



LEBANESE ASSOCIATION FOR
DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION
الجمعية اللبنانية للتنمية الإجتماعية والتواصل



Pre-arrival Volunteer Handbook

February 2019



Disclaimer

This Pre-arrival Volunteer Handbook provides general advice only. It is not intended to be legal advice. While every effort has been made to ensure the information contained within this handbook is accurate at the time of publication, the publishers give no warranty as to its accuracy. If you require legal advice with regard to particular issues or questions, you need to access this through your own legal service provider.



Contents

Foreword	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Introduction	4
Situation in Lebanon	4
Challenges of Lebanon	4
Volunteering with Salam	6
The Work of Salam	6
Projects	6
Role of the Volunteers	7
Project Proposals	7
How to Apply	7
Conditions	7
Next Steps	8
Logistics	9
Getting to Lebanon	9
Accommodation	9
Arrival	10
Driving	10
What to Expect	11
Communication	11
Living Conditions	11
Costs	11
Culture	12
As a Woman	12
Social Media	12
Rules in the House	13
Security	14
Precautions Traveling to Lebanon	14
Security Checkpoints	15
When Traveling in Lebanon	15
Emergency numbers	15
Donations	17
What to do Now	17





Foreword

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Salam LADC. It is people like you that we rely on to deliver our various programs to marginalized populations within Lebanon. Salam LADC is a grassroots organization and volunteers are the face, heart, and soul of what we do.

They are the front-line workers in the field providing education classes, homework support, distributing aid, and many other activities that we have designed and implemented throughout the years. Since February 2016, we have been extremely fortunate to have had over 500 volunteers from over 30 countries come work with us and we are excited to welcome many more as we continue our work.

Along with delivering programming, we immerse ourselves into the surrounding culture. When we live within the community, our presence enters into their lives, and stories begin to form.

These memories that we share together will stay and teach us that life is a partnership through dialogue and peace.

To all who are coming from different countries to contribute to the message of peace, we can't thank you enough.

Joseph Matta
Executive Director



Introduction

Situation in Lebanon

Lebanon is one of the smallest countries in the world, bordered by Syria to the North and East, Israel/Palestine to the South and the Mediterranean Sea to the West. While small in area, the country has an incredibly varied demography, with an amazing diversity of religion, culture and nature. With a tumultuous recent history however, the country has struggled to develop and prosper in many regions, with a highly uneven distribution of wealth. After a long civil war that ended in 1990 and multiple invasions from Israel since, more than 1 million Lebanese were already living below the poverty line before the Syrian refugee crisis began affecting Lebanon from 2011 onwards.

Lebanon has been experiencing extra burden since the beginning of the exodus of Syrians fleeing their country's violence. Since 2011, Lebanon has taken in 1.5 million Syrians and Palestine refugees from Syria, accounting for over a quarter of Lebanon's estimated 4.3 million native residents. It has the highest concentration per capita of refugees in the world. In 2015, the Lebanese government enforced stricter regulations resulting in restrictive access by refugees into Lebanon¹.

Because of this, the Lebanese economy and infrastructure has taken additional strain which has created tensions between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees. An example is the increased competition for jobs and resources. Refugees also face evictions, police raids, mistreatment and local restrictive movement because of tensions¹.

Lebanon has banned the construction of formal camps for Syrian refugees, forcing refugees to live in substandard shelters like garages, warehouses, tents, unfinished buildings, and animal sheds. An increasing number of refugees lack proper documentation, restricting their free movement and access to basic services, as well as exposing them to greater risk of harassment and exploitation. Refugees also face serious restrictions in obtaining healthcare and have to pay for food, rent, clothes, medicines, and other necessities².

The highest concentration of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are found in the Bekaa Valley, which is where Salam decided to set up its headquarters. 69% of all informal refugee settlements in Lebanon are located here in the Bekaa.

