

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS OVERVIEW

Spotlight on fragmented contexts:
Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen

December 2025

INTRODUCTION

Between June–November 2025, crisis-affected populations in 36 countries experienced high to extreme humanitarian access constraints, according to the ACAPS humanitarian access analysis framework.

Operational barriers, including the requirement for aid organisations to secure multiple sequential approvals, fragmented service coverage across jurisdictions, and increased reliance on remote modalities, further hindered their ability to meet basic needs. While access restrictions can arise from multiple drivers, one pattern emerged as a recurrent feature: fragmented authority systems where power and control are distributed across competing governance structures. Unlike individual drivers, which may fluctuate, fragmented authority creates a structurally different operational environment – more inertial than other drivers – that generates distinctive barriers for humanitarian organisations.

This report examines four countries: Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen. These countries represent distinct fragmentation patterns: Lebanon (hybrid governance), Palestine (territorial partition with institutional overlap), Syria (territorial fragmentation across armed group zones), and Yemen (dual competing administrations). As illustrative case studies, these demonstrate specific operational consequences of each fragmentation type.

In a number of protracted crises, humanitarian access is shaped by how authority is fragmented in two distinct ways – territorial fragmentation, where different geographic zones operate under different authorities of control, requiring organisations to navigate multiple jurisdictions; and institutional fragmentation, where multiple overlapping authorities govern the same space with competing regulatory requirements – both experienced as distinct operational realities by humanitarian responders. Often, both occur simultaneously. The specific distribution of power and control across territories and institutions has become a critical determinant of response speed, geographic

coverage, and negotiations, directly affecting whether people in need receive timely and comprehensive aid. Fragmentation across state entities, non-state armed groups, and de facto administrations creates operationally distinct access challenges – greater in scale (multiple approval chains), less predictable (conflicting regulations), and less reversible (non-transferable clearances) – compared to centralised authority contexts.

In fragmented authority contexts, humanitarian access is not restricted by a single entity but requires the navigation of multiple, often-conflicting approval systems, compliance frameworks, and movement regulations that exist simultaneously. Movement restrictions typically prove most binding, particularly in territorially fragmented contexts, while registration delays and competing compliance requirements create persistent operational bottlenecks. In some contexts, a humanitarian convoy might require clearance from three different authorities to traverse the same territory. An organisation must comply with registration requirements imposed by competing administrative entities with fundamentally different legal bases and operational demands. Communities may be divided by internal administrative or military lines of control, creating separate regulatory regimes for neighbouring areas. These multiple, layered impediments arise from both deliberate political strategies by fragmented parties (e.g. targeted registration denials, movement restrictions, counterterrorism compliance) and the structural consequences of fragmented authority itself (e.g. the requirement to negotiate with multiple authorities simultaneously, non-transferable approvals across jurisdictions). These consequences are systematically harder to negotiate away than political constraints from single entities given multiplied negotiation requirements and non-transferable approvals.

While ACAPS' Global Humanitarian Access Index continues to monitor humanitarian access constraints across 83 countries – providing comprehensive severity tracking – this report deepens the interpretation of those scores by analysing causal pathways (how fragmentation compounds barriers), negotiation dynamics (multistakeholder compliance requirements), and operational consequences (coverage gaps, response delays). These distinctive challenges warrant focused analysis most relevant for operational planners, donors funding structural adaptations, and responders engaged in access negotiations, targeting context-specific obstructions. This report represents a thematic deep dive into this specific and growing access challenge, complementing ACAPS' Global Humanitarian Access Overview.



INTRODUCTION

HOW ARE ACCESS LEVELS CALCULATED?

ACAPS' methodology groups nine indicators under three dimensions:

PILLAR 1 Access of people in need to humanitarian aid

[GO TO PILLAR 1](#)

1. Denial of existence of humanitarian needs or entitlements to assistance
2. Restriction and obstruction of access to services and assistance

PILLAR 2 Access of humanitarian organisations to people in need

[GO TO PILLAR 2](#)

3. Impediments to enter the country (bureaucratic and administrative)
4. Restriction of movement within the country (impediments to freedom of movement and/or administrative restrictions)
5. Interference into implementation of humanitarian activities
6. Violence against humanitarian personnel, facilities, and assets

PILLAR 3 Physical, environmental and security constraints

[GO TO PILLAR 3](#)

7. Insecurity or hostilities affecting humanitarian assistance
8. Presence of landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), explosive remnants of war (ERW), and unexploded ordnance (UXO)
9. Physical constraints in the environment (obstacles related to terrain, climate, lack of infrastructure, etc.)

The scoring model rates indicators on a scale of 0–3 and then combines them in pillars, where they get a final score on a scale of 0–5. The overall access score by country is ranked according to the following scale:

- Extreme access constraints
- Very high access constraints
- High access constraints
- Moderate access constraints
- Low access constraints
- No significant access constraints

For definitions and examples of the indicators used, along with details about the data model behind the methodology, please [see here](#).



INTRODUCTION

What is the temporal scope of this analysis?

The humanitarian access constraint scores (0–5 scale) for the selected countries reflect ACAPS' Humanitarian Access Index data collection period from June–November 2025, a fixed six-month window enabling cross-country comparability despite varying dynamics across the analysed countries. The fragmented authority narratives, however, examine historical and institutional trends extending beyond this time frame to capture evolving causal pathways – providing analytical nuance absent from fixed-period scoring – with post-period developments used only to illuminate structural dynamics already evident during the scoring window, avoiding retrospective bias.

How were the highlighted countries selected?

The four countries selected are illustrative cases portraying distinct fragmentation patterns – Lebanon (hybrid governance), Palestine (territorial and institutional fragmentation), Syria (armed group zones), and Yemen (dual administrations) – analysing how each structure generates specific humanitarian access challenges, although most contexts reveal pattern overlap rather than exclusive categories. In Palestine, humanitarian organisations must simultaneously comply with Israeli military procedures, Palestinian Authority (PA) coordination requirements, and localised authority demands, with movement approvals varying by administrative zone. In Syria, territorial fragmentation from protracted armed conflict means different regions operate under fundamentally different control structures – administrative, legal, and coercive – each imposing distinct administrative and regulatory frameworks. In Lebanon, Hezbollah's informal regulatory authority, through coercive security presence and parallel service provision, overlaps with formal state institutions, generating competing administrative requirements and ambiguous humanitarian authorisation claims. In Yemen, fragmented administrative authority across the Internationally Recognized Government of Yemen (IRG), the de-facto authority (DFA) in the north of Yemen (also known as the Houthis), southern authorities, and various armed groups leads to separate, territorially bound approval systems that remain mutually exclusive across zones but overlap at contested boundaries, representing the most

extreme – based on the number of competing authorities, complete non-transferability of approvals, and persistent boundary conflicts – administrative fragmentation among the four cases.

What are our sources?

ACAPS' Humanitarian Access Methodology uses qualitative and quantitative information and data sources, collating them in a structured way in the Humanitarian Access Index, to quantify the level of humanitarian access in a number of contexts. ACAPS analysts collect information from a range of credible and publicly available secondary sources, including UN agencies; governments; international, national, and grassroots NGOs; international and local media; and humanitarians working in the countries and areas analysed. In fragmented authority settings, key constraints may be underreported given information gaps across competing jurisdictions. This is mitigated through triangulation that cross-verifies multiple sources to reduce political bias and contested narratives.

