

BEYOND BORDERS, BEYOND CRISIS

THE EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGN
NATIONALS IN LEBANON
DURING WARTIME

THE LEBANESE EMIGRATION RESEARCH
CENTER FACT SHEET SERIES ON FORCED
DISPLACEMENT OF FOREIGN NATIONALS
2023-2025

Published in 2025 by the Lebanese Emigration
Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame
University Louaize

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Suggested Reference

Sensenig, Eugene Richard. *Beyond Borders, Beyond Crisis: The Experience of Foreign Nationals in Lebanon during Wartime*. Lebanese Emigration Research Center Fact Sheet Series on Forced Displacement of Foreign Nationals, ser. 1, 2023-2025. Lebanese Emigration Research Center.

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INTRODUCTION **04**

Highlights the challenges faced by foreign nationals in Lebanon during crises, and how to advocate for protecting their rights.

FACTSHEET - I **05**

Examines the challenges faced by migrant workers (MWs) in Lebanon during wartime, highlighting their vulnerability due to low incomes, precarious legal status, and the restrictive kafala system.

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Explores the experiences of expats and dual-nationals in Lebanon during the 2024 conflict, highlighting the challenges they faced with evacuation and the need for better preparedness for future crises.

FACTSHEET - III **13**

Analyzes post-evacuation support for foreign nationals returning home from Lebanon, highlighting disparities in welfare programs and the need for comprehensive reception schemes for future evacuees.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR **16**

A human rights expert specializing in migrant and refugee rights. He directs LERC, which researches Lebanese emigration and foreign nationals in Lebanon.

Introduction

Despite the significant presence of foreign nationals in Lebanon, their experiences and challenges, particularly during times of crisis have been under-researched. The ongoing instability in the Levant since 2023, marked by a significant escalation in violence with the cross-border conflict with Israel that began on 8 October 2023, has further exposed their vulnerabilities. The Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) is launching this series of fact sheets to address the challenges faced by foreign nationals during these crises. These fact sheets aim to inform policymakers, researchers, humanitarian organizations, and the general public about the unique challenges faced by this diverse population. By shedding light on their experiences, we hope to encourage greater action and advocacy to protect their rights and well-being.

These fact sheets focus on the lives of foreign nationals during the ongoing security crises in Lebanon, particularly since the escalation of the conflict in October 2023. According to the November 2024 [ReliefWeb](#) report on Lebanon, over 4,000 people have been killed and almost 17,000 injured in this conflict, displacing almost one million residents, including an estimated 25,000 migrant workers (MWs). Many Lebanese dual nationals and expatriates from various regions also left the country. These fact sheets aim to unravel the complexities of life in Lebanon for non-Lebanese citizens.

Focus is placed on the displacement of foreign nationals living, working, and studying in Lebanon since October 2023. These developments are described against the backdrop of the pervasive instability and liminality within the country, which has made life for non-nationals particularly difficult on an ongoing basis. Foreigners share with Lebanese the experience of poor infrastructure, unreliable government services, and a collapsing economy. Based on their citizenship and residency status, they are also more vulnerable in periods of severe crisis, especially during wartime.

The initial three factsheets in this series are dedicated to the manner in which manual and semi-skilled migrant workers (MWs) from the Global South, on the one hand, and so called 'expats' from the Global North, on the other hand, have weathered the storm during the last one and a half years of violent conflict in the Levant.

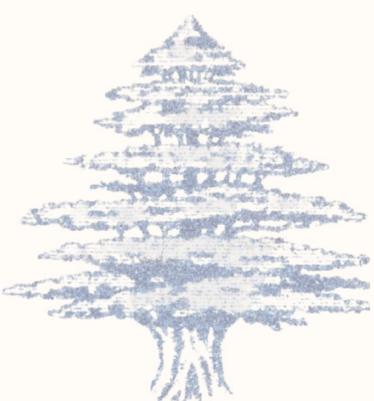
The **first factsheet** focuses on the plight of MWs in Lebanon, particularly during the intensified conflict and active bombing as of September 2024. The purpose is to accentuate the unique problems facing this group and the systemic manner in which these injustices are perpetuated.

The **second factsheet** analyzes the evacuation of expats, primarily from the Global North, enabling a comparison between MWs and this group and is intended to illustrate the particularities of a group made up of both Lebanese dual nationals and those expats who are exclusively citizens of a foreign country.

