LEBANON

SOCIAL PROTEST

STARTING DATE: 17 OCTOBER 2019

TRIGGER
- Announcement by the government of a tax on messaging applications such as WhatsApp in a context of poor economic situation.

GOALS
- Removal of the entire political class, considered corrupt by the demonstrators.
- Early election allowing a renewal of the political landscape.
- End of the confessional political system.
- Establishment of a transitional government of technocrats to tackle the economic crisis.
- Implementation of economic measures to curb the economic crisis that is undermining the country.
- Establishment of efficient public services, especially water and electricity.

STATE OF PLAY

- Resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri on 29 October
- Continuation of demonstrations aimed at a wider change in the political landscape.
- Regular tensions between demonstrators and security forces.
- Sporadic tensions between supporters of rival parties : Hezbollah members attacked demonstrators on 25 October in Beirut, clashes between protesters and supporters of Michel Aoun occurred on 13 November.
- Political negotiations underway to form a new government following the announcement of Saad Hariri's resignation.

IMPACTS: IMPORTANT

- 2 demonstrators killed.
- Several people injured during clashes between demonstrators and law enforcement.

- Country paralyzed since the beginning of the protest movement, banks and public administrations temporarily shut down.
- Very sharp slowdown in economic and commercial activity.

- Roads blocked almost daily by demonstrators which has widely disrupted traffic in the country's major cities, particularly Beirut, and in surrounding areas.
- Refuelling of service stations made very difficult.

POTENTIAL TRIGGERS FOR ESCALATION

- Unsatisfactory decisions made by current politicians,
- Continuation of demonstrations and possible radicalisation of protesters; more violent repression of protests.
- Increasingly catastrophic economic situation due to inactivity in the country,
- Rising political-religious tensions between supporters of the different political parties of the Lebanese system.
- Escalation of violence between demonstrators of different faiths, in the form of civil conflict.
- Decision by the Hezbollah – for whom the pre-revolt political conditions were favourable – to intervene, including through an armed intervention.

POTENTIAL TRIGGERS FOR DE-ESCALATION

- Political solution to the crisis, compromise between the demands of the demonstrators and the ruling political class, organisation of new elections, political dialogue on confessionalism.
- Strong economic measures, efficient public services, decisions designed to curb endemic corruption.