Challenges of Lebanon

If you are coming from a Western country, Lebanon can be somewhat of a culture shock. The Lebanese dress code is more relaxed than in most Middle Eastern countries. However, you

¹ European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - Lebanon

² VASYR 2017: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, UN, December 2017



should still dress conservatively and respect religious and social tradition. Driving can be a challenge. Local drivers have little regard for traffic laws and congestion and aggressive driving are serious problems throughout the country. Planning extracurricular activities on the weekend can be difficult, expect chaos and delays. For example, renting cars can be a struggle or taking a service to a tourist destination can be cumbersome.

Sewage systems are bad in Lebanon. If you use the washroom, you must dispose of your tissues in a garbage or it will clog the pipes. It is also recommended to have tissues with you at all times. Some places only offer water hoses to clean yourself. Fresh water is also an issue. It is highly recommended that you do not drink tap water and recommend that you purchase bottled water. There are also frequent power cuts.

If you are coming during summer, ensure that you bring a hat, sunscreen, and mosquito repellent. If you are arriving during winter, ensure that you bring warm clothes, including waterproof boots and a raincoat. Temperatures can drop below 0.





Volunteering with Salam

The Work of Salam

Salam LADC supports vulnerable populations in Lebanon through providing direct aid and facilitating the efforts and initiatives of independent volunteers and organizations. We provide a platform for international volunteers, grassroots initiatives, and private and institutional donors to coordinate their efforts towards assisting and empowering refugee and other vulnerable populations across Lebanon, whilst also serving as a link to the major local and international actors.

In light of the overwhelming need created by the Syrian refugee crisis, our aim is to provide agile, effective, and non-bureaucratic assistance, which fills the gaps where refugees and local communities do not receive sufficient support. We strive towards strengthening inter-community dialogue and building bridges between the Lebanese and Syrian communities, and assisting the most vulnerable – regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation.

Projects

Education

This is the main sector of Salam's current projects. All of the education programs are aimed at supporting children from both displaced and host communities on the path towards enrollment in the Lebanese school system. For those already enrolled it's about providing the support they need to stay engaged and learning. In order to achieve this the content of all our English, Arabic and math classes for children are tailored to the Lebanese curriculum in order to best support children in the learning process.

Community Based

Our community-based projects aim at empowering the local refugee and host communities who are experiencing the severe strain from the refugee influx. While the vast majority of humanitarian assistance in the region focuses on people's basic needs, we believe that it is important for people to engage in activities that are not just about survival – activities where people can express themselves, share experiences, relax in a safe environment or simply have fun. While not always having direct developmental impacts, these projects can help people to feel human, start fresh dialogue and make connections across boundaries, strengthening civil society, improving social stability and providing more fertile ground for social cohesion.

Aid

Salam LADC's aid program works to alleviate the financial pressure on the most vulnerable people in the area. We offset spending through the provision of different types of aid, most of which is meant to fulfill short-term needs. We conduct needs assessments regularly within our program communities to ensure that we are providing relief to those who need it most. By working closely with other local and international partners on the ground, Salam is able to



reach the most vulnerable families and individuals, often covering gaps in provision that other NGOs cannot. Please note aid distributions are infrequent during summer months.

Role of the Volunteers

Since Salam LADC began its international volunteering platform at the beginning of 2016, the organization has hosted more than 500 volunteers from over 30 different countries. If you are interested in gaining experience through working with our team on the ground, participating and contributing to programs here in Lebanon, you are most welcome to apply.

While we need volunteers from all kinds of backgrounds, there are particular skills that we are looking for that are necessary in order to maintain a number of our existing programs. And of course, being able to stay longer means you will get to know the programs much better and consequently be able to have a much greater impact.