Some of the most relied-upon sources and datasets are:

- the Aid Worker Security Database by Humanitarian Outcomes
- the Aid in Danger project by Insecurity Insight
- the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
- the International NGO Safety Organisation
- OCHA's Humanitarian Needs Overviews, situation reports, humanitarian snapshots, and access severity mapping
- Landmine Monitor reports.

Sources are weighted contextually by reliability, recency, and jurisdictional coverage, with triangulation across perspectives on state entities, non-state armed groups, and de facto administrations where possible.

Read more about our [methodology](#).



INTRODUCTION

Limitations

ACAPS’ Humanitarian Access Overview faces the same limitations as all secondary data reviews. Information might not be available without physical presence in the countries analysed, and information from third parties might come with a certain degree of delay, especially in fragmented authority contexts where non-state areas remain systematically underreported** owing to access restrictions and competing narratives. Information delays disproportionately affect slowly changing bureaucratic indicators (registration delays, compliance frameworks) more than rapid-onset security incidents, especially in fragmented authority settings where non-state-controlled areas face underreporting given restricted information flows. Analysts systematically triangulate (cross-checking UN, NGO, media, and field humanitarian reports), with triangulation rigour varying by context – e.g. extensive in capital cities (multiple accessible sources) vs. limited in non-state areas (indirect verification only) – and assessed source reliability. When possible, analysts cross-check available information with humanitarians working in countries of operation.

ACAPS most often assesses contexts in the Humanitarian Access Overview at the country level, meaning some indicators might represent a sum of the crises present in a country. A more detailed granularity is available in the published dataset.

This report identifies patterns from four case studies and explores direct (rules, approvals, movement regulations) and indirect (uncertainty, risk transfer, non-transferable gains) mechanisms through which fragmented authorities generate access impediments. These insights illuminate similar fragmented contexts but are neither globally representative nor appropriate for comparative ranking between case studies. Findings provide analytical insight for operational adaptation, not global benchmarking. The mechanisms identified may apply with greater or lesser intensity depending on specific circumstances.

Disclaimer

The deterioration or increase in access constraints recorded in some countries might be the result of receiving new information previously not available rather than actual changes in the situation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thematic report examines humanitarian access in contexts where authority is fragmented across competing governance structures, territorial divisions, and parallel regulatory systems. It argues that fragmented authority constitutes a distinct condition that generates structural barriers systematically compounding deliberate political obstructions (registration denials, movement bans) and insecurity from multiple parties. The analysis draws on four case countries – Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Yemen – to illustrate how fragmented governance environments shape humanitarian access in practice. Across all four case studies, the report found that fragmented authority is a structural driver of humanitarian access constraints. Fragmented authority is understood in this report as a condition in which no single party exercises exclusive and coherent control over territory, regulation, and service provision, regardless of international recognition status. This includes situations of military dominance without administrative coherence, where one party controls territory militarily but faces competing regulatory frameworks from others.

While the case studies focus on the Middle East, fragmented authority is not a region-specific phenomenon. Similar mechanisms may be observable elsewhere. Adopting International IDEA's definition of state fragmentation as “a process by which a central government loses control over parts of its territory, leading to semi-autonomous regions or competing power structures”, case studies in this report analyse core mechanisms observable across protracted crises (International IDEA 2025). Rather than facing a single access system, humanitarian organisations must navigate multiple, parallel approval, registration, and coordination frameworks that differ by territory and authority. In most cases, access approvals are rarely transferable across areas, creating cumulative bureaucratic delays that frequently amount to a de facto denial of access, with varying intensity across contexts. These constraints persist even during ceasefires or political transitions because of institutional inertia, competing legitimacy claims, and entrenched parallel governance structures, underscoring that fragmentation itself, rather than active hostilities alone, systematically impedes humanitarian response, although coordination mechanisms can sometimes mitigate effects (OCHA 15/01/2025 and 23/12/2025; UNRWA 07/01/2026; UNHCR 28/08/2025).

The report highlights that for affected populations, fragmented authority translates into uneven and often de facto discriminatory access to assistance and essential services, arising from both structural jurisdictional differences (varying regulatory regimes across zones) and intentional exclusionary practices (selective aid distribution, targeted movement restrictions). In many fragmented contexts, civilians are subject to differing movement rules, documentation requirements, curfews, and security risks depending on which authority controls their area.

Humanitarian organisations face compounded constraints arising from the need to engage with multiple authorities simultaneously, unlike multilevel coordination in centralised states, where single regulatory chains apply. These include overlapping registration regimes, inconsistent permit systems, restrictive counterterrorism measures, and, potentially, heightened exposure to interference, surveillance, detention, or deregistration. This multiplication of administrative obligations affects programme design (authority-specific strategies), stakeholder selection (dual compliance needs), and risk tolerance (multiplied exposure), while increasing operational costs, slowing delivery, reducing programmatic efficiency, and complicating coordination mechanisms designed for single-authority settings. Local organisations face compounded risks from financial chokepoints (INGO funding cuts), reputational exposure (sanctioned entity associations), and legal conflicts (dual compliance regimes). INGO restrictions undermine their funding, supplies, and technical support, aggravating localisation challenges and risk transfer pressures.

Drawing on analysis from Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen, this report demonstrates that fragmented authority functions as a structural driver of humanitarian access constraints – although intensity and form vary by context – rather than a context-specific anomaly. It finds that multiauthority control systematically produces parallel approval and registration regimes, non-transferable movement permissions, and cumulative bureaucratic delays. The report further shows that these constraints often persist across ceasefires and political transitions, indicating that fragmentation is likely to remain a defining feature of humanitarian operating environments and will likely continue to shape access negotiations, coordination models, and funding decisions.



