

Lebanon Prayer Update, January 2025

Thank God that a 60-day ceasefire was agreed between Hezbollah and Israel at the end of November. It provides for the withdrawal of both sides' forces from the south of the country with their positions taken over by Lebanese government troops. But progress in implementation is slow and there is a risk that hostilities could flare up again if the process is not completed by both sides before the end of January. The jubilation of Lebanese civilians rushing to return to their homes in the south has in many places been frustrated by military checkpoints turning them back.

Please pray that the ceasefire period would hold and lead to a permanent peace agreement and there would be an end to localised attacks in the meantime. And that those displaced from their homes in the south may be able to return in peace.

Meanwhile Assad's overthrow in neighbouring Syria has opened the way for some of the 1.5 million Syrian refugees who have been living in Lebanon since 2011 to begin to return home. It is also cutting off Hezbollah from the main supply route whereby it receives shipments of arms from its backer Iran.

Please pray that the situation in Syria may stabilise so that these positive consequences for Lebanon may not be overturned.

Lebanon has been without a permanent President since 2022. A two-thirds majority in parliament is necessary to elect a new President and eleven attempts since the last President retired failed to achieve this. The Prime Minister has been acting President, even though he does not have a majority in parliament either as attempts to form a coalition government have also failed so far. But a fresh attempt on 9th January finally succeeded and Joseph Aoun who commanded the Lebanese Army at difficult times in the past was elected by 99 votes out of the 128 MPs. .

Please pray that factional interests may now be put aside, and parliamentarians manage to work together now on agreeing a Prime Minister and a governing coalition willing to work in the interest of national unity and begin to secure a return to stable government for Lebanon.

Inter alia the new President has pledged to "affirm the state's right to monopolise the carrying of weapons."

As you pray, please also thank God for the great efforts made by churches in Lebanon to share Christ's love and care with the 1.2 million Lebanese citizens from the south of the country who had to flee their homes when Israel invaded.