Finally, the **third factsheet** addresses the largely ignored and under-researched area of welfare provision for foreign nationals who left Lebanon during the crisis and war period. It accentuates the need for further study on this topic.

Additional factsheets are in preparation dealing with important aspects of the experience of foreign nationals during the ongoing crisis in Lebanon, including those of the various refugee populations and the need to include foreigners in the relevant research and policy development processes.

In times of crisis, the fault lines of inequality deepen. Lebanon's conflicts have disproportionately impacted its population and among them foreign nationals, particularly migrant workers, who face systemic injustices and heightened vulnerabilities.



Factsheet - I

The ongoing crisis and war in Lebanon, has accentuated the vulnerabilities of the MW population in the country. Primarily employed in manual and semi-skilled labor across sectors like construction, industry, agriculture, and domestic service, these workers face unique challenges as they cope with the pervasive crises and the ongoing war. Unlike 'expats' from the Global North who often have greater resources and support networks, MWs contend with lower incomes, language barriers, restrictions on mobility, and precarious legal status. These factors make it incredibly difficult for them to respond effectively in times of war and access essential support services.

Migrant workers in Lebanon face discrimination, lack of resources, and legal barriers, hindering their ability to escape crisis situations.



Along with lower levels of income and education, MWs face language barriers and restrictions on mobility which make it particularly difficult for them to respond in times of war. Their identity and travel documents are often confiscated or lost, many have an irregular immigration status, their social networks are limited, either by default or intent, leading to isolation and a lack of resources in times of crisis. Furthermore, discriminatory policies and animosity on the part of the host population hinder their ability to make use of support services available to Lebanese and Global North expats, thus undermining their chances to escape threatening situations on their own or with the support of their co-nationals.

The mobility and flexibility of MWs is further undermined by their legal status and dependence on their employers under the 'kafala' or guardianship system, which effectively ties workers to their employers and restricts their freedom of movement. This impacts female workers in domestic service in particular because of their isolation in the household.

Note on Terminology:

In this fact sheet, we use the term "migrant worker" (MW) to refer to individuals primarily engaged in semi-skilled and manual labor, often in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and domestic service. These workers predominantly originate from countries in the Global South, although this is not always the case. "Expats," on the other hand, generally refers to professionals and entrepreneurs, largely from the Global North, including Lebanese dual nationals. While these distinctions are not absolute, they help to illustrate the different experiences and challenges faced by these groups.

To ensure clarity, we include Lebanese dual nationals primarily from the Global North in the 'expat' category, as their experiences and access to resources often align more closely with foreigners from the Global North.

According to the most recent *OIM Migrant Presence Monitoring (MPM)* survey, there were 176,504 MWs in Lebanon in 2024, of which 70% were female. The MPM identified a total of 98 nationalities among the migrant population in Lebanon. About half of all migrants (48%) are categorized as "live-in" migrants, predominantly domestic workers. The majority of labor migrants in Lebanon come from five countries: Ethiopia (38%), Bangladesh (21%), Sudan (9%), the Philippines (7%), and Egypt (6%). Whereas over 90% of all MWs from non-Arab countries are female, they make up less than 10% of Arab MWs.

Box 1: Number of MWs in Lebanon

The Impact of the 'Kafala' System on Migrant Mobility and Flexibility in Times of War

According to the 'kafala' system, foreign workers in all categories are bound to their employers during the duration of the work permit and visa governing their employment in Lebanon. While all foreigners are negatively impacted during a crisis, this system is particularly detrimental for migrant domestic workers (MDWs), who are overwhelmingly female and thus more vulnerable to discrimination and abuse. Many MDWs have their documents confiscated systematically, are rarely allowed to leave the premises of employment, have limited access to communication, and are exposed to severe forms of exploitation and gender-based violence (GBV). The 'kafala' system also excludes many foreign workers from the protection of existing labor laws and the right to join labor unions and participate in collective bargaining. During the ongoing economic and political crisis in Lebanon since 2019, all foreign workers suffered in ways similar to the overall Lebanese population. MWs were less able to protect themselves and cope with the collapsing economy and deteriorating security. With the outbreak of the military conflict in October 2023, and the active bombing war in September 2024, the situation of MWs, and MDWs in particular, deteriorated dramatically.