PALESTINE

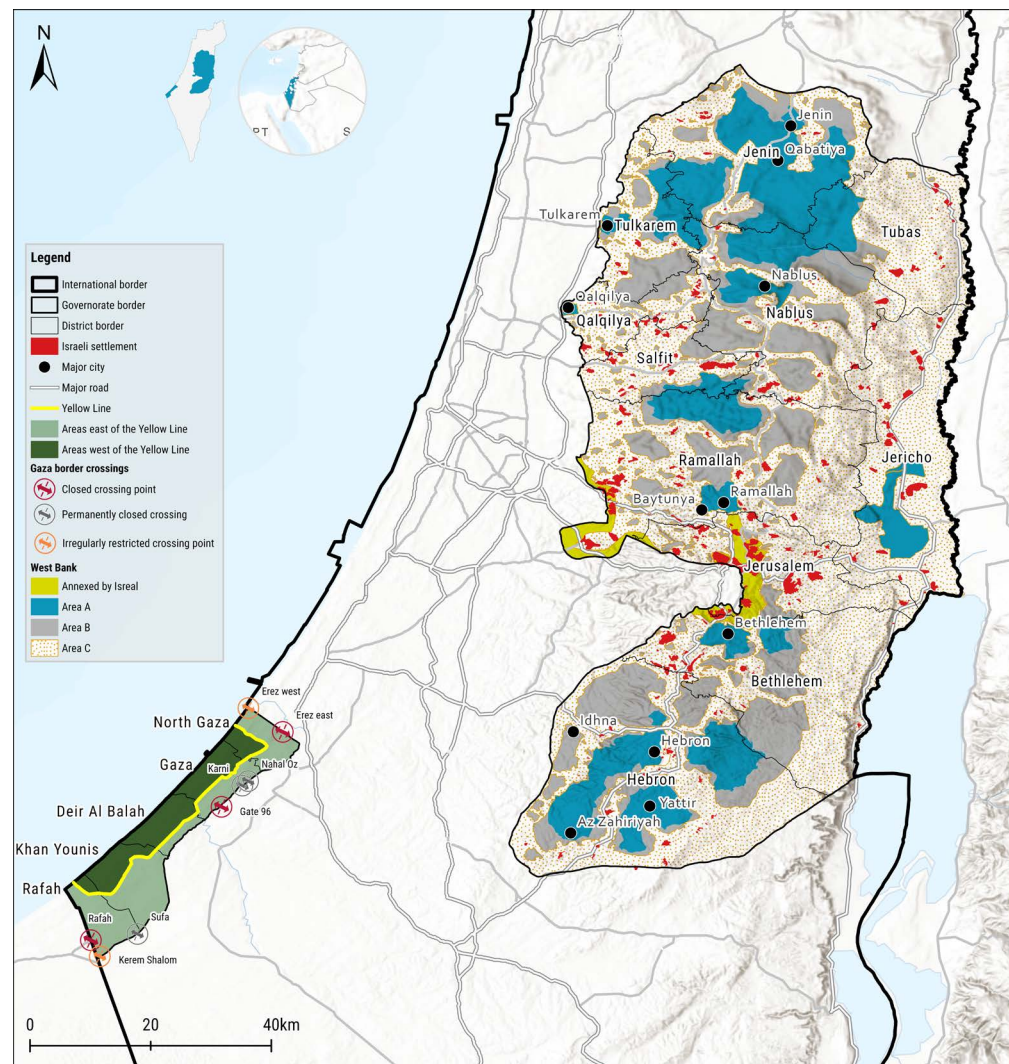
Score: 5

Humanitarian access in the State of Palestine has long been extremely restricted, but especially after 7 October 2023, when Israel intensified bureaucratic and administrative restrictions. Alongside their military operations, access restrictions became more severe and persistent (UNGA 10/09/2024).

The State of Palestine is fragmented geographically and administratively into three main territories: East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank, with each area falling under different structures of civic authorities and belonging to different Israeli regulatory frameworks for movement, permits, and organisation registration. The West Bank is further divided into Areas A, B, and C, resulting in differing levels of Palestinian governance and Israeli control that shape access, security, and service provision (Anera accessed 08/01/2026). This geographic fragmentation means that humanitarian organisations face multiple, parallel access systems rather than a single unified framework applicable to all conflict-affected areas, with Israeli restrictions typically being the most constraining (NRC 04/03/2025; UNCTAD 02/12/2024). Organisations are required to comply with Israeli military and administrative procedures across all areas, besides coordinating with civic authorities for the implementation of operations (TNH 25/08/2025; RI 12/11/2024; UNRWA 01/02/2025).

This creates sequential and sometimes duplicative approval processes, overlapping registration requirements, and layered movement controls that would likely differ under a single authority. The fragmentation of authority also imposes movement restrictions within each territory, meaning that access approved in one area may not necessarily apply to others.

Map 1. Access constraints in Palestine: fragmented control and blocked routes as of December 2025



Source: ACAPS



Access of people in need to humanitarian aid

The State of Palestine is divided geographically and politically into East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank (B'Tselem accessed 04/12/2025). This division is not limited to the separation between Gaza and the West Bank, as each area is further fragmented by internal lines of control, complicating and hindering humanitarian access. Since the ceasefire on 10 October 2025, Gaza has been divided by a military, fluid, and evolving control line known as the Yellow Line into two main parts: a western side, over which Hamas retains primary administrative control, and an eastern side under predominantly Israeli military control, with control patterns remaining fluid and contested (ACLEED 07/11/2025; Reuters 11/11/2025). Some of the areas under Israel are controlled by militias reported to be backed by the Israeli military, where civilians cannot move freely or access aid safely (BBC 21/11/2025; The Guardian 30/09/2025; Haaretz 19/09/2025). This, alongside road closures, no-go zones, and evacuation orders since 7 October 2023, creates a cumulative, layered set of access impediments that prevents people from returning to where their homes or lands used to be, not only restricting their movement but also increasing protection concerns and reducing their means of income.

In the West Bank, the institutionalised fragmentation that resulted in the patchwork of Areas A, B, and C, layered with Israeli checkpoints, roadblocks, separation-barrier gates, and permit requirements, creates high movement restrictions, where Palestinians face different rules depending on where they live. Closures, checkpoint openings, and permit enforcement often change unpredictably, disrupting people's access to aid, healthcare, education, and livelihoods. This multiauthority structure, with Israeli military control, PA civil authority in parts of A and B, and mixed control in Area C, results in frequent and mostly policy-driven systemic closures, curfews, and permit-based restrictions that disrupt people's daily lives and access to governmental and humanitarian services (Anera accessed 04/12/2025; Reuters 22/09/2025; OCHA 28/05/2025).

Access of humanitarian organisations to people in need

Beyond the access constraints inherent to territorial and governance fragmentation, Israeli authorities have imposed discretionary policy measures that further restrict humanitarian access. These administrative decisions include the suspension of humanitarian organisations' registration, the denial of staff visas and permits, and the blocking of aid shipments.

Humanitarian access to Gaza and the West Bank is governed through multiple, layered control stages affecting entry, internal movement, and operational authorisation. Rather than the civic authorities in these areas, Israel controls entry into Gaza and the West Bank and regulates the movement of people, goods, and humanitarian personnel. In March 2025, Israeli authorities imposed new registration requirements on the 170 INGOs operating in Israel and gave them until 9 September to re-register with the Ministry of Justice, increasing administrative burdens and deterring continued humanitarian operations. These requirements included detailed disclosures about their staff, funding sources, partnerships, and activities, which are considered unusually intrusive and politicised relative to established humanitarian practices (OCHA 06/08/2025; BADIL 20/05/2025). Beyond these administrative constraints, Israeli authorities have repeatedly denied the entry of humanitarian aid and staff during the reporting period (TNH 20/11/2025). For example, in July, the Israeli authorities denied the aid shipment requests of 29 organisations because they were "not authorised" (OCHA 06/08/2025). This pattern of obstruction is further reinforced by the ban on visas and permits for UNRWA's international staff to enter East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank, which has been in place since January 2025, further reducing international humanitarian presence in Palestine (UNRWA 25/11/2025).

Even following the ceasefire agreement on 10 October 2025, the denial of registration and entry of aid has continued, as Israel has not committed to the ceasefire condition of unimpeded aid entry. For example, between 10–21 October, Israeli authorities denied entry requests of aid shipments of 17 INGOs carrying water, food, tents, and medical supplies into Gaza. INGOs accounted for 94% of all rejection decisions, with nearly 75% of the denials issued on the basis that organisations were "not authorised" to deliver humanitarian aid (WHH 23/10/2025; UN 23/10/2025). On 30 December, Israel notified 37 INGOs that their registration had expired, requiring them to cease operations within 60 days across East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank (NRC 02/01/2026).



