



Caritas expresses grave concern regarding the recent escalation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon, which has resulted in a significant loss of life and injury, particularly among civilians.

According to the Ministry of Health, on Tuesday 24th September, at noon, at least 569 deaths, and 1,835 injuries have been recorded due to a series of Israeli airstrikes across Lebanon. Tragically, this number includes 50 children and 94 women, along with several health workers.¹ The situation is especially dire in southern Lebanon, where nearly 500,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in the last 48 hours, heading towards northern regions.² Further massive displacement is expected from the South, Beirut and the Bekaa.

This latest wave of violence follows last week's attack on civilians by Israel in Lebanon and Syria, as well as Hezbollah's launches of hundreds of rockets into Israel. Israel's attack on civilians in Lebanon involving the explosion of various electronic devices - such as pagers, two-way radios, and others - is of particular concern and shows disregard of international humanitarian law. This attack has resulted in the death of at least 37 people- including two children- and injuries of over 3,400 people in Lebanon alone, leaving many with permanent disabilities.³

The situation remains volatile, and our primary concern is for the safety and wellbeing of all civilians affected by this conflict.

International humanitarian law clearly stipulates that all parties involved in an armed conflict must differentiate between the civilian population and combatants, as well as between civilian objects and military objectives. It is also crucial to minimize collateral damage as much as possible.

In light of these tragic events, we strongly urge all parties to exercise utmost restraint, immediately cease the violence and prioritize the protection of civilians.

We call on all States with influence in the region to avoid further escalation and prevent further loss of life. The protection of civilians and adherence to international humanitarian law should be of utmost priority.

Dialogue and diplomacy are the only sustainable solutions to this conflict. We urge all parties to return to the negotiating table and work towards a peaceful resolution that respects human rights, accountability and the equal dignity of all people in the region.

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-hezbollah-exchange-fire-after-lebanon-suffers-huge-casualties-2024-09-24/>

² <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/nearly-half-million-people-in-lebanon-displaced-due-to-israeli-attacks-says-foreign-minister/3340581>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/09/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-explosions-across-lebanon>