Particular skills we need support with:

- The ability to run or help teach English classes from absolute beginners to conversational students
- Skills in assisting students with basic numeracy and literacy in English and math
- Strong Arabic skills (able to translate in the field).
- Working in early childhood education and with developmental play for young children
- Musical accompaniment for a children's music program: Piano, guitar, etc.
- Interest and skills in helping the organization with fundraising applications
- Yoga teaching experience
- Technical and software skills
- Ability to drive in Lebanon: this is more helpful than you think! (Just remember that you need an International Driving Permit that must be obtained in your home country)

Project Proposals

All new projects need approval from the coordination team and/or Salam Board. If you would like to start something new with Salam LADC please submit a request for the proposal form to our volunteer coordinator at volunteering@salamladc.org. Please submit the proposal at least 2 weeks before you arrive so our team can meet and determine any questions, alterations and whether the project meets the needs on the ground. **Please ask our volunteer coordinator for a template as all projects need to be submitted in the same format.**

How to Apply

Whether you're eager to fill out your application today or you're looking to start your application a bit further down the road, here are a few conditions that you will need to take into consideration when applying to volunteer with Salam.



Conditions

1. Duration: Due to the long-term sustainability aspect of our projects, Salam has decided to only accept volunteers who can commit to 2 weeks or more and highly encourage those who can stay 2 months or more, to take a leading role to help facilitate and strengthen our current projects.
2. Arrival: We will be accepting newly arriving volunteers only on Monday morning to ensure that people are properly inducted and that it doesn't interrupt scheduled projects.
3. Age: You must be 18+ in order to come and volunteer at Salam
4. Language: Working ability in English is mandatory. Working ability in Arabic is desirable
5. Health insurance: You must have health insurance to volunteer with Salam. Please purchase it before arriving. If you would like Salam to arrange health insurance for you, please email hananimi63@gmail.com, Subject: Health Insurance. In the email attach a photocopy of your passport photo and indicate that you are volunteering with Salam LADC. Cost is \$48-70 for 92 days. **YOU MUST EMAIL BEFORE YOU ARRIVE OR YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET INSURANCE THROUGH SALAM**
6. It is mandatory that you have a working cell phone that has the capability to use Whatsapp.
7. We are only looking for volunteers that have their hearts in the right place. What we mean by this, is that you're here primary to be helping the vulnerable populations that Salam works with. We are strongly against any form of voluntourism.

Next Steps

1. Make sure that you will meet all the conditions above and that you feel that you are qualified to be a volunteer for Salam.
2. Fill out the application by clicking [here](#)
3. Obtain your International Driver's License if you have a driver's license.
4. Get confirmation from our volunteer coordinator.
5. Book your flights.