Without official registration, humanitarian organisations cannot bring food or aid into Gaza, their staff cannot obtain the Israeli entry visas required to operate in Israel and the West Bank, and they are unable to move personnel or equipment through Israeli territory. The absence of permits creates a chain of access restrictions, where one barrier amplifies the impact of another, ultimately blocking both aid delivery and operational access in and around Gaza (PIC 05/11/2025). Many local NGOs, especially in Gaza, also depend heavily on partnerships with international organisations to provide supplies, funding, and technical support. Restrictions on INGOs may effectively transfer operational and legal risks to community responders, who must navigate the same access barriers but lack the same protections, raising concerns about localisation and the sustainability of aid delivery for donors. This means increased restrictions on INGOs are likely to disrupt the operations of local NGOs as well (OCHA 06/08/2025; BADIL 20/05/2025).

Policy measures also interact with structural access barriers in Palestine, which stem from its fragmented territorial and governance arrangements. These include the need for humanitarian organisations to coordinate with multiple authorities for entry, movement, and local implementation, as well as territory-specific movement barriers that limit the transfer of personnel and aid across East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank. While organisations need to obtain approvals from Israeli authorities for the entry of personnel and aid into Gaza through border crossings such as Kerem Shalom and Kissufim, they may need to coordinate de facto and informally with Hamas, which exercises effective territorial control, for local implementation. That said, after Israel's accusations of Hamas looting aid, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) system was created, adding a new layer of control over aid delivery that bypasses Hamas (IDF 19/08/2025; GHF 24/11/2025). Between May–November, the US-Israel-backed GHF replaced the UN system, requiring people in need to walk long distances and face life-threatening encounters with Israeli forces and other armed groups to receive aid (OHCHR 05/08/2025). Attacks killed nearly 859 people seeking aid near GHF distribution sites between late May–August (OHCHR 05/08/2025; AJ 24/11/2025). The GHF announced ending its mission in Gaza on 24 November, but its model will likely be expanded through the Civil Military Coordination Center (CMCC), which will be in charge of coordinating aid into Gaza (AJ 24/11/2025; TNH 20/11/2025). The CMCC, which has representatives from 50 countries and international organisations, was created on 17 October, but reports indicate that Israeli officials continue to maintain the final authority over aid distribution (LWJ 24/11/2025; TNH 20/11/2025; US Central Command 28/11/2025).

Another fragmentation layer is the different militias forming in Gaza, notably the Popular Forces, positioned near the Kerem Shalom crossing, which further complicates access by introducing an additional, non-state authority alongside Israeli and Hamas control (AJ 08/12/2025). There have been reports of the militia looting humanitarian aid shipments. An estimated 800–1,000 civilians reside within their area of influence (Stimson 27/10/2025). Delivering aid to them requires coordination with the Popular Forces militia, which is coerced rather than formally authorised, as access often depends on negotiating passage and avoiding interference rather than on any recognised approval framework (France 24 03/08/2025).

Because the West Bank operates under overlapping Israeli and PA control, operations under the PA face complex registration requirements, mostly imposed by Israel, alongside financial procedures and obstacles to opening bank accounts and moving funds. In East Jerusalem, checkpoints and the separation barrier highly restrict access (ICNL accessed 30/11/2025).

Physical, environmental, and security constraints

Fragmented authority in Gaza, where Israeli forces control borders, airspace, and large areas of the territory while Hamas administers others, contributes to creating a highly insecure operational environment. During active hostilities, civilians face constant threats to safety and restricted access to essential services, while humanitarian responders face unpredictable movement constraints, multilayered approvals, and heightened operational risks during hostilities.

Recurrent Israeli air strikes, shelling, and ground operations during the reporting period, including at least 282 ceasefire violations between 10 October and 10 November, repeatedly blocked movement, forced civilians to shelter, and prevented access to aid distributions and health services, creating persistent impacts on mobility and access to essential services (AJ 11/11/2025; OCHA 09/10/2025). Attacks continued to hit critical facilities, such as hospitals, schools, and WASH infrastructure, between June–November, disrupting access to services and contributing to the degradation of the humanitarian operating space (Insecurity Insight 05/11/2025). This unstable environment has also forced humanitarian organisations to relocate or temporarily suspend operations. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross temporarily closed its Gaza city office on 1



October and moved personnel to southern Gaza after intensified bombardments (OCHA 02/10/2025). Similarly, insecurity in September forced Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to temporarily suspend medical activities in Gaza city (MSF 26/09/2025).

Similarly, though at a lower frequency and scale than in Gaza, within the West Bank, fragmented authority has resulted in an environment where civilians and essential services, such as healthcare and education, remain highly exposed to Israeli military actions, increasing insecurity. Israeli forces have intensified raids across West Bank towns, villages, and refugee camps located in Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarem, not only during the reporting period but since October 2023, resulting in deaths, arrests, widespread damage to civilian infrastructure, road closures, increased movement restrictions, and disruptions to services. For example, medical services have repeatedly been obstructed, resulting in delayed or missing treatment. Between 7 October 2023 and 28 October 2025, at least 789 attacks on healthcare infrastructure, including obstruction to access and killing and arresting health workers, were recorded in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Insecurity Insight 03/12/2025; OCHA 02/10/2025).