Mobility and War – the Plight of Migrant Workers in Wartime Lebanon

The war situation in the southern border region impacted MWs in ways similar to the overall population. While many were internally displaced along with their Lebanese employers, MWs, and particularly MDWs, were often abandoned and left to fend for themselves in a manner not dissimilar to the treatment of the employers' house pets and livestock. As the war overwhelmed the entire country as of September 2024, desperation increased markedly. Reports of abandonment of MDWs grew dramatically, describing how female employees were left without shelter, resources, or support. Many lacked access to information in a language they could understand, preventing them from receiving news about evacuation procedures and available assistance, and hindering their ability to leave danger zones and evacuate from Lebanon. There are numerous reports of MWs, in particular those from African countries, facing racist discrimination, including being turned away from formal and informal shelters and places of refuge. Because they lacked access to their travel documents and residency permits, many were unable to identify themselves properly, making evacuation and other assistance even more difficult. Most MWs suffered from limited financial resources, further exacerbated by employers who were unable or unwilling to pay their wages, making it nearly impossible to cover evacuation costs. Finally, the chaos prevalent during wartime displacement left many women vulnerable to GBV and without protection of their rights as workers.

Examples of Specific Country Responses

In many cases, the home countries of the MWs in Lebanon were able to provide support with the evacuation during the war. The experience of MWs was very diverse and often impacted by the prejudice, stereotypes, and even open racism prevalent in Lebanon. The following examples are gleaned for an exhaustive survey of the media reporting during the war by the LERC research team. Like many embassies representing expats from the Global North, several embassies of countries from which MWs traditionally emigrate to the Arab world were particularly proactive. As was the case in previous crises, including the 2006 war, the Philippines proved to be particularly well prepared for the evacuation of its citizens free of charge, despite criticism from civil society on their readiness.

Of the approximately 11,000 Filipinas in the country, most of them MDWs, the overwhelming majority were reluctant to leave, fearing they would lose their jobs if they did. Furthermore, many embassies expected their citizens to pay for their flights home, which most MWs were unable to afford. In many cases, countries of origin didn't have embassies in Lebanon, but only honorary consulates, which provided limited support, according to Salma Sakr, of the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM). She told Al Jazeera: "These consulates are completely useless and some exploit workers in this situation and make them pay more. With the embassies, there's a higher-level response."

Workers from Bangladesh reported that they often lacked access to travel and employment documents and thus were unable to return home or apply for assistance. The same held true for many African countries, including Sierra Leone and Ethiopia, with workers reporting abandonment by their employers, lack of access to proper information, and discrimination when accessing shelters and support because of their nationality or skin color.



No place for foreign workers being displaced in Lebanon

Some of them were born and raised in Lebanon, but in war they have no place in the authorities' support programmes.

Al Jazeera / Oct 4, 2024

At the height of the bombing war in November 2024, IOM has identified 881,326 IDPs, including an estimated 23,850 migrants who have been forced to flee their homes and workplaces. It estimates that “between 6,000 to 10,000 MWs need return assistance, based on requests from embassies, authorities in countries of origin, and migrants themselves.”

“In close coordination with embassies and Lebanese authorities, IOM is supporting migrant returns and working to mobilize additional funding for these efforts. In the last two weeks, IOM has assisted 213 migrants to return to their countries of origin, including through commercial flights and one charter flight to Bangladesh.”

Box 2: Statistics on number of MWs who received support

The Response of Civil Society

The Lebanese government and the embassies of the countries of origin provided limited support for MWs during the war. This was partially because of the deep economic and political crises in both sending and receiving countries, but largely because of the systematic discrimination against MWs in Lebanon. In this context of discrimination, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were able to provide urgently needed services and advocate for the respect of their legal and labor rights. Similar to the situation for expats, as detailed in the following factsheet on expats (Sheet Number II), this highlights a unique characteristic of MW protection, which has also been partially necessary for employees from the Global North.

