



profile: ein el hilweh camp

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Ein El Hilweh camp is located south of Saida in south Lebanon. It is the largest Palestine Refugee camp in Lebanon.

The camp's inhabitants originally came in 1948 mostly from coastal Palestinian towns. The camp also hosts a large number of Palestine Refugees displaced from other parts of Lebanon, particularly from Tripoli, who came to Ein El Hilweh during the Lebanese civil war and in the aftermath of the Nahr el-Bared conflict in 2007. The ongoing Syria crisis has also led to the additional presence of Syrian refugees and Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS) in the camp.

Security and governance in the camp are the responsibility of Popular Committees and Palestinian factions. The camp is surrounded by a wall and access for people and building materials is controlled by the Lebanese Armed Forces through check-points.

UNRWA in Ein El Hilweh Camp

General information

- Established: 1948
- Size: 0.321 sq km
- UNRWA provides services to nearly 50,000 Palestine Refugees in the camp
- Places of origin of Palestine Refugees: Saffouriyah, Shaab, Taitaba, Manshieh, al Sofsaf, Ras al-Ahmar, al-Tireh

Main UNRWA installations serving the camp:

- Community and Camp Services office: 1
- Health centres: 2
- Schools: 8
- Relief and Social Services: 2
- Sanitation office: 1

UNRWA employees serving the camp:

- Administration: 1
- Health: 49
- Education: 260
- Relief and Social Services: 12
- Sanitation Services: 37

Education

Elementary and preparatory education is provided through a network of seven schools and secondary education is provided through one secondary school, which is also attended by students from outside the camp. There are about 6,000 Palestine Refugee students in the camp, including PRS. UNRWA schools have a designated safety route to evacuate students in case of fighting in the camp. On occasion in recent years, fighters have taken position inside the schools during clashes in the camp.



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Health

Ein El Hilweh camp has two UNRWA Health Centres providing primary health care. Health services in the camp include general curative care and specialized consultations, prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, mental health, provision of maternal and child health, and school health campaigns. The two centres receive an average of 575 patients per day. Services also include a pharmacy, a dental care unit and a laboratory for essential tests.

In addition, UNRWA covers a percentage of hospitalization expenses by Palestine Refugees. The majority of them do not benefit from any external forms of health insurance and rely on UNRWA support. The Agency supports both secondary and tertiary health care through yearly contracts with hospitals including the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) as well as private and governmental hospitals. Despite the support provided by UNRWA, many patients have difficulties in paying for their share of the costs. PRCS runs al-Hamshari Hospital located just off the perimeter of the camp.

Relief and Social Services

A core focus for social protection is providing Social Safety Net (SSN) support to the most vulnerable Palestine Refugees to ensure that they are better able to meet their basic food needs. Assistance is issued quarterly to more than 3,448 families (13,116 individuals) in the camp. UNRWA underwent a reform to strengthen social service interventions through professionalizing its social workers. Through this, a family-based approach has been provided to support beneficiaries, helping strengthen their psychosocial resilience and social inclusion. Community-based organizations (CBOs) in Ein El Hilweh also provide services including social development, recreational activities, employment opportunities for women and activities for the elderly. UNRWA works closely with several of these CBOs to support vulnerable persons in the camp.

Infrastructure and Camp Improvement

UNRWA sanitation services include the collection and disposal of solid waste; the cleaning of roads and streets; insect and rodent control; maintenance of water; and sewer and storm water systems. These services were expanded following the Syria crisis and the additional influx of people.

A comprehensive infrastructure project was completed in Ein El Hilweh which encompassed the construction and rehabilitation of sewerage, drainage and water supply systems, as well as the pavement of roads and alleyways. The entry of building materials for the rehabilitation of shelters and infrastructure requires permissions from the Lebanese authorities. The electricity grid is old and exposed electricity wires are a serious hazard.

UNRWA is not responsible for provision of electricity in the camp: a few hours a day are provided by the Lebanese national grid, and generators are operated by private entities. Since 2021, the cost of electricity has risen dramatically with the rising cost of fuel, making it increasingly out of range for some, and leading to changes in daily life such as not running a fridge or limiting hours of electricity at night.

Protection

The inhabitants of Ein El Hilweh camp are affected by multiple overlapping crises: the long-term vulnerabilities of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon because of restrictions on the right to work, Lebanon's economic collapse, overcrowding, and a number of serious safety and security hazards. The worsening socioeconomic situation has exacerbated the mental health and psychosocial needs of many in Ein El Hilweh, while increasing stress has contributed to greater tensions or conflict within families and between individuals. Street crime, theft and drug use are proving a significant problem as poverty and desperation grow.

The camp is also characterized by an unpredictable security situation, due to the presence of multiple armed actors and widespread availability of weapons. While clashes between armed groups have been rare for a number of years, there was a serious security incident in September 2021 impacting UNRWA schools but without casualties among students and staff. Violence and restrictive security measures disrupt residents' freedom of movement, people's ability to access services and impact people's mental health.

Overcrowding has long been a problem for the residents of the camp. The population has increased as a result of the ongoing Syrian crisis, placing additional strain on infrastructure as well as increasing competition for informal employment and tension over eligibility for cash assistance.

Levels of violence against children and gender-based violence are reported to be high, but individuals are often reluctant to seek support due to stigma and fears around lack of confidentiality and reprisals.

UNRWA works with partner organizations on gender-based violence, mental health, psychosocial support and child protection programmes. The Agency also provides legal aid and emergency cash assistance. UNRWA works with partner organizations on gender-based violence, mental health, psychosocial support and child protection programmes. The Agency also provides legal aid and emergency cash assistance and participates in activities such as campaigns to tackle harassment, bullying and drug abuse.



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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine Refugees in the Agency's area of operations, namely the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. Thousands of Palestine refugees who lost both their homes and livelihood because of the 1948 conflict have remained displaced and in need of significant support for over seventy years. UNRWA helps them achieve their full potential in human development through quality services it provides in education, health care, relief and social services, protection, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.