

POPULATION OVERVIEW

Estimated  
**80,000**

People living in Ein El Hilweh camp & adjacent areas



**PRL**  
55,000 individuals

**PRS**  
6,000 individuals

**OTHER**  
Estimated  
19,000 individuals

Ein El Hilweh

**Schools (8)**  
7 Primary schools  
1 Secondary schools  
1,404

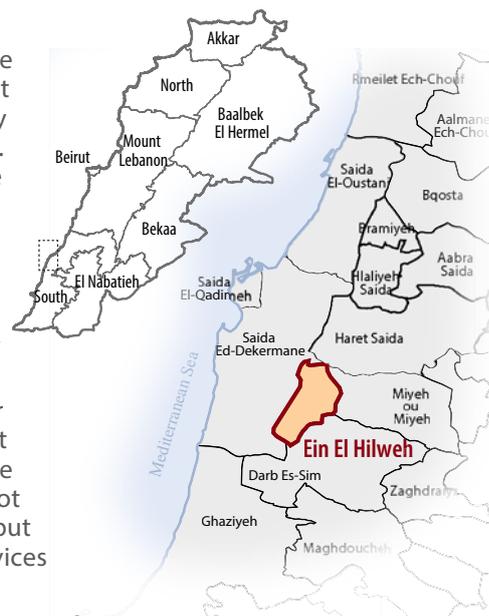
**UNRWA Primary Health Center**  
2  
521

**Relief and Social services offices (RSS)**  
2

Total  
National

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Ein El Hilweh Palestine refugee camp (EHC), located 3 km south-east of Saida, was first settled in 1948 by refugees from northern Palestine. The camp received many Palestine refugees from other camps during Lebanon's civil war, becoming the country's largest camp in terms of both area and population; an estimated 80,000 people reside in and around the camp, in an area of 1.5 square km. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) began operations in the camp in 1952. The Agency does not manage or administer the camp, but does provide many essential services within.



An estimated 6,000 Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) have settled in the camp since the start of the conflict, joining Palestine refugees in Lebanon (PRL) who already face high levels of multigenerational poverty and vulnerability. Camp residents – both PRS and PRL – suffer from high rates of poverty and unemployment and remain heavily dependent on UNRWA and NGO services for housing, health care, and education. They have few independent sources of income, partly due to legal restrictions on work and property ownership.

The influx of high numbers of PRS into an overcrowded urban space has put a further strain on already overstretched and inadequate infrastructure and services in the camp. It has also increased competition over scarce resources, jobs, and assistance, increasing the risk of community tension. PRS are particularly vulnerable given their higher levels of poverty and unemployment than PRL, and fewer community and family support systems to rely upon.

SECURITY & ACCESS

Security is a major concern in EHC. The camp is a microcosm of the Palestinian political universe, with virtually all Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Syria-aligned ("Tahaluf"), extremist, and Islamist factions represented and in constant competition for influence and power. This situation has produced a tense and confrontational environment characterized by lawlessness and frequent break-downs into brief episodes of armed violence. The frequent violence in the camp – perpetrated by a small number individuals, including non-Palestinians – severely threatens the safety and security of its inhabitants and impedes their ability to access a range of desperately-needed UNRWA services; it prevents children from going to school and patients from accessing vital health and other services.

In July-August 2015, fighting between the PLO faction Fatah and the extremist group Jund al-Sham reportedly left 6 dead, over 70 injured, and 3,000 displaced. Unrest beginning in December 2016 forced UNRWA to close different installations in the camp on at least 18 occasions. In February 2017, a severe conflict erupted in the camp between PLO factions and Islamist groups following the temporary dissolution of the camp's Joint Security Force, an inter-factional force with the aim of preventing clashes between rival factions and containing extremists. The clashes caused 1 death and 10 injuries. Additional clashes in March killed two in renewed fighting between Fatah and Jund al-Sham. Sustained clashes between Fatah and followers of Bilal Badr in April left 9 dead and 95 injured, and again in August left 7 dead and 64 wounded. The continued instability of the Joint Security Force, along with ongoing difficulties in patrolling certain neighborhoods, is a major obstacle to sustaining peace in the camp. Continued sporadic clashes have caused extensive damage and interrupted

critical UNRWA services. These disruptions have particularly severe consequences given camp residents' dependence on UNRWA and NGO services.