NGOs played a crucial role in filling key gaps, such as providing shelter, food, healthcare, and emergency financial support, particularly for displaced MWs, and MDWs. Female workers, especially those abandoned by their employers and facing severe threats of GBV, received direct support from civil society activists, who also advocated for their rights and launched awareness-raising campaigns locally and internationally. These campaigns helped improve information dissemination between various government and civil society players, and informed MWs of available support, both for those seeking to evacuate and those planning on staying but needing emergency services during the war. It should be noted here that civil society activists adopted a holistic approach, assisting the desperate and displaced Lebanese population, MWs and expats, refugees, and even abandoned and suffering house pets and livestock with the same level of commitment.



Postcard from south Lebanon: The animals at the mercy of Israel's bombardment

Volunteers and animal lovers risk their lives to rescue livestock, strays and abandoned pets traumatised by war

 The National / Apr 5, 2024

Follow-up and Support for Future Crises

The legal, social, and economic reforms necessary to deal with this dilemma are directly related to the overall reform process needed in the country as a whole. However, in preparation for possible displacement and evacuation emergencies in the foreseeable future, several immediate improvements can be introduced in a timely manner in order to ease support for MWs.

The most urgent reform required is the abolition of the 'kafala' system, which has been described by various international organizations and NGOs as a form of modern day slavery, or unfree labor. All foreign workers should have the right to a work permit for a specific period, linked to a working visa that allows them to change employers. With this reform, all foreigners should enjoy freedom of movement and association within Lebanon, including full protection under existing labor laws, and the right to form and/or join labor unions and bargain collectively. Considering the lack of support that many MWs receive from their countries of origin, an alternative network of emergency services for displacement and evacuation should be established to provide all MWs with clear and timely information and support in times of violent crisis and war.

Furthermore, special emphasis should be placed on the needs of MDWs and all female MWs in order to protect them from GBV and other forms of exploitation. This requires specialized shelters and psychosocial support services.

Like the proverbial 'canary in the coalmine', the experience of MWs during the last one and half years in Lebanon highlights the need to refocus attention on dealing with the severe, interrelated crises in the country. These include the pervasive culture of impunity, system of clientelism, toxic sectarianism, and a weak and fragmented security system. However, the issue of MWs rights also sheds light on the need to expose and combat discrimination based on ethnic stereotyping and racism against foreigners and to establish a robust system of workers' and women's rights, benefiting all employees in Lebanon.

1. In collaboration with local and international labor union organizations and the ILO and IOM, a campaign targeting the abolition of the 'kafala' system should be carried out in the immediate future.
2. Linked to the abolition of 'kafala', a new labor law should be passed allowing all foreigners to enjoy the right to freedom of movement and association with Lebanon.
3. In preparation for the next severe conflict situation, and in collaboration with the OIM and ILO, an emergency relief mechanism should be introduced which provides all foreign nationals with timely and transparent information in times of severe crisis and war.
4. The work of local and international NGOs in combating GBV, in particular with respect to MDWs, should be intensified, especially in the light of current attacks on gender equality and diversity management on a global scale.

Box 3: 'To do list' for social and political players



Lebanon Casts Migrant Workers Out Onto the Streets as War Rages On

October 29 marks the International Day of Care [...]