YEMEN

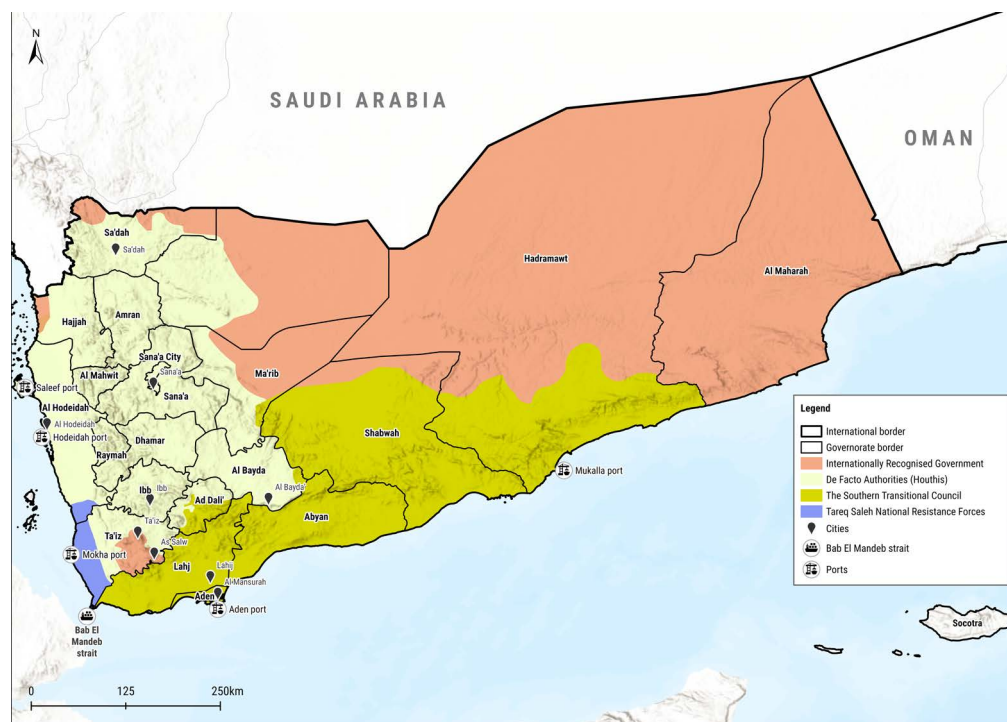
Score: 5

Yemen's fragmented, overlapping, and shifting areas of territorial authority create a highly complex governance and access environment. This environment, characterised by multiple authorities vying for legal and territorial control, constrains humanitarian responders through overlapping bureaucratic, security, and political barriers. Examples include overlapping permits and the deployment of checkpoints creating aid delivery delays. Since 2014, the DFA has governed much of northern and western Yemen, creating a split authority that underpins many of the access constraints apparent in the country. For most of 2025, the Saudi Arabia-backed IRG controlled most of the south and the east. The IRG is under the control of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), a coalition of anti-Houthi groups, including the directly Saudi-backed forces of the Al Islah party and the Nation's Shield Forces (AJ 07/01/2026; ACLED 20/11/2023). In late 2025, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), also a PLC member and which had the backing of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), launched an offensive capturing most of southern Yemen, including the IRG's capital in Aden (Reuters 08/12/2025). Within a month, Saudi Arabia had reversed this, forcing the UAE to remove its support for the STC, with the IRG reasserting political and territorial control over southern Yemen (AJ 14/01/2026). These developments took place outside the data collection period of June–November 2025 but it is important to note that these developments led to the establishment of checkpoints, movement restrictions across Aden, and repeated closures of Aden airport, highlighting the impact of instability on humanitarian access and freedom of movement. (Arab Weekly 05/01/2026; Al Jazeera 02/01/2026)

Beyond challenges arising from overlapping control, internal political dynamics within these authorities also generate access constraints, including those linked to the DFA's simultaneous conflict with Israel and the US. The DFA campaign targeting shipping in the Red Sea and its exchange of attacks with Israel cause restrictions and damage to ports, causing fuel shortages that reduce NGO transport capacity and import capabilities (SCR 02/11/2025). NGOs in DFA areas face highly constricting regulatory frameworks, which are

selectively enforced, as well as raids on NGOs and UN offices following accusations of espionage on behalf of Israel and the USA (UNSC 12/09/2025; News Yemen 12/11/2025). These factors further constrain the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Map 2. Access constraints in Yemen: fragmented control and port dependence as of December 2025



Source: ACAPS



Access of people in need to humanitarian aid

The DFA enforces a gender-specific access control policy (Mahram) requiring women to travel with a male guardian or obtain their written approval to access basic services (HRW accessed 16/01/2025; Amnesty International 29/04/2025). Initially enforced at the discretion of civic authorities since December 2020, rendering access unpredictable, these restrictions appear to be more consistently policed at checkpoints across DFA-controlled areas (HRW 04/03/2024). Issued as verbal directives rather than grounded in Yemeni law, this policy functions as a structural access barrier embedded in the routine enforcement of de facto governance. The policy directly limits women's ability to reach healthcare facilities and aid distribution points, prevents them from taking part in needs assessments, and effectively denies them access to assistance (ECDHR 21/01/2025). These restrictions constitute a double constraint on both people's access to humanitarian aid and humanitarian organisations' access to people in need. They limit women's access to aid and undermine humanitarian delivery capacity by preventing Yemeni women humanitarian workers from operating services. The Mahram requirement particularly affects women-headed households, as it severely constrains physical movement to distribution points across sectors. Impacts are most pronounced in protection-related services; women face increased dependence on male intermediaries, limited access to GBV, legal, and psychosocial services, and the reduced presence of female protection staff, increasing protection risks for them (UN Women 01/05/2025; UNFPA 02/04/2025).

Many Yemenis, particularly those displaced multiple times by conflict, living in remote areas, or from marginalised communities (such as Al Muhamasheen), frequently lack official identification documents, either from being lost in conflict or administratively excluded. This may restrict movement and eligibility for assistance (UNHCR 04/12/2024; NRC 22/11/2024). The rollout of the SMART ID in IRG areas exemplifies institutionalised fragmentation, further widening documentation gaps between the two areas of control. Because the DFA does not recognise Smart IDs, IDPs, particularly those from northern areas, face restrictions on both movement and access to services in southern regions, reinforcing the structural barriers to aid resulting from competing identification regimes (OCHA 15/01/2025).

DFA-operated checkpoints, armed tribesmen, and IRG and STC forces prevent people from safely accessing aid. These exist in governorates such as Aden, Al Bayda, Shabwah, and Ta'iz, as well as those in northwestern Yemen. In 2024, at least 127 civilian casualties were linked to checkpoint violence. This risk discourages civilian movement and results in the avoidance of checkpoint-adjacent aid routes, significantly constraining access to humanitarian assistance (Govt. UK accessed 15/01/2026). Yemen's third-largest city, Ta'iz, has been under a partial blockade by the DFA since 2015. Frequent road closures and checkpoint restrictions have repeatedly blocked humanitarian and civilian movement, often preventing the delivery of food, water, and medical supplies to approximately 300,000 displaced people in the city (HRW accessed 16/01/2025). The protracted nature of this blockade exemplifies the persistence of barriers to access caused by fragmented authorities.

Access of humanitarian organisations to people in need

As a result of institutional fragmentation, NGOs in Yemen operate under a split-authority registration regime, with distinct, conflicting, and overlapping sets of bureaucratic and legal requirements between the two authorities in Sana'a and Aden. This dual system creates immense complexity and delays for humanitarian organisations. Both authorities, particularly the DFA, seek to control the work of humanitarian responders through the registration and permit processes, requiring NGOs to maintain relations with a range of authorities (Sida 31/03/2025). Under Yemeni law implemented by the IRG, new associations must have at least 21 founding members. Foundations are also required to deposit a comparatively large initial balance with a bank, although measures are inconsistently applied (ICNL accessed 16/01/2026). National NGOs, INGOs, and other international organisations operating in DFA territories face more significant constraints than in IRG areas when applying for visas, travel permits, and sub-agreements for aid delivery. Sub-agreements govern approval for specific NGO activities, such as cash or food distributions. Delays often take months, effectively preventing timely humanitarian action across all sectors. NGOs seeking to operate across both authority areas must submit multiple permit applications in each jurisdiction. This duplication increases administrative complexity and consumes significant time and resources. These permits also include movement



restrictions for NGOs. DFA officials regularly and frequently impose delays on movement permits for humanitarian convoys in Sana'a and Al Hodeidah, slowing the response and preventing the timely delivery of aid (OCHA 15/01/2025).

In 2025, the DFA increasingly accused humanitarian responders of criminality. This framing appears to aim to delegitimise humanitarian organisations among wider populations and legitimise the increase in targeting and harassment by authorities. In October, DFA leader Abdul-Malik Al Houthi publicly accused UN agencies of spying for external governments, specifically the US and Israel (SCR 02/11/2025). The DFA then escalated these accusations of espionage by raiding a UN compound in Sana'a, detaining 20 staff members and seizing UN assets. According to the UN, the DFA released the staff on 20 October after vacating the compound (UNSC 12/09/2025). This was the most high-profile incident, with arbitrary detentions of both Yemeni and international UN staff increasing over October and November. On 28 October, the UN reported that 59 Yemeni UN personnel remained detained by the DFA (Reuters 28/10/2025). In November, DFA raided the offices of three predominantly health INGOs (International Medical Corps, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and Marie Stopes International) in Sana'a, seizing equipment and detaining staff for interrogation (Al Shorouk 11/11/2025; News Yemen 12/11/2025; Al Muntasaf 16/11/2025). These raids and detentions have a cooling effect on NGOs working in DFA territory. Organisations have reduced staffing to 'essential levels' and lowered operational risk thresholds, leading to reduced programming or withdrawal. In the long term, this cooling effect is likely to lead to reduced coverage within Yemen or more frequent service suspensions, as evidenced by WFP's complete suspension of activities in DFA areas in December (Yemen Online 23/12/2025).