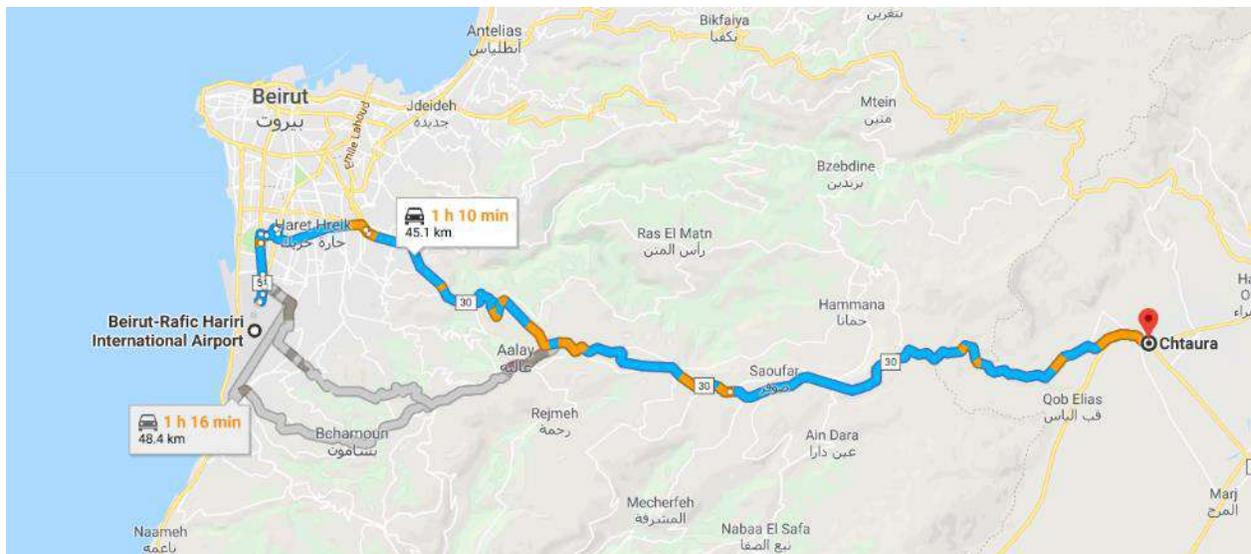




Logistics

Getting to Lebanon

1. You will need to fly to Beirut (BEY) – there's only one airport.
2. You will need a visa to enter Lebanon. Please check with your national consulate about the criteria for you getting a visa. Many countries are able to get your visa on arrival. The stamp says 1 month but it can easily be renewed to 3 months.
3. For transfers from the airport, we recommend [White Taxi Service](#) or [Allo Taxi](#). The going rate from the airport to the Bekaa is \$40-\$60 US and from the airport to Beirut is \$18 US.
4. [Getting to the volunteer HQ](#) in Bekaa: Our base in the Bekaa Valley is in Taanayel, Rising Sun building, which is approximately a 1-hour drive from Beirut.



5. There is a local micro bus that leaves from the [Cola intersection](#) in Beirut to Chtaura in Bekaa. The bus costs 5,000 LBP one way and should take about an hour. You may have to pay an additional 5,000 LBP depending on how much luggage you have.

Accommodation

1. In Beirut, we recommend [The Grand Meshmush Hotel](#), [Saifi Garden](#), or [Hostel Beirut](#).
2. If interested we have 4 beds within our Beirut office, located in Sin El Fil neighborhood. Please email volunteering@salamladc.org for further details. Cost is 10,000LL/night.
3. In The Bekaa Valley, there is [DeLora Suites](#) or [Massabki Hotel](#) (in Chtaura) or the [EcoLodge](#) located in Taanayel.
4. We have a volunteer house in Taanayel, prioritized for long term volunteers but open for short-term volunteers based on availability. The house includes:
 - 17 beds available
 - 5 working toilets
 - 1 shower



- Full kitchen
- Rent costs \$35 US a week is due Monday morning

Cost is subject to change, and each volunteer is expected to participate in the weekly cleaning schedule.

Arrival

1. Please note that we will be accepting new volunteers on **Monday morning only**. Volunteers must arrive by 9am for volunteer induction with our volunteer coordinator. If you happen to fly in on another date, there is plenty to see in Beirut and Lebanon in general. For initial ideas check out [Trip Advisor](#).
2. Majority of projects run Monday-Friday. Weekends are generally free; however, some projects may happen on the weekends but are not rostered by our staff.
3. Buy a local sim card with data (~\$50 for the SIM card and then different deals for data and SMS/calls): **YOU MUST** get package with either data or one which specifically accommodates **WhatsApp**. [MTC Touch](#) is the best choice for our area. And if you go to a certified store (not a cell phone store), then it's much cheaper

Driving

1. To be fully insured you **MUST have an IDP** (International Drivers Permit) which must be obtained in your home country, prior to departure. You drive at your own risk.
2. Congestion and aggressive driving are serious problems throughout the country, where drivers have little regard for traffic laws.
3. At night, many drivers use their high beams exclusively, often creating a serious hazard due to blinding glare.
4. Lebanese drivers are unaccustomed to sharing the road with bicycles, and it is rare to see cyclists around the country.
5. Don't be afraid to use the horn.





What to Expect

Communication

At Salam, our primary mode to communicate is through WhatsApp. Please ensure that your phone is capable of running this app.

Living Conditions

We have limited supplies and only have the basic necessities. If you require additional housing supplies, it is recommended that you bring them from home.