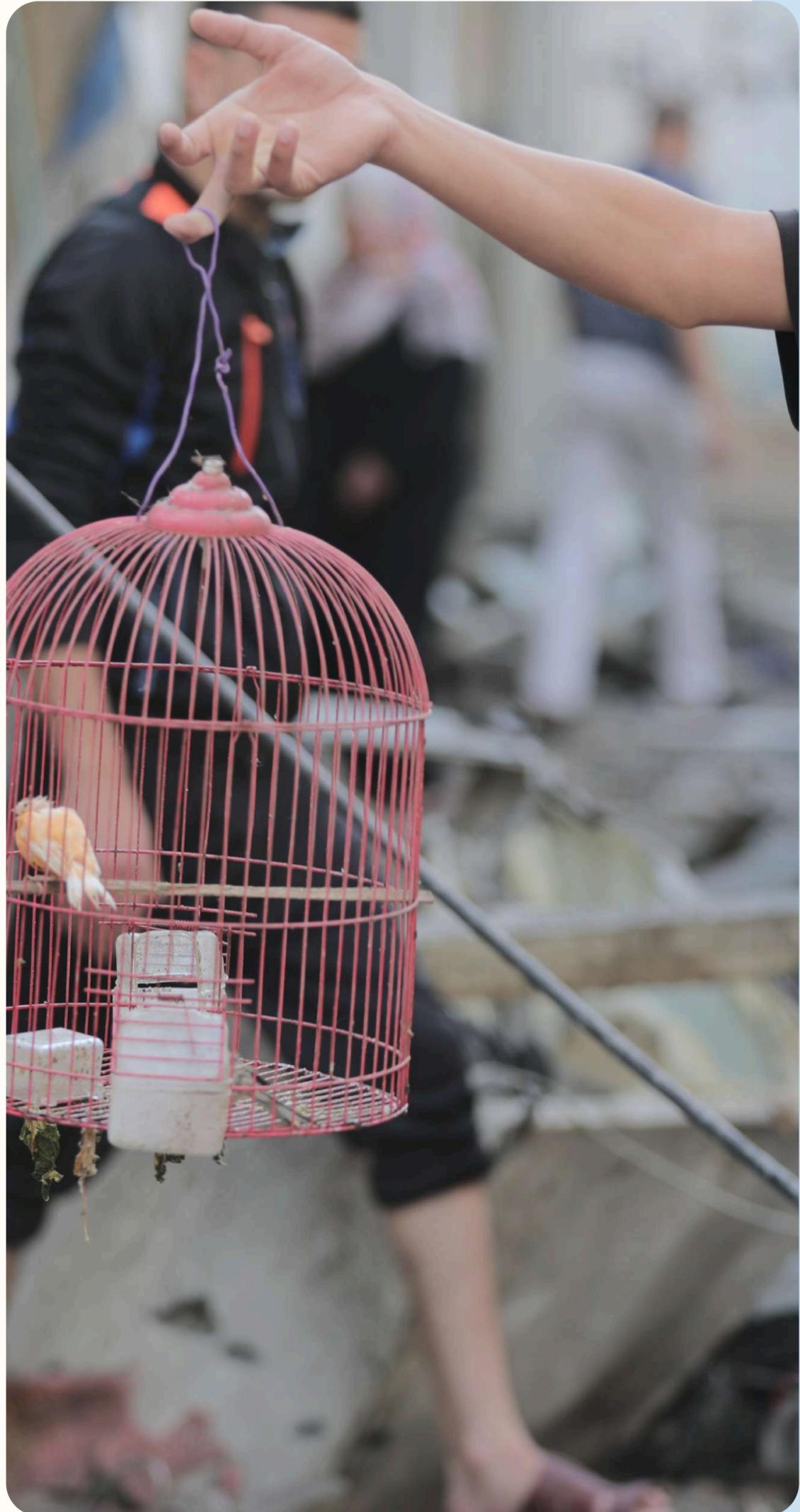
The Media Line / Oct 29, 2024

Factsheet - II

Affecting several hundred thousand expats and dual-nationals in Lebanon, the issue of humanitarian assistance and evacuation in Lebanon has been a subject of intense debate, particularly since the evacuation crisis in 2006.

During the war in summer 2006, most of evacuees were Lebanese dual-nationals from various regions including the United States, Canada, and Australia, but also from the European Union, Latin America, West Africa and various other regions of the Global South with large Lebanese diaspora populations. The persistent threat of armed conflict in the region keeps the issue of evacuation preparedness on the agenda for both expats and dual-nationals.

Lebanon's evacuation crisis highlights the need for better preparedness for expats and dual-nationals facing ongoing regional instability.



Expats and Dual-Nationals – Lost in Ambiguity

The term ‘expats and dual-nationals’ denotes two overlapping groups of residents in Lebanon. On the one hand, it refers to those foreigners employed in skilled occupations or who are entrepreneurs, unlike MWs. On the other hand, it includes a significant group of citizens of foreign countries whose numbers are difficult to determine because they hold Lebanese citizenship and are not included in the statistics for alien residents. Inversely, most countries with large diaspora populations do not require their citizens to register with embassies or consulates abroad. Thus, for example, the French government reports that 1.7 million of its citizens were voluntarily registered as expats in 2021, but the actual number of number of French citizens residing overseas is estimated to be closer to 2.5 million. Similarly ambiguous, estimates of the number of US citizens in Lebanon range from 80,000 to 120,000, with the overwhelming majority of them being dual nationals. The same holds true for many other countries with large Lebanese diasporas, with roughly 15,000 Australians, an estimated 20,000 Brazilians, about 24,000 French citizens, and between 40,000-75,000 Canadians currently residing in Lebanon. These numbers increase significantly during the summer vacation months. West Africans provide additional ambiguity, with for example approximately 5,000 Nigerians estimated to be living in Lebanon, many of them dual nationals, others students and MWs in industry and domestic service.

