settlements hosting approximately 8,300 people, WFP provides wheat flour and home-based ovens to bake daily bread. WFP wheat flour distribution is underway, with stocks sufficient to meet needs across all Afghan refugee settlements through the end of April.

Lebanon

- Unabated airstrikes and unprecedented evacuation orders across the country have displaced more than 102,000 people, now staying in 484 shelters, of which 431 already reached maximum capacity.
- Since 2 March, **WFP has provided food assistance to almost 40,300 displaced people in 159 shelters** across Lebanon through cooperating partners and in collaboration with the Government of Lebanon. This includes hot meals, light Ready-to-Eat (RTEs), and packs of bread. Additionally, WFP delivered 2,500 packs of bread to El Nabatieh Union of Municipalities to be distributed in surrounding villages.
- WFP and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), **activated emergency cash transfers for 183,200 people**, leveraging the established national shock-responsive social safety net, prioritizing households from evacuated villages, with high probability of being displaced or directly affected by airstrikes.
- Moreover, under WFP's Emergency Preparedness Trust Fund (EPTF), thanks to ECHO funding, 404 mt of pre-positioned RTEs were dispatched from Türkiye to support the response to the escalating humanitarian situation in Lebanon. The EPTF is a multi-donor mechanism that strengthens WFP's rapid emergency response capacity in the MENAEE region through the pre-positioning of food stocks, deployment of mobile kitchens and bakeries, and enhanced digital tools for fast beneficiary registration and cash-based assistance.
- Nationwide school closures have led to the suspension of WFP's school meals programme, affecting continuity of assistance to vulnerable children. WFP is implementing mitigation measures to safeguard pre-positioned food stocks.



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Syria

- As per UNHCR, cross-border movements from Lebanon into Syria continue to increase, with over 67,000 predominantly Syrian families, and over 6,000 Lebanese, having crossed to date mainly through Masnaa and Jousieh crossings.
- WFP has **distributed over 17,000 date bars at Masnaa** and Jousieh crossings in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.
- Following the Syrian Civil Defense under the Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management activation of a humanitarian response at Jdeidet Yabous, WFP is working closely with other UN partners at the border to assess needs and coordinate immediate support.

Palestine

- Fuel has been prepositioned at bakeries, sufficient to cover approximately 14 days of operations. However, upstream constraints continue to severely restrict the flow of humanitarian goods into Gaza.
- While the reopening of Kerem Shalom for humanitarian assistance is a positive step, sustained and predictable access across all crossings remains essential. Without it, WFP will be compelled to reduce food rations to 25 percent of daily requirements for approximately 1.3 million people.
- Moreover, impacts on food security are already evident in Gaza, with market food prices reported to be rising rapidly as households engage in stockpiling amid growing uncertainty. For instance, within a span of two days, flour prices increased by 270 percent, causing a partial withdrawal from local markets.

Yemen

So far, the regional hostilities have had a limited direct impact on WFP operations in Yemen. However, UNHAS temporarily suspended all flights on 28 February due to airspace restrictions, with operations resuming successfully on 2 March. WFP Yemen is updating its contingency plans in the event of further escalation.

Türkiye, Iraq and Armenia

- In case of refugees influx from Iran, WFP stands ready to provide food or cash assistance for an initial three-month period, in coordination with the respective Governments and cooperating partners.
- WFP teams continue to assess local emergency capacities and observe populations movements along the border with Iran as part of the emergency preparedness efforts.

Contacts

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