The rapid cycle of designation, delisting, and redesignation of the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organisation by the US has increased administrative burdens for NGOs, creating volatility that amplifies donor hesitation and enhances banking restrictions to prevent the violation of these sanctions, all of which increase access constraints for NGOs. Disruptions have been hardest-felt in the DFA areas that the sanctions target, with compliance with the sanctions triggering clinic closures, broken nutrition pipelines, and rising household debt. While humanitarian exemptions exist within the sanctions, experts label these as too narrow and unclear to reassure banks. The disruption caused by these slowed transactions also affects the import of goods and equipment (including fuel for operations) in both IRG and DFA areas, constraining overall operations (Sritharan et al. 31/10/2025).

Physical, environmental, and security constraints

Between August–September, flash floods from torrential rains affected over 455,000 people (OCHA 17/09/2025). The floods destroyed homes and IDP camps, driving displacement across multiple governorates under both authorities. Flood damage also blocked roads, preventing physical access for affected people and responders. Road blockages persisted until September. These disruptions, worsened by the previously identified disruptions caused by fragmented authorities, delayed aid convoys and prevented access to essential health, WASH, nutrition, and shelter services during the flood response (IFRC 03/09/2025). In general, active conflict between the DFA and IRG and the resulting fragmentation of governance have limited investment in climate-resilient infrastructure, constraining coordinated disaster response efforts (IOM accessed 14/01/2026).

Maritime insecurity in the Red Sea (driven by DFA attacks and Israeli air strikes on key ports) has disrupted Yemen's import-dependent humanitarian supply chains, reducing the flow of food and fuel into markets and constraining both commercial and humanitarian deliveries (BBC 07/07/2025; WFP 25/11/2025). Limited fuel supplies restrict the transport of goods and aid, while reduced food imports hinder planned distributions, creating interruptions in humanitarian operations. The combination of attacks and air strikes compounds unpredictability. Supply disruptions may occur simultaneously or in rapid succession, making it more difficult for responders to anticipate and plan logistical operations.

Given Yemen's diverse terrain and operational difficulties, the humanitarian response is heavily dependent on community responders to deliver aid. This, alongside restrictions and the targeting of UN bodies and INGOs by the DFA, means the transfer of risks to local organisations. A joint statement by IOM and 115 aid organisations in May emphasises the crucial role of local NGOs and civil society organisations, which often serve as the first and sometimes only responders in remote areas and those presenting other physical access constraints (IOM accessed 14/01/2026). These dynamics demonstrate the need for the localisation of the response to be based on necessity rather than choice.



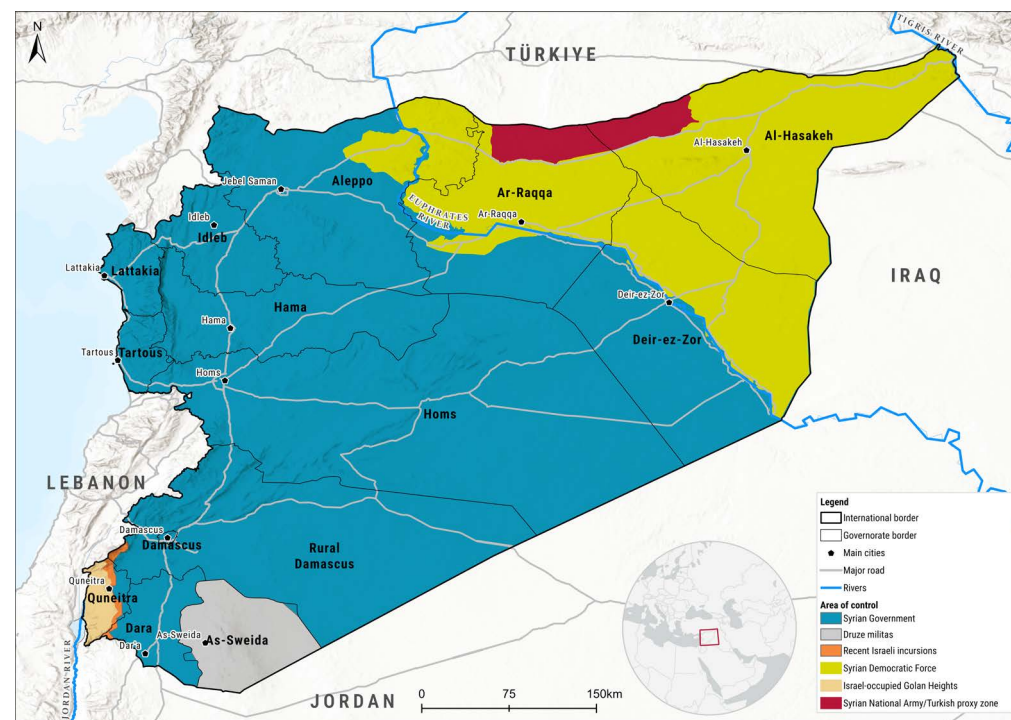
SYRIA

Score: 4

Humanitarian access restrictions continue to be very high across Syria, especially in southern Syria, as a result of sectarian clashes – since July 2025 in As Sweida governorate and since December 2024 in Dar’a, Quneitra, and Rural Damascus governorates given Israeli incursions – making Syria’s access constraints heterogeneous, varying by region (SNHR 08/07/2025; BBC 17/07/2025).

After President Bashar Al Assad’s fall on 8 December 2024, a transitional Government was formed, but a core challenge has been the reintegration of territories fragmented by a civil war between 2011–2024, competing authorities, and foreign military presence (Credendo 28/11/2025; CFR accessed 30/12/2025). Political negotiations among de facto authorities, armed groups, and external parties continue without a unified political settlement, making fragmentation and access constraints likely to continue throughout 2026 (Arab Center 05/11/2025; NPA Syria 30/04/2025). Despite the transitional authorities’ aim to integrate all forces into a new national army, de facto control of certain areas across Syria remains split among different armed factions. The Syrian National Army and allied Hayat Tahrir Al Sham control much of western and northern Syria (including Aleppo, Damascus, and Idlib governorates). Parts of Northeast (NES) remained under the control of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) until December 2025 (GPC 03/04/2025). In the south, there is a different form of fragmentation that occurs at a communal level. As Sweida governorate is largely under the control of five main Druze factions, the largest being under Hikmat Al Hijri. Israel has expanded its military control in parts of Dar’a, Quneitra, and Rural Damascus as well as fully controlling the Golan Heights since 1967 (MEI 12/06/2025; CFR accessed 30/12/2025; DW 22/07/2025). Latakia governorate is under the control of the transitional Government, but pro-Al Assad remnants keep tensions and potential for clashes viable (EUAA 07/07/2025 a). Although the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant no longer holds territory in Syria, it remained active throughout 2025, especially in Deir-ez-Zor, northeast Syria (Al Hasakeh and Ar Raqqa), desert zones, and occasionally in the south, adding to the general insecurity in Syria and further constraining movement (SOHR 07/05/2025; EUAA 07/07/2025 b; AJ 30/05/2025; ORSAM 25/01/2021).