The Struggle for Agency

Due to their privileged social and legal status, the expat and dual-national community was better equipped to handle the displacement and evacuation crisis. The ongoing conflicts in the region led many activists and community leaders to pressure their embassies to be better prepared for a rerun of 2006. Two main demands emerged: first, that home countries cover all evacuation expenses if need be, and second, that emergency post-evacuation support be provided upon arrival, similar to those policies in place for people fleeing natural disasters or the post-evacuation and safe haven support offered to government employees in similar situations.

The US embassy for example, representing the largest group of expats and dual-nationals in Lebanon, utilized its unique approach to interaction between the embassy and the population through the ‘Citizen Liaison Volunteers (CLV) or wardens system’ in order allow its citizens to express their concerns vis-à-vis leading government representatives, including the respective ambassadors, and other high-ranking officials. While other countries lack similar ‘wardens systems,’ their embassies maintained close contact with their citizens in Lebanon during this period. Despite the one year preparation phase between October 2023 and September 2024, neither the embassies nor the expat and dual-national communities anticipated the intensity of events that unfolded between the start of the bombing war on September 23, 2024, and the ceasefire 66 days later on November 27.

Displacement and Evacuation

The overwhelming majority of the expat and dual-national community were reluctant to leave Lebanon prior to late September 2024. This changed rapidly as the air war intensified with a widespread sense of vulnerability and insecurity quickly impacting other segments of Lebanon’s polarized population. Most embassies offered financial assistance and emergency services, but did not provide free comprehensive evacuation services, as had been the case during the war in 2006. As will be detailed in the third factsheet, post-evacuation and safe haven policies were also not in place for most evacuees, who had to rely on the support from local civil society organizations, as well as family and friends upon arrival in their home countries.



Which countries are evacuating citizens from Lebanon?
Most Western countries have urged their citizens to leave Lebanon as Israel launches ground incursion in Lebanon.
Al Jazeera / Oct 2, 2024

Most countries issued highest level travel warnings and recommended immediate departure from Lebanon. As opposed to the massive air, land, and sea evacuation efforts in 2006, most governments relied on commercial flights during the entire period of the war. Governments attempted to secure blocks of seats for evacuees, as well as chartered flights and ferries to Cyprus or directly to their respective homelands around the world. Several countries, including Germany, Greece, Spain, and Turkey, deployed military aircraft and naval ships to assist their citizens, and vulnerable individuals from other countries. During the 66 days of the air war, Cyprus became a hub for expats and dual-nationals transiting from Lebanon by air or sea. A few countries, including the United States, France, the UK, deployed military aircraft, warships, and troops to Cyprus in preparation for potential emergency evacuations, similar to the 2006 operation.

Hurdles and Challenges of Commercial Evacuation

The reliance on civilian air and sea travel had significant advantages for both governments and the expat and dual-national communities. As of October 2023, many embassies advised their citizens to book flights as soon as possible, while seats were still available at reasonable prices. This included considerations such as extra baggage, pets, and accompanying family members without foreign passports. A potential 'Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO)' option, as in 2006, would have meant highly restrictive travel arrangements.

When the air war began in September 2024, most, and eventually all flights from Beirut were delayed, postponed and in most cases cancelled, with the exception of the Middle East Airlines (MEA), the national carrier. Flight prices for existing flights skyrocketed, becoming unaffordable for many. Furthermore, travel within Lebanon became increasingly difficult as the war progressed. Unlike MWs, who were often confronted with open discrimination, in particular when accessing shelters and other emergencies services, expats and dual-nationals were able to prepare their departure from a comparatively privileged position. However, both groups shared a reluctance to leave Lebanon because of their work and family commitments.

