

Lebanon: Families face running out of food in new Covid-19 lockdown



PUBLISHED JAN 19, 2021
BY [ISLAMIC RELIEF](#)

Some of the poorest and most vulnerable families are at risk of running out of food during Lebanon's strict new lockdown, Islamic Relief says.

An 11-day, round-the-clock curfew has come into effect after a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases has left hospitals overwhelmed and having to turn critically ill people away. People are now confined to home and only allowed to leave if they are granted special one-hour emergency [permits](#). However, there are serious food shortages and the price of staple foods has spiralled out of control, making it impossible for many to afford deliveries.

Many essential food items are now more than five times the price before the crisis, and unemployment has almost doubled.

"Covid-19 has become rampant with thousands of new cases every day. Hospitals are completely overwhelmed and have had to close their doors to new patients. Critically ill patients are being given oxygen cylinders and told they have to go back home. Children and older people are lying on the floor outside hospitals with oxygen masks. The situation is escalating very quickly and action is needed to stop the virus. "But the strict lockdown will hit the poorest and most vulnerable people the hardest and push them further into hunger and destitution. Many people can't afford to buy any food due to the sharp rise in prices. People panicked after the curfew was announced and started stocking food hysterically – now shelves are empty, bakeries have run out of bread and there is a severe food shortage. Even when there is bread available many people cannot buy it as the price has gone up

by 50 per cent this week alone. “The pandemic has devastated the economy even further. Two in every three people are now unemployed and are struggling to find the next meal for them and their children. Labourers in farms and construction sites – many of them refugees – are especially vulnerable as they are among the lowest paid workers in the country, often earning less than US \$2 a day, and they will no longer be able to work at all during the lockdown.”

Islamic Relief distributed thousands of food parcels in Beirut and across the country just before the new lockdown came into effect, as well as winter clothing and blankets.

Islamic Relief has also supplied 10 hospitals with fuel, medical supplies and masks, and has requested permission from the Lebanese authorities to continue delivering more during the lockdown. Previous curfews in Lebanon gave exemptions for vital humanitarian aid to continue, but under the new curfew all projects have had to be suspended.

“We are doing all we can to help those in need but the numbers are growing every day and there just isn’t enough help for everyone who needs it. We urge the Lebanese authorities to provide support to the most vulnerable and ensure they receive food and other care throughout the lockdown. Without more support from the international community and the Lebanese authorities the situation will deteriorate dramatically.”

Press release distributed by Media Pigeon on behalf of Islamic Relief, on Jan 19, 2021. For more information subscribe and [follow](#) us.

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