Map 3. Access constraints in Syria: overlapping areas of control as of December 2025



Source: ACAPS



Access of people in need to humanitarian aid

Fragmented authority in Syria has created overlapping security entities, including Syrian government forces, allied militias, foreign forces, and non-state armed groups, and inconsistent, unpredictable, and arbitrary control measures that limit civilians' ability to move freely and access essential humanitarian and governmental services. This is evident in southern Syria, where Israel's incursions and clashes between state and non-state armed groups in As Sweida, for example, have been restricting people's movement.

Not only during the reporting period but since December 2024, Israeli forces have been imposing curfews and evacuation orders, forcing people to flee, disrupting movement, and preventing people from accessing aid and services. They have seized or demolished homes, blocked residents from returning to their land and work, and detained civilians (transferring some to Israel). This has resulted in livelihood losses and increased aid dependency (HRW 17/09/2025; SNHR 21/06/2025). New semi-permanent checkpoints and roadblocks set up during these incursions further restrict travel and disrupt access to services (AJ 05/11/2025; SOHR 26/11/2025).

Residents in As Sweida reported in August that the governorate remained under what they described as a complete siege, imposed by transitional government forces at the local level, following clashes in July between Druze armed groups and Bedouin militias backed by security forces (Atlantic Council 08/08/2025; PBS 28/08/2025). The Syrian Government denied the existence of a siege in early August and announced the delivery of humanitarian aid convoys to As Sweida, creating a divergence between official narratives and field-level reporting that complicates needs assessments, while humanitarian organisations continue to report high unmet needs, especially for food, water, and fuel, which remain only partially met because of continuing access constraints (Atlantic Council 08/08/2025; PBS 28/08/2025; ECHO 24/07/2025).

Access of humanitarian organisations to people in need

Syria's fragmented authority requires humanitarian responders to negotiate with multiple power centres, including the formal transitional authorities and de facto non-state armed groups, each imposing its own rules. At the same time, organisations operate in a context of continued insecurity because of sporadic sectarian clashes and Israeli incursions (OCHA 20/11/2025). This fragmentation and insecurity hinder coordination and impede timely aid delivery because humanitarian responders may need to navigate overlapping authorities and manage conflicting security requirements. In As Sweida, for example, bureaucratic, operational, and logistical factors arising from fragmented control continued to delay aid deliveries until 30 November 2025. Since July, clashes between Druze fighters and government forces in As Sweida have disrupted the main supply route (the Damascus–As Sweida road). Aid convoys report that attacks on this road force them to reroute or pause overnight for safety (OCHA 13/11/2025). It is unclear whether the attackers are fighters aligned with Hikmat Al Hijri or with government forces, as both deny hindering the delivery of aid, which reflects uncertainty that itself becomes an access barrier (SANA 19/08/2025; SOHR 14/11/2025). The transitional government authorities have heavily restricted access to the governorate, requiring prior coordination for entry and exit, especially in July; these requirements are often applied inconsistently likely given a lack of coordination, creating unpredictability for humanitarian operations (The National 28/07/2025).

During November, Israeli forces continued their incursions in southern Syria, specifically in northern rural areas in Quneitra governorate. This has forcibly displaced dozens of families, while those who remain depend highly on humanitarian aid. This aid is not always available given prolonged Israeli road closures that prevent humanitarian responders from reaching people in need (Le Monde 10/11/2025).

Interauthority fragmentation between SDF-held areas and those under the transitional Government further complicates humanitarian access, with delays at key crossing points, such as Atheria and Zakia (in Hama governorate, northern Syria), continuing to disrupt personnel movement and humanitarian shipments (OCHA 20/11/2025). These crossings are critical as they serve as primary humanitarian corridors and routes for essential goods, personnel, and commercial trade between governorates. Uncertainty around the 10 March agreement to integrate the SDF into Syrian state institutions can also result in a more



fragmented landscape, including for humanitarian access. In December, clashes erupted between forces of the Syrian General Security Service and the SDF, resulting in increased movement restrictions along key routes, such as the Alleramoon–Shihan road, and delays in civilian and humanitarian movement (OCHA 07/01/2026).

Physical, security, and environmental constraints

Fragmented authority in Syria continues to fuel clashes between competing parties, heightening insecurity and further restricting movement and humanitarian access.

In As Sweida, clashes that escalated in July 2025 have resulted in insecurity and restricted civilian movement, especially on key humanitarian supply roads and civilian corridors. In western and northern Quneitra, Israeli expansion into the countryside during early November has resulted in restricted civilian movement, mainly as a result of increased insecurity and the establishment of checkpoints and blockades by the Israel Defense Forces, delaying the delivery of humanitarian aid (OCHA 13/11/2025; HRW 17/09/2025). In Al Hasakeh, many displaced people report being unable to return to their homes because of insecurity, lack of safety, and other reasons, such as lack of shelter and the absence of humanitarian support for returnees (MSF 06/11/2025). Insecurity also limits access to civilian infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals. For example, between January–August, humanitarian organisations reported 34 attacks on healthcare across the country, including threats and attacks on health workers, damage to facilities, and the targeting of humanitarian convoys (Health Cluster 01/09/2025).