Insecurity in EHC also impacts residents' freedom of movement. While residents are generally able to leave and enter the camp, movement is often restricted during the frequent periods of heightened security measures, limiting access to employment and essential services. Security restrictions have also been reported on the entry of building materials to the camp, inhibiting shelter improvements and infrastructure rehabilitation.

In addition, the conflict in Syria has heightened tensions in EHC, with numerous factions resolutely opposed to the Syrian regime and Hezbollah's involvement in the conflict. While most of these factions existed in the camp before 2011, the conflict has likely strengthened and emboldened certain more extreme groups, including Jund al-Sham.

The Lebanese army maintains a security zone around the camp and controls its four main entrances, but has no presence within – as is the case in all the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon except Nahr el-Bared (which has had its own security setup since the 2007 crisis). Security inside EHC is maintained by an inter-factional security committee, by Palestinian factions themselves, and by a Fatah-led Joint Security Force composed of most of the camp's factions.

## NEEDS

### Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (PRL)

PRL households across Lebanon live in severe poverty spanning several generations: 65 per cent of PRL live under the poverty line and 23 per cent are unemployed, a significant increase from the 2010 rate of 8 per cent. Accordingly, in a 2014-2015 assessment by REACH, OCHA, and UNICEF, the highest-priority need identified by PRL in EHC was employment, followed by improved roads and security. All respondents reported a significant population increase in the last 3 years. A lack of conflict mitigation mechanisms was identified as a source of community tension, exacerbated by overstretched resources and public services, as well as job shortages. Food represents 36% of PRL monthly expenditures (compared with 20.6% for Lebanese), and PRL reported buying lower-quality food and borrowing in order to meet their basic needs. While the situation has significantly improved with respect to wastewater management and solid waste collection, the latter can still be challenging when service is interrupted by clashes. Finally, while UNRWA provides education to camp residents, drop-out rates are high among young adults, in part due to pressure to support family members and a perceived lack of opportunities upon graduation.

### Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS)

PRS are one of the most deprived groups in Lebanon, with 89 per cent living in poverty, 95 per cent food-insecure, and 52.5 per cent unemployed among PRS countrywide. In the REACH assessment, the PRS in EHC – like the PRL – flagged employment as their highest-priority need, followed by the provision of non-food items and shelter rehabilitation. PRS respondents also noted a lack of conflict mitigation mechanisms, but additionally pointed to political affiliations and youth unemployment as specific sources of tension. PRS are particularly vulnerable to disruptions in UNRWA funding or services, with UNRWA cash assistance representing the main source of income for 92.6% of PRS. Finally, movement and legal status are of particular

concern to PRS; while only 3% of PRS entered Lebanon irregularly, more than half no longer hold a valid visa, indicating the majority of PRS have lost their legal status due to the cost and complexity of renewal.

## Adjacent Areas

The 8 neighborhoods surrounding EHC, known as "adjacent areas," are primarily inhabited by PRL and PRS, along with some Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese, including "Dom" families (one of the most vulnerable groups in Lebanon). The population of these neighborhoods is estimated to be around 12,500, included in the 80,000 total. The needs of the residents of these neighborhoods are unique, as they fall between mandates; UNRWA is not responsible for providing basic urban service – such as water, sewerage, solid-waste management, or road networks – outside the physical boundaries of the camp. Any basic urban services provided by the municipality are politically difficult, as most residents are living informally and assistance could be interpreted as a step toward "permanent resettlement." Sewage management is a top priority for these neighborhoods, followed by water and electricity network upgrades and rehabilitation, then road-paving. Uncertain administrative oversight over these areas has at times resulted in the implementation of ad hoc projects lacking continuity; in some cases, residents are left to deal with the remnants of failed or discontinued projects.

## RESPONSE

UNRWA is the main provider of assistance and protection services to Palestine refugees across Lebanon, covering both PRL and PRS with its assistance which includes health, education, and social and relief services, as well as camp improvement efforts. 358 UNRWA staff operate services in the camp – including 8 UNRWA schools, two primary health centers and two relief and social services offices – and approximately 150 UNRWA staff reside with their families in the camp. While the Agency primarily operates within the boundaries of EHC, PRL and PRS in adjacent neighborhoods can enter the camp in order to access services, including education, cash assistance, and healthcare. UNRWA faces chronic funding shortfalls as financial support has been outpaced by a growth in needs. UNICEF supports the Agency with providing immunization, maternal and child health services, primary and secondary education, technical and vocational education, and child protection and psychosocial support interventions for both PRL and PRS. A number of NGOs also operate in EHC, including organizations specifically targeting PRS such as Islamic Relief Worldwide (for health consultations) and the NGO Right to Play (for child protection, psychosocial support and life-skills programmes). Infrastructure projects in and around EHC benefit both PRL and PRS, primarily through UNRWA in the camp and through UNDP, NRC, ICRC, and UNICEF in the adjacent areas.