1. Please bring your own sheets, towels, pillows, blanket/sleeping bag, we have a few sets but not many. Beds at Salam are single beds. It gets cold in Bekaa at night, especially between November and March.
2. If you are arriving during summer, we recommend that you bring sunscreen and mosquito repellent.
3. You should bring flip flops, house shoes or thick socks. No shoes in the house.
4. This is a mixed gender house with shared bathrooms and shower.
5. You will be sleeping in a dormitory with other volunteers. There are 4 bedrooms and **may be mixed gender** dependent on number of volunteers. **(4-5 beds per bedroom)**.
6. There are books and some board games at the house, but any contributions are welcome.
7. A head torch/lamp is a great thing to bring for when/if the power goes out or you want to go on reading after the others are asleep. Power outages happen every day at around 10am, 12pm, 4 pm, 8pm, 12am.
8. We only have one shower and the water needs to be heated.
9. We share the costs of basic food between everyone. We pay about 15,000 LL (10 USD) at the start of each week which goes towards communal food for the house.
10. If you will be needing accommodation from Salam, rent costs \$35 US a week and is due every Monday morning. You also have the option to pay for your entire rent upfront
11. The tap water is **NOT** safe to drink.
12. We have WIFI in the house, it is slow but usable but be prepared for outages (**no streaming, skyping, or gaming allowed**)

Costs

1. Currency - Lebanese Pounds or USD. Both are accepted (It is predominantly a cash country). It is the standard that \$1 USD = 1500 LL. Exchange rates can be found [here](#)
2. Rental cars should be between \$25-30 a day (check online for deals). If you are coming short term, please consider renting a car.
3. Every Monday there is a local market in El Marj. You will be able to get fresh fruits and vegetables for cheap
4. There are many restaurants where you can order delivery. Most lunch meals will cost around \$12 USD and dinner will cost around \$15



5. There are also supermarkets where you can get your basic goods like shampoos, soaps, and razors. Prices are comparable with what you would expect at home

Culture

The culture in Lebanon is very diverse, please be aware of your social conduct and their social norms. We are hosted as guests in Lebanon and in their culture. We are here to help the truly vulnerable by working within the culture not by pressing our culture onto them.

Please remember, everybody deserves the same amount of respect, whether you are a politician, a volunteer, a refugee, poor or rich. We are here as humans to help other humans.

- If somebody offers you tea, a gift or just a seat, it is considered impolite not to accept (bear in mind there may be security implications, dependent on context). Also, be warned that accepting drinks may not be hygienic.
- If you learn a few Arabic phrases and show interest in the culture by saying “hello, how are you?” in Arabic or “Shukran” instead of “thank you” it goes a long way.

As a Woman

- Be aware that women dress more conservatively in Lebanese culture. When working within settlements we dress similarly:
 - Keep your shoulders covered, and if it’s hot wear a scarf around them
 - Wear loose pants/skirts/dresses well past the knee
- In some cases, wearing a ring will make things easier
- More conservative men will not shake your hand. Just place a hand over your heart, instead of shaking their hand
- If you are out doing errands, always go in groups of two or more

Social Media

- Please be cautious when posting on social media, you never know what it will imply to those who may see it, a Syrian or Palestinian refugee, a local NGO, or the police/military. Post non-political post while you are here in Lebanon
- In Lebanon, there are precautions and warnings for a reason, but don’t post overly-dramatized or exaggerated versions of reality. If one follows the security measures and acts respectfully it is most likely that danger will not come to a volunteer, however one must be very vigilant and aware
- A photographer will be assigned to certain projects during the week and photos will be made available for all volunteers afterwards. We ask that no phones be out during the activities/projects as the focus needs to be on the work at hand
- Those wishing to help as photographers will need to sign a photo policy and understand the consent rules
- Facebook Live or any other live streaming is not allowed



- **Do Not take pictures of the military**, military checkpoints and bases, governmental or municipal buildings and staff. You may be detained.
- Be cautious of taking photos and videos, assess if it is appropriate to do so. Generally, it is advised to ask for permission before doing so.
- In Palestinian settlements political factions are housed in civilian areas. They will not be happy with any pictures taken.

