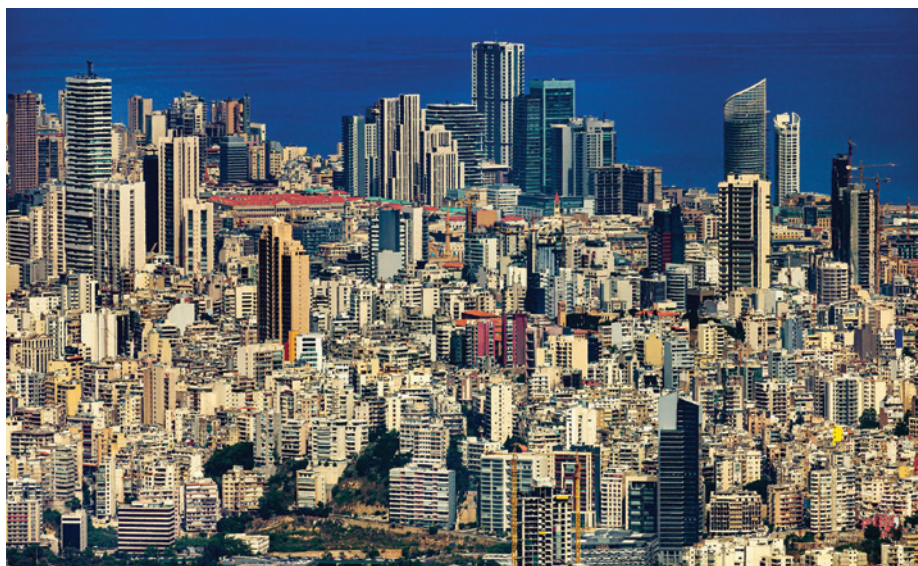


# Jesuit Coalition in Lebanon

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City skyline, Beirut, Lebanon

In the war against Iran, there has been little attention paid to the fact that Israel has also been conducting a war in Lebanon. Claiming that they are rooting out Hezbollah fighters, Israel's bombing campaign, according to the United Nations, has displaced nearly 700,000 people from their lands. That number includes 200,000 children, with hundreds of confirmed deaths of non-combatants. While 120,000 have found refuge in government shelters, the vast majority have nowhere to turn. The Israeli Defense Force continues to demand the evacuation of

some of the most densely populated areas of the country.

In response a coalition of Jesuit works and affiliated institutions in Lebanon have adapted to these needs amid continuing violence. Unlike the crisis of 18 months ago, demand for emergency shelter in traditional refuge areas in west Lebanon has sharply declined. In the Bekaa Valley town of Taanayel, for example, only a small number of displaced families have sought accommodation, with the organisation Arc en Ciel hosting ten families at one of its facilities. At

the same time, shelters in the town of Bikfaya remain largely empty, as many Christian residents of southern Lebanon have chosen not to leave their communities. This reflects both ongoing population movements and a weariness among survivors. At a meeting this past Sunday, Jesuit superiors and directors of works met to review the population displacement and coordinate future responses.

The situation is markedly different in Beirut, where migrant workers – many of them African families – have filled a shelter opened by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and the Arrupe Migrants Center (AMC) at St Joseph Jesuit Church. Designed for 80 people, the shelter quickly reached nearly twice its capacity, housing 150 by the second day. Staff members, led by Michael Petro SJ, and the parish council have expanded facilities by converting the church crypt into a dormitory and installing portable sanitation units, while volunteers and parish leaders coordinate daily operations.

The Centre de la Jeunesse Catholique (CJC), a social centre attached to St Joseph's Church, has focused its efforts on families who have decided to remain in southern Lebanon despite the risks. The first shipment of food and clothing should be on its way. Its route will take it through the village of Qawzah, a community that had been previously rebuilt with the Jesuit coalition and international assistance, which now sits largely abandoned as residents seek safety in nearby towns, hoping that their homes will not be destroyed yet again.

These have been the main prongs of the Jesuit coalition's emergency

responses: JRS and AMC providing accommodation for migrant workers (who are mostly Muslim), and CJC supporting Christian families who have decided to stay. The Xavier Network has been coordinating requests for aid with JRS handling as much as of the immediate need as resources allow.

Educational institutions are attempting a partial return to normalcy even as conflict continues. St Joseph University of Beirut moved classes online, while the Collège Notre-Dame de Jamhour resumed in-person instruction earlier this week, welcoming about 80 per cent of its students despite transportation disruptions. Across the country, however, hundreds of public schools have been converted into refuges, housing a portion of the 200,000 people who are staying in the 480 open-accommodation shelters, leaving much of Lebanon's public education system effectively suspended.

Airstrikes continue across Beirut and other areas, many of them clearly assassination attempts on specific targets. This has led to unbearable anxiety among the population, because, while warnings are usually given before an Israel Defense Force strike, assassination bombings come without such notifications, targeting specific apartments or rooms within hotels.

The Jesuit coalition has found a special ministry among the chaos by ministering to those with nowhere else to turn. Security forces have increased their monitoring of relief sites, including Jesuit-run shelters, which remain notable for accepting migrant workers as they are turned away from government-run facilities.