The Lebanon Humanitarian Fund has financed three projects that partly cover EHC: a \$250,000 Terre des Hommes Italia project providing food and protection case management to 5,050 people in the Tyre and Saida areas; a \$386,000 project through UNRWA providing protection and legal support and assistance to Palestine refugees with disabilities in all of Lebanon, and \$99,000 project with UNRWA aimed at building emergency preparedness and responding to the impact of the April 2017 conflict. In addition, following the February unrest in EHC, \$26,000 of the first allocation to UNRWA was reallocated to respond to the infrastructure and protection impact of the violence.

 **Education:** UNRWA operates 8 schools (7 primary and 1 secondary) located in two compounds in the camp, attended by 5,452 students, including 825 PRS. Palestinian children living in the adjacent areas are able to attend UNRWA schools inside the camp. With the support of partners, including UNICEF, UNRWA also organizes extracurricular and sport activities for children to relieve tension, and provides psychosocial support to all children and UNRWA education staff. Additional educational programmes are run by organizations outside of the camp, including kindergartens, libraries, remedial programs, an art center, and a literacy program. Involved organizations include the Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation (GKCF) and Association Najdeh.

 **Health:** UNRWA operates two primary health centers (PHCs) and a radiology unit in the camp, with services including dentistry, maternal health, laboratory analysis, x-ray, and provision of medications. The two PHCs serve an average of 1,100 people per day. Islamic Relief Worldwide is also active in the camp providing primary health consultations. UNRWA organizes referrals of patients for secondary and tertiary healthcare services to a network of contracted private and public hospitals in Saida and the region, including the Palestine Red Crescent Society's Hamshari hospital near the camp entrance. Hospitalization and ER services are also provided by Human Call's hospital, located within the camp. Palestine refugees in adjacent areas are able to obtain preventative health services at the UNRWA PHCs in the camp. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is also active providing health services in the adjacent areas.

 **Protection:** UNRWA and UNICEF partner with several international and national NGOs to address protection needs of children and caregivers living in EEH. With UNICEF's support, UNRWA's protection services encompass identification and referral of vulnerable individuals, provision of legal aid services (counseling, assistance and formal representation), gender-based violence (GBV) case management and psychosocial support, child protection, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Additionally, UNRWA conducts prevention initiatives against GBV through awareness raising and community-led prevention groups. UNRWA is also involved in emergency response coordination, along with relevant partners. A partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), for instance, has enhanced emergency preparedness in schools. Psychosocial support services are also provided by NGOs and CBOs in the camp, including Right to Play, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), and Islamic Relief Lebanon, which provide community-based child protection, psychosocial support, and life-skills programmes. A number of organizations help meet protection needs outside the camp as well, including MSF, which caters to the needs of physically and mentally challenged and blind individuals. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) also provides legal assistance and counseling to refugees. Finally, there is a protection committee operating in the camp consisting of UNRWA, NGOs, and community representatives.

 **Social Stability and Livelihoods:** A number of organizations are active in the social stability and livelihoods sectors in the adjacent areas, including the General Union for Palestinian Women, Solidarity

Association for Social and Cultural Development, the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training, Popular Aid for Relief and Development (PARL), Badr, and Association Najdeh, which undertakes awareness campaigns and assistantship programs. The NGO Nashet is active both within the camp and the adjacent areas through social stability programs, women's food production cooperatives, and a "center for technical training" that also conducts workshops and summer activities. UNRWA also plays a role by helping coordinate activities aimed at increasing livelihood opportunities, particularly for women.

 **Food and Cash Assistance:** UNRWA provides cash assistance to both PRS and PRL, including a Social Safety Net Programme that benefits over 9,000 individuals. These activities are conducted through the Agency's two Relief and Social Services (RSS) offices in the camp.

 **Shelter:** UNRWA provides shelter rehabilitation services to some of the most vulnerable families in the camp in the form of a self-help programme. UNRWA also contributes to emergency shelter repair efforts following clashes in the camp. Meanwhile UNDP and NRC are active in shelter waterproofing and rehabilitation in the adjacent areas. ICRC has also been involved, conducting assessments for WASH improvements to shelters in the adjacent areas.