****To preserve Salam’s vision and standing it is essential that all volunteers of Salam comply with all Code of Conduct and Security measures, as described above and disclosed by Salam Coordinators upon arrival. In the case of non-compliance, Salam reserves the right to withdraw all association with any/all volunteer involved.**

Rules in the House

1. **Do not flush any paper in the toilet.** The toilets will back up and flood!
2. Wash your dishes after you use them
3. No consumption of illegal drugs on Salam properties
4. Whoever is the last person up **MUST** lock all doors before bed
5. No settlement contact unless on official business
6. We do not tolerate any form of violence, racism, prejudice, or misogynistic behavior
7. If you are expecting visitors, the volunteer coordinator must be informed ahead of time
8. Quiet time after 11pm. For those that want to stay up past 11pm, please try to be quiet so other volunteers can get their rest



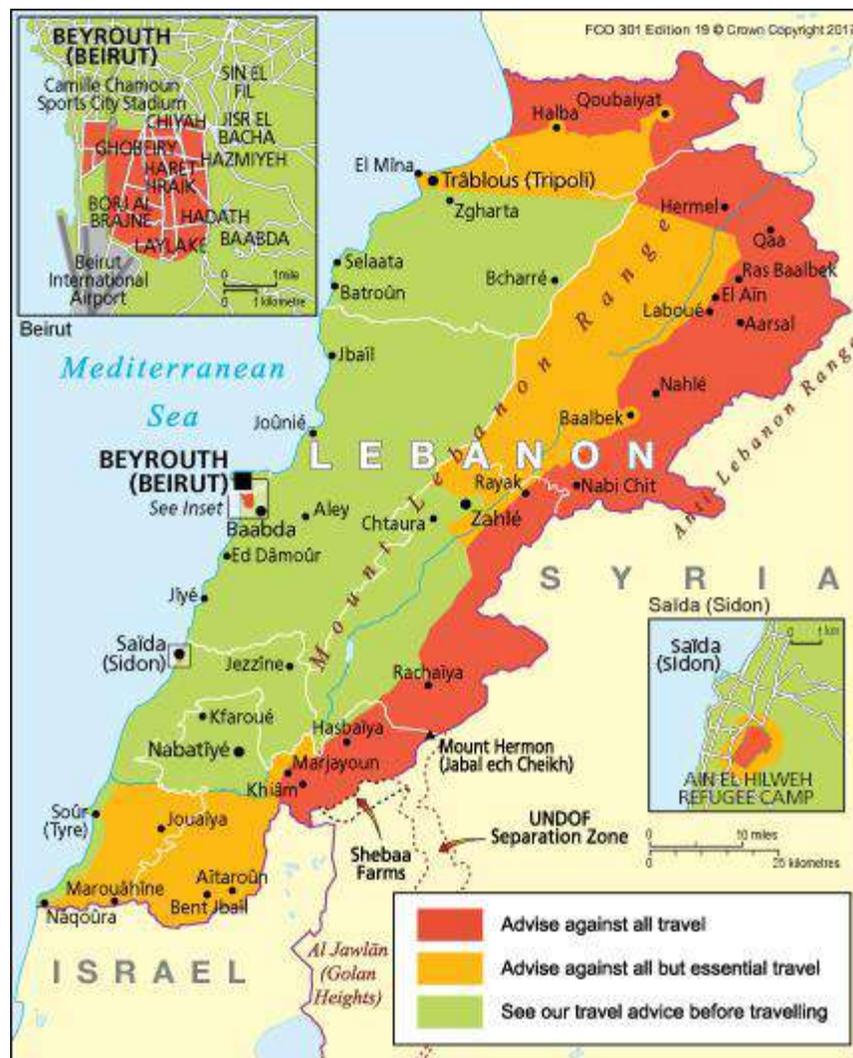


Security

We stress that Lebanon is **NOT** Europe. We advise that volunteers who wish to apply are familiar with being in the Middle East and check travel information provided by their government.

