



14 November 2023, Beirut, Lebanon – With fighting ongoing at Lebanon’s southern border, the country is preparing its health facilities for the risk that hostilities may expand.

A public health emergency operations centre has been activated by the Ministry of Public Health with WHO support, so that the Lebanese health sector is coordinated and efficient in these efforts.

More than 300 people in Lebanon have been wounded and 75 killed in the clashes so far, and these numbers could rise quickly if tensions escalate.

One of WHO's priorities is preparing hospitals for mass casualty events, when emergency medical services could be overwhelmed by the number of wounded patients and the severity of their injuries. Hundreds may be injured and in need of immediate medical attention in the space of hours, and the country's health system must be prepared and ready to cope with such an event.

To this end, WHO has been assessing the capacities of hospitals in the south of the country. Working with the Lebanese government, 8 hospitals in the south were identified as front-line referral hospitals. WHO has pre-positioned supplies for emergency surgeries in each of these hospitals, and more supplies are being stockpiled in the central warehouse in Beirut.

WHO is evaluating the readiness of the referral hospitals on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are equipped with the supplies and training needed, that best practices for the storage of medicines and other supplies are being followed, and that there is good monitoring and reporting of data.

The referral hospitals are also being prioritized for trainings on critical topics such as clinical care of trauma injuries and the organization of hospitals and patient pathways, so that even in the heat of the moment, patients can be efficiently triaged and provided the best care possible. A number of organizations – the International Committee of the Red Cross, Lebanese Red Cross Society, Order of Nurses in Lebanon, Lebanese Society of Emergency Medicine and Médecins Sans Frontières – have joined efforts with WHO to provide these trainings. The first of these started in the week of 6 November.

“While we hope that we will not be faced with a mass casualty scenario, Lebanese health workers must be prepared and supported should it arise,” said Dr Abdinasir Abubakar, Acting WHO Representative in Lebanon. “WHO is working closely with the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health and other authorities towards these readiness efforts.”

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