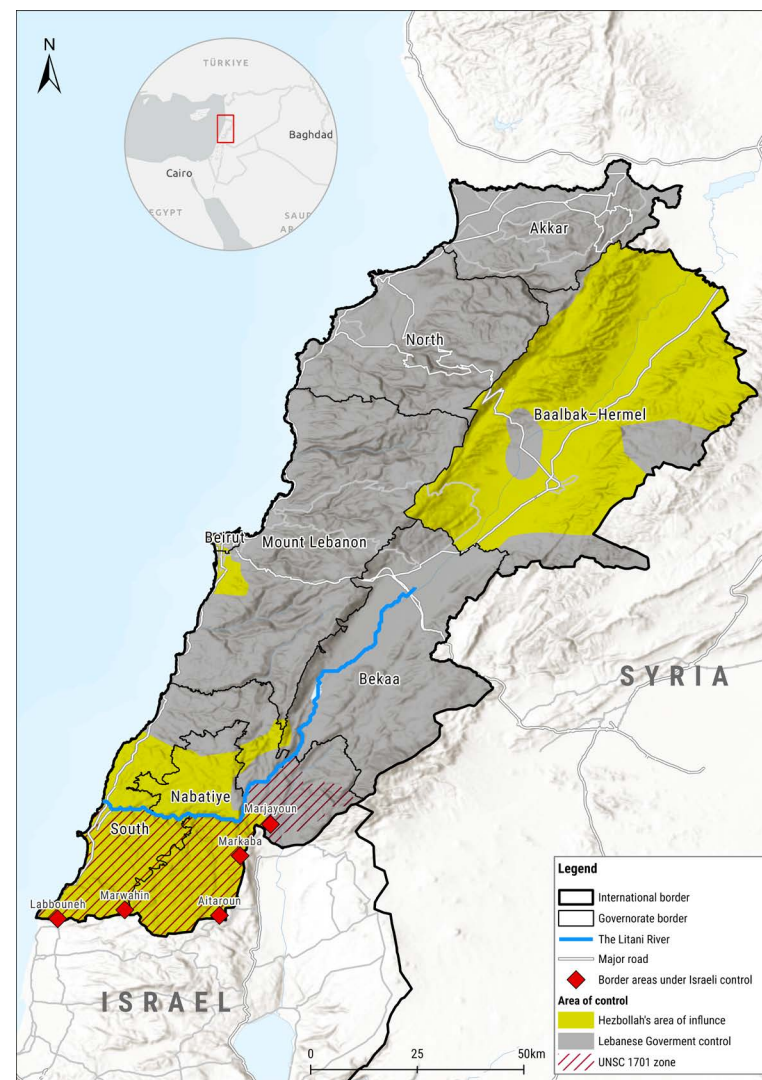
LEBANON

Score: 4

The fragmented political landscape, which manifests as hybrid governance, contributes to very high humanitarian access restrictions across Lebanon, although during the reporting period, constraints were mainly driven by the Israeli military presence in the Lebanese border areas in the south.

The context in Lebanon is analytically distinct from Palestine, Syria, or Yemen. The territorial fragmentation of Lebanon is subtle, as it may be perceived as a case of hybrid governance rather than overt territorial division. The Lebanese Armed Forces formally control most of the country, with Hezbollah considered a parallel authority in areas where there is a majority of Shia Muslims, such as Nabatiye and South governorates, the southern suburbs of Beirut city, and Bekaa Valley (30km east of Beirut) (TWI 06/08/2024; Chatham House 30/06/2021). Hezbollah continues to have significant autonomous influence in those areas, and it remains a component of the Lebanese Government and a key political party (AJ 30/08/2025; CFR 21/01/2020). An additional external layer to the fragmented territorial control in Lebanon is the presence of the Israeli military. Following escalations of conflict between Hezbollah and Israel between September–November 2024 and the ceasefire agreement on 27 November, Israel had maintained control over five strategic positions near the border until December 2025, south of the Litani River (NRC 23/09/2025). The area established under the United Nations Security Council resolution 1701 is controlled exclusively by the Lebanese authorities and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, and is meant to be free of any other armed personnel, assets, or weapons (UN 01/10/2025).

Map 4. Access constraints in Lebanon: hybrid governance and southern border zones as of December 2025



Source: ACAPS



Access of people in need to humanitarian aid

Lebanon differs from other cases, as having a hybrid authority does not generally create internal movement restrictions. People can move freely in most areas across the country. That said, external restrictions arising from Israel's control over the five strategic positions near the border in southern Lebanon, where they have established checkpoints, are preventing people from accessing their farmland, limiting their means of income and potentially contributing to increasing child labour cases and food insecurity levels (NRC 23/09/2025). UNIFIL also reported that Israeli forces erected two concrete T-walls, one each in October and November 2025, creating physical barriers and preventing people's access to more than 4,000m² of Lebanese agricultural land, disrupting livelihoods and potentially contributing to increasing food insecurity (UNIFIL 14/11/2025). Lack of safety also restricts farmers' movement as conflict remnants, such as the presence of unexploded ordnance and reported contamination with white phosphorus, prevent people from reaching their land and disrupt their livelihoods (AAH 18/11/2025).

Access of humanitarian organisations to people in need

Hezbollah, which can be perceived as a hybrid authority in Lebanon, does not only maintain security and governance; it manages economic and social parallel and semi-institutionalised service provision systems, such as health and education. For example, Hezbollah's Islamic Health Authority manages eight hospitals and over 90 medical centres (AJ 30/08/2025; CFR 21/01/2020). This gives Hezbollah influence over service delivery and creates informal gatekeeping for humanitarian responders, who often need to coordinate with these structures to reach affected populations.

In Lebanon, access constraints are driven more by external factors rather than internal fragmentation. In southern Lebanon, access constraints do not primarily stem from the need to navigate Hezbollah's parallel governance structures but from the fact that Hezbollah has been designated as a terrorist organisation by the US since 1997 – an indirect access constraint operating through donor compliance regimes, not physical or administrative denial in operational areas (DoS accessed 10/12/2025; Charity and Security Network 05/06/2012). This designation restricts US-funded NGOs from engaging with community responders in charge of operations in the worst-affected areas. As a result,

organisations receiving US financing cannot channel assistance through Hezbollah-linked structures, limiting their ability to operate in areas where civilian needs are highest and where, generally, it is likely challenging to deliver aid without engaging with Hezbollah (Charity and Security Network 05/06/2012).

It remains unclear whether humanitarian organisations operating in Hezbollah's areas of influence need to coordinate approvals, security clearances, and activity notifications directly with Hezbollah institutions rather than the Lebanese State. This information gap limits the ability to assess the potential bureaucratic impediments to coordinating humanitarian operations.

Following the conflict with Israel, Hezbollah's weakened service provision and the rise in humanitarian needs have reshaped humanitarian access, creating greater dependence on humanitarian aid amid Hezbollah's reduced ability to address some needs. This is also aggravated by the economic troubles Iran is experiencing, which may have led to reduced funding for their proxy, Hezbollah (MENAF 02/06/2025). Hezbollah's reduced capacity has also strained local services and limited the group's ability to support humanitarian activities compared to previous years.

Physical, security, and environmental constraints

There are no physical and systematic security restrictions arising from the presence of hybrid authority in Lebanon, making it slightly different from other cases, where fragmentation itself produces physical insecurity. Israel's control over border areas does not create internal bureaucratic impediments that hinder humanitarian operations, but their attacks, including almost 1,200 ground raids and 500 air strikes between November 2024 and November 2025, have increased insecurity, restricting people's movement and forcing humanitarian organisations to limit the delivery of services such as food, water, medical supplies, and education (PBS 22/11/2025; UN HRC 17/10/2025; TNA 24/11/2025; NRC 23/09/2025). These insecurity-driven restrictions have resulted in temporary suspensions of operations. Some operations have been affected directly by air strikes. On 10 November 2025, a drone attack near an MSF clinic in Hermel town in northern Lebanon damaged the building, temporarily suspending services (MSF 12/11/2025).



Israeli drone strikes also targeted government schools and hospitals between June–November 2025, disrupting access to education and healthcare services. Because service delivery in southern Lebanon is managed through a mix of state institutions and Hezbollah-linked structures, fragmentation may complicate protection and coordination mechanisms for civilian infrastructure (Chatham House 30/06/2021). During September, an Israeli drone strike near Tebnine Governmental Hospital in Sour killed one civilian, while Israeli forces destroyed a school for students with special needs in Nabatiye using controlled explosives. In June, an Israeli air strike damaged another school for people with disabilities in Beirut’s southern suburbs (Insecurity Insight 25/07/2025, 29/10/2025, and 03/11/2025). Such attacks can result in temporary closure and further strain an already-fragmented/hybrid governance environment, reducing the availability of essential services and making it harder for humanitarian organisations to identify safe facilities, coordinate with authorities, and deliver assistance, even though fragmentation here primarily complicates protection and coordination rather than directly blocking territorial access, as in more highly fragmented contexts such as Palestine, Syria, and Yemen.



SEE THE CRISIS CHANGE THE OUTCOME