Our volunteers only work in the field during daylight hours unless a project has received pre-approval.

Always carry your passport with you and emergency cash.



Precautions Traveling to Lebanon

You will be **refused** entry at customs if you have travelled to Israel and have an Israeli stamp in your passport. More information on visas can be found [here](#).



- At passport control in the airport, please be clear that you are entering as a tourist
- You will be required to list an address in Lebanon. Please write down the address of whatever hotel or hostel you are staying in during your initial night
- Depending on your nationality, you are usually not required to pay for a visa. Proceed to the foreigner entry line.

Security Checkpoints

There are military checkpoints all over Lebanon. Their purpose is to maintain safety and stability in a country all too familiar with war. The officers are in 99.9% of the cases very nice. They will sometimes check your identity, so **always have your passport with you when driving around. It is the only valid ID for foreigners in Lebanon.**

- When driving past, slow down, roll down your window, turn down the music and say Marhaba (hello). They might wave you by or ask where you are going. Be friendly and polite, at night make sure to turn on the lights inside the car, and always turn down the music
- Cooperate and be respectful **AT ALL TIMES**

When Traveling in Lebanon

1. If traveling to the South, you **will** need permission from the military (general security office in Tyre). If you need to go for any reason, please speak to the Salam Coordinators upon arrival. If traveling to the North, you should do so in coordination with someone from Salam as it is deemed unsafe. Again, check the information provided by your local government.
2. Note that certain areas in Beirut are considered red zones and are not suitable for tourism. Feel free to consult with us if you have any questions.
3. **Stay away from the Syrian border and you are NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER Syria if you want to volunteer with Salam!**
4. **Areas of concern/No-go zones:**
 - **DO NOT GO INTO ARSAL.**
 - The **North Bekaa area and some areas in north Lebanon is pretty much a no-go zone as well.** If you must go, coordinate with us! **Tripoli** should be done in coordination as well, we will link you with coordinators or NGOs present.
 - **Some of the Palestinian settlements are safer than others. But none is considered safe.** There are two in Beirut which can be accessed with specific NGOs or in agreement with local security. Consult Salam leadership team before going. The Palestinian settlements are self-regulated, there is no Lebanese military or security presence. In some of the camps there are armed groups and active militias.

Emergency numbers

- Civil Defense: 125
- Ambulance (Red Cross): 140
- Fire department:175



- Internal Security (Police): 112
- Embassy: The numbers will vary according to your origin. Find the number and save it on your phone.

DISCLAIMER: This security advice is for your own safety and protection. Follow them and stay safe. Get travel insurance. We cannot guarantee anyone's safety. We do not take any responsibility for anything that may occur. You will travel on your own risk. Let your embassy know you are here and what you are doing.





Donations

Prior to your arrival you can transfer your funds to the Salam bank account (ideally needs to be done **2-3 weeks before you arrive**). If unable to transfer directly to our Lebanese account, you can use our PayPal account or Salam Norway account. Once you are on the ground in Lebanon you can meet with the coordination team and determine which programs you would like to support. If you arrive with cash donations (US dollars, please!) that will also need to be deposited into the NGOs account and the same process applies for using those funds. This helps us comply with the local law and the requirements of the Ministry of Interior and Finance, as well as allowing us to be more transparent as an NGO.

Send any donation inquiries to: donation@salamladc.org

***Please be aware: do not use the words “refugees,” “Syria,” or anything similar when noting the transfers as it will be flagged, and transfers may be delayed or denied.**

What to do Now

1. Have you read the whole document?
2. Do you understand all the security risks?
3. Would you like to come volunteer in Lebanon?

To be able to plan and facilitate in the best possible way, please fill in the online application form

Please use the following link: [Application Form](#)

If you have a question that was not covered, please email us!

At volunteering@salamladc.org

Thank you all for your interest. We hope this information is useful and provides some answers.