

# UN Refugee Chief Urges Support for Lebanon as Risk Grows that Syria Conflict Could Cross Borders



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18 June 2013 – UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres kicked off a visit to the region to mark World Refugee Day by meeting with leaders and refugees in Lebanon today. Mr Guterres sounded the alarm about the massive support needed for refugees and for the countries and communities hosting them. He noted that the long-feared spillover of the Syrian crisis into neighboring countries is becoming a "harsh reality" that must be addressed "to prevent the flames of war from spreading across the Middle East."

Presenting the largest ever humanitarian funding plan for Lebanon, Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Mr. Guterres appealed to a room full of international donors for \$1.7 billion dollars that will be required for Lebanon. Forming part of the updated Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP5), the appeal for Lebanon includes \$450 million for the government of Lebanon's own response capacity community for its support so far and highlighted the increasing challenges Lebanon is facing.

Amid worsening violence, the number of Syrians fleeing to Lebanon is projected to reach well over one million by the end of 2013. The pressure on local communities is overwhelming. "Lebanon is a small country with a big heart," Mr. Guterres told reporters in Beirut. "There is not a village, city or town in Lebanon that is not hosting Syrian refugees," he added. Echoing this concern, Lebanon's Minister of Social Affairs Wael Abou Faour said that "Lebanon alone cannot cope with the Syrian refugee crisis. We are talking about Lebanon's stability."

In a statement, Mr. Guterres noted that, from the beginning, the crisis in Syria has posed a threat to regional peace and security. "This threat is now becoming a harsh reality with an increasing risk of spillover of the conflict into neighboring countries," he said. "The international community must overcome its divisions and come together to stop the fighting if we want to prevent the flames of war from spreading across the Middle East."

"Lebanon and other neighboring countries need massive support so that they can continue to receive and help so many refugees and preserve stability," the High Commissioner said. "It is very important to support humanitarian organizations. But it is just as important to directly support the government, the relevant Ministries and local communities."

While in Beirut Mr. Guterres also met with the Lebanese President, Michel Sleiman. Mr Guterres will continue his visit to the region in Jordan on 19 – 20 June. World Refugee Day is marked every year on 20 June.

For more information on this topic, please contact:

In Beirut, Dana Sleiman on mobile +961 3 827 323

On mission in Beirut/Amman, Melissa Fleming on mobile +41 79 557 9122