Recommendations for Future Preparedness

Although the 66-day war in Lebanon ended in late November 2024, the country remains partially occupied and the threat of a renewed military conflict is imminent. The lessons learned from 2006 and from 2024 provide the foundation for following recommendations:

- ✔ Improved Coordination between home country embassies, government agencies and expat/dual national communities in Lebanon is essential for emergency planning. This requires a higher level of transparency and collaboration between countries of origin.
- ✔ Many countries maintain ties with their diaspora communities and political parties in the homeland in order to 'Get out the vote (GOTV)' during elections. These partisan organizations provide a bridge and can articulate the needs and concerns of their constituencies in preparation for renewed crisis.
- ✔ Considering the prevalent state of insecurity in Lebanon and the overall region, governments should commit to providing timely evacuation services free of charge to their citizens in times of crisis. Calls for this commitment between 2006 and 2023 fell on deaf ears.
- ✔ Countries with large diaspora populations in Lebanon should design and implement comprehensive post-evacuation and safe haven programs to support their citizens once they are successfully extracted from crisis regions and before they can return to their 'second home' in Lebanon, if need be.

Factsheet - III

Migrant Workers, expats, and dual-nationals share a common reason for not leaving Lebanon in times of severe crisis, imminent danger, and impending warfare: They have established lives, and in many cases family ties in Lebanon which they cannot replicate in their 'other home country'. This third factsheet is based on media reports on the return home and the field research conducted by LERC on the reception of evacuees from Lebanon during the 66-day war and thereafter.

Foreign evacuees from Lebanon face varying support upon return, highlighting the need for improved pre-designed emergency aid schemes and post-evacuation support, especially for those from vulnerable situations.



Push and Pull Factors Influencing Evacuation Decisions

The decision to leave Lebanon in times of severe crisis, imminent danger, or impending war would seem to be universal for all foreign citizens. What they can expect once they get home, however, is starkly different and in some cases perhaps worse than the situation they left behind. The main distinction between the reception in the home land for MWs, on the one hand, and expats and dual-nationals, on the other, is directly linked to their reason for living, working, or studying in Lebanon in the first place. MWs from Ethiopia (38%), Bangladesh (21%), Sudan (9%), the Philippines (7%), and Egypt (6%) chose to leave home and work in Lebanon because the situation in their countries of origin was significantly worse. Most expats and dual-nationals in Lebanon come from developed countries, primarily in the Global North. Their reasons for residing in Lebanon are diverse and beyond the scope of this factsheet. Anecdotal evidence and the experience of the LERC researchers when dealing with expats and dual-nationals indicates that they are generally hesitant to leave Lebanon during crises, fearing an uncertain future upon returning home.

The primary precondition for security and stability upon a return home from Lebanon is the existence of a developed welfare state and robust social insurance program, which care for all financial and material needs. Secondly, the existence of pre-designed emergency aid schemes targeting those post-evacuation returnees who are only temporarily in need of support, is a key component. It would not only facilitate a return home, but also encourage those reluctant to leave Lebanon to take the risk. It would act as a green light of sorts, indicating that the home country is prepared for all eventualities.

There are huge disparities between the mass government funded and coordinated evacuation program in 2006 and largely individualized and commercialized displacement and evacuation experience in 2024. Whereas the air war over Lebanon began at the very outset of hostilities in July 2006, leaving foreigners no time to get out of the country, it took almost a year for the recent air war to begin in earnest in Lebanon. Secondly, there was a strong learning curve among both the governments and diaspora populations from the Global North and Global South between the two wars. The fact that many dual-nationals and some expats returned to Lebanon after the 2006 war sparked controversy about the expenses involved in evacuation and caring for the post-evacuees in their countries of origin. The debate was especially virulent in Canada, which had offered very generous reception packages for Lebanese-Canadians.

The Post-Evacuation Experience and the Welfare State

MWs from the Global South had little expectation of receiving state sponsored support when returning home, and the patchy evidence available indicates that there was little to none forthcoming. With respect to the home countries of the dual-nationals and expats from the Global North, however, the experience of those returning home was largely determined by the quality of the overall social insurance and welfare programs prevalent in their respective countries.



LAURA BOUSHNAK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Lebanon's Returnees Find a Homeland Battered and in Need of Their Help

By Abdi Latif Dahir and Laura Boushnak February 10, 2025

Some who left the country in successive waves of emigration have felt drawn back to aid recovery efforts after the bloody and destructive war between Israel and Hezbollah.