 **Water & Sanitation:** Water is provided to EHC households through 10 wells located within the camp. These wells are managed by the PLO or Tahaluf Popular Committees. The camp also has a new water network implemented through infrastructure projects within the last three years. However, there is a shortage of water provision due to improper use and management of the wells. UNRWA provides chlorination for the wells and sometimes assists to cover their running costs. The Agency is also involved maintaining the water network infrastructure, working to prevent flooding, intervening in the event of flooding, and supporting water supply through rehabilitation and cash subsidies for well repairs, pumps, and generators. UNDP has installed a new water network in one adjacent area, and is in the process of rehabilitating water networks in other adjacent areas. NRC has also been involved in this process, conducting water assessments and providing pumps and generators to complete connections to the new UNDP network. Première Urgence has also been involved in repairing water networks.

All houses in the camp are connected to a recently implemented sewage network, managed and operated by UNRWA. Adjacent areas rely on networks established by the PLO or by the communities themselves. Where no comprehensive network exists, residents rely on individual connections or septic tanks. UNRWA does not maintain or rehabilitate sewage networks outside of the camp, though at times the Agency will informally help with unblocking congested sewage pipes or manholes. NRC and Première Urgence have been involved in establishing and rehabilitating sewage networks in the adjacent areas; UNDP has installed sewage networks in 3 adjacent areas and has an ongoing project in one.

 **Solid Waste Management:** Solid waste collection, a particular challenge given population growth and funding constraints, is provided by UNRWA without charge in the camp, through both manual and mechanized

methods. The Agency then transports the collected waste to Saida dump. Some informal collection also takes place in the nearest adjacent areas. Where not provided by UNRWA, solid waste collection in the adjacent areas is undertaken by residents themselves or by private organizations. Collected waste is deposited at UNRWA collection points or in containers located within adjacent areas.

**⚡ Electricity:** The electricity network inside the camp has been operated by the PLO Popular Committee since the civil war. Power is provided through the grid by Electricité du Liban (EDL) and is supplemented privately by generators. All but two adjacent areas are connected to the camp grid, though individual household connections are often informal, poorly organized, and unsafe. UNDP completed a study in partnership with EDL Saida for electricity rehabilitation works in all 8 adjacent areas, including cables, lighting, circuit-breakers, and new transformers. The project is nearing completion.

### 25 NGOs in Ein El Hilweh and adjacent areas:

Al Karameh Association for the Disabled, Association Al-Najdeh, American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), Badr, Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation (GKCF), Geneva Call, Human Development Center (HDC), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Islamic Relief Lebanon, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), Mousawat, Nabeh, Nashet, National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (Beit Atfal Al-Soumoud), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Palestinian Women's Union, Popular Aid for Relief and Development (PARAD), Première Urgence, Right to Play, Solidarity Association for Social and Cultural Development (SASCD), Terre des Hommes Italia (TdH-IT), Women's Program Center, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

### And 3 UN agencies:

UNDP, UNICEF and UNRWA.

### Camp and adjacent areas map



**Disclaimer:** The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**Data Source:** Activity Info for 2016; Daily Star (on file); OCHA, Palestine Refugee Camps (PRCs) in Lebanon (internal document); OCHA, Briefing Note: Ein El Hilweh Palestinian Refugee Camp (January 2017); OCHA/REACH Community Profile for Ain el Hiloué (May 4, 2015); Matrix: Palestinian Gatherings (internal document); Gatherings Working Group (internal document); International Crisis Group, Nurturing Instability (2009); Nicolas Dot-Pouillard/Civil Society Knowledge Centre, Between Radicalization and Mediation Processes (2015); Middle East Eye (on file); UNCHR, The Situation of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (Feb. 2016); UNDP/KDC Participatory Needs Assessment (Dec. 2013, internal document); UNDP/UNHABITAT, Investigating Grey Areas (2010); UNRWA Press Releases; UNRWA/AUB, Profiling the Vulnerabilities of Palestine Refugees from Syria Living in Lebanon (2015); UNRWA, Schools on the Front Line; UNSCOL Media Highlights (internal document) For further information see: UNRWA, *Labour Market Research and Development: Professions of Restricted Access for Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (2015)*; UNRWA, *Protection Brief: Palestine Refugees Living in Lebanon (2017)*.

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