

Media release

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Syrian refugees forced to tear down their homes

Thousands of Syrian families and children living in Arsal, Lebanon face having their homes demolished in the next few days or tearing them down themselves, after the deadline for removing all refugee shelters built with materials other than timber or plastic sheeting passed.

The alternatives for these families remain unclear. Some have started demolishing their homes, and setting up flimsy tents nearby, others are waiting to see if the authorities take a decision to move forward.

The decision to demolish shelters made of concrete with over five rows of bricks was communicated verbally to refugee communities. Save the Children and other NGOs have called on the Lebanese government to halt planned demolitions.

Bushra*, 34, a Syrian mother of 3 children aged 13, 12 and 3, who has been living in Arsal for seven years, said:

“They sent us a notice that we had to demolish (our houses), it was before the Eid. We started demolishing (the house), and the ceiling fell off, and we left, and we’re now waiting for someone to come give us wood and tarpaulin to continue with the demolition.

The whole camp is demolished, not just me, they said that all the houses had to be demolished. But I have a small child, she has asthma, we can’t stay outside, because of the sun.

The whole line of tents where we are, they’ve been all demolished. We are waiting for someone to come and register us, but I have small children, where are they going to sleep?”

This act occurs as we head into World Refugee Day on Thursday 20 June. The world is currently witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record; around one person is newly displaced every two seconds, according to Save the Children’s recent Global Childhood Report.

Nearly 31 million children are among the 68.5 million people around the world that have been forced from their homes as a result of conflict or persecution.

Save the Children is working with other humanitarian agencies on a plan to support families whose homes will be demolished.

A Save the Children spokesperson said, “We will be distributing shelter kits that contain a tent, plastic sheets, timber wood and a toolbox. We will also create one mobile child-friendly space (CFS), which can be easily moved to different locations across Bekaa and allow children and adolescents to access activities that contribute to their psychosocial well-being.”

ENDS

Photo caption: CHI 344043 Up to 400 Syrian refugees living in this informal settlement in Aرسال now face becoming homeless as the Lebanese government prepares to demolish concrete structures in the town. The families have not been informed of any alternatives yet as worries grow about their fate.

Audio files and a transcript are available [here](#)

To arrange an interview please contact Joelle Bassoul in Beirut joelle.bassoul@savethechildren.org 0096 1816 00696 or Davina Hagan in London 0044 7732 601762. During out of office hours, please contact the 24-hour press office in London media@savethechildren.org.uk 0044 7831 650 409.

About Save the Children NZ

Save the Children works in 120 countries across the world. The organisation responds to emergencies and works with children and their communities to ensure they survive, learn and are protected.

Save the Children NZ currently supports international programmes in Fiji, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Laos, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand, and Mozambique. Areas of work include education and literacy, disaster risk reduction, and alleviating child poverty.