The New York Times

As would be expected, countries with large diaspora populations, like Australia, Canada, and France, along with those with smaller expat and dual-national communities such as Germany, Sweden, or the UK, extended their comparatively generous welfare packages to the returnees as a matter of policy. As a rule, services and benefits in advanced welfare states included access to free or low-cost healthcare, education, employment services, temporary housing allowances and resettlement grants, job search assistance and skills training, and emergency support for those evacuees who were destitute. This was linked to financial support during the actual evacuation. The United States, on the other hand, limited its support to loans to its citizens to cover travel expenses, which needed to be repaid according to normal commercial terms upon arrival. Once the returnees were in the US, they were basically on their own. None of the surveyed countries had specific, pre-designed programs to assist returning evacuees. This gap was well known by the expats and dual-nationals and served as a huge disincentive for those weighing whether or not to leave Lebanon during the war. Those without sufficient financial resources had to rely on civil society assistance or apply for emergency welfare programs.

Challenges and Recommendations for Improving Post-Evacuation Support

To improve support for future evacuees, countries should develop comprehensive reception schemes that:

- ✔ Determine the financial needs of large evacuation populations on the national, region, and local level, similar to policies in place for people fleeing natural disasters.
- ✔ Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, to identify regional support requirements. Establish a multi-stakeholder group approach involving government, NGOs, international organizations, as well as diaspora communities.
- ✔ Develop monitoring and evaluations (M&E) mechanisms to learn from past and current experiences and improve future preparedness. Furthermore, the post-evacuation and safe haven support mechanisms offered by the government and corporate sector to their employees in similar crisis situations can serve as a model for civilian populations residing long term in regions like the Middle East in which repeated violent crises would seem inevitable.



Lebanon conflict: what are foreign countries doing to get their nationals out?

Nations worldwide are evacuating citizens from Lebanon after a sharp escalation in the conflict between Israel and Iran-backed Lebanese armed movement Hezbollah. People are also fleeing on their own.

Reuters / Oct 8, 2024

About the Author

Professor Dr. Eugene Richard Sensenig is a leading expert in human rights, needs assessment, and curriculum development, with over 30 years of experience in these fields. He has worked extensively with international organizations, universities, and NGOs on a wide range of human rights issues, including migrant and refugee rights, gender equality, disability inclusion, and labor rights. He has also conducted research and advocacy on dangerous working conditions in the extractive industries and has co-founded a social enterprise focused on diversity and inclusion.

Throughout his career, Dr. Sensenig has demonstrated a strong commitment to human rights education and has played a key role in promoting human rights initiatives in Lebanon and beyond. He has developed and taught university courses on human rights, organized conferences and workshops, and represented universities in international forums on human rights and the rule of law.

Dr. Sensenig's expertise extends to the areas of global mobility, gender mainstreaming, and diversity and inclusion. He has developed assessment and training tools on gender-based violence, diversity in the extractive industries, and the political economy of sectarianism. He has also been involved in projects on historical memory, just governance, and combating sectarianism in Lebanon.

Dr. Sensenig holds a PhD in international relations and a habilitation in the history of migration policy.

He is a full professor at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) and the director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC). He is also a research fellow at the New York University School of Law's Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, Forge Program.

You can find more about Prof. Sensenig here: [Eugene Sensenig.pdf](#)

About LERC

Founded in 2003, the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) was initially established by Notre Dame University (NDU) – Louaize to study emigration from Lebanon over the past 150 years. This included mapping the global Lebanese diaspora and documenting their experiences. LERC also researched foreign nationals and refugees who had resided in Lebanon for a significant period, including Armenians, Palestinians, Iraqis, and Syrians.

The influx of Iraqi refugees in 2003, followed by the displacement and forced emigration during the 2006 Summer War with Israel, and the subsequent arrival of Syrian refugees in 2011, prompted LERC to expand its research focus. This now includes immigration, transit migration, refugee policy implementation, and, as of 2010, foreign domestic workers in Lebanon.

LERC has the largest database of Lebanese emigration and diaspora communities in the Middle East and collaborates with research centers worldwide. LERC's expertise extends beyond Lebanon, with experience carrying out both local and international projects.

