

Arab Baptist seminary sheltering Christians and others

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Christians and others fleeing the war zone in southern Lebanon are finding refuge at Arab Baptist Theological Seminary near Beirut, its president Wissam Nasrallah told Baptist Press, as Israel's fight against Iran ally Hezbollah intensifies.

Housing about 170 internally displaced persons among an estimated 800,000 who have fled southern Lebanon in the past 10 days, the seminary founded decades ago by Southern Baptist missionaries has learned to be present, visible, and active when war strikes.

"What good is salt if it stays in the salt container? It will become sticky and full of humidity," Nasrallah told Baptist Press. "Salt needs to be outside the salt container. Human tendency is self-preservation and self-protection, but God had to teach us that he has work for us to do, and he wants us to be tools in his hands that he can use."

At least 687 have been killed and 1,774 injured in Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon since March 2, Lebanon's public health ministry [reported](#) March 12.

Large portion of the population displaced

About a fifth of Lebanon's 4 million people are displaced, including members of The Baptist Church in Deir Mimas near the Lebanon and Israeli border, Nasrallah said, as well as Christians from other congregations.

Lebanon enjoys religious freedom, with Christians comprising about 30 percent of the population, or 1.2 million people. Evangelicals number about 1 percent of the population, he said, or about 40,000 people.

Nasrallah would like American Christians to know there are Christians in the region living out their faith.

“There is a story of Christian believers who, despite the surrounding darkness, are making a difference and are living out their faith so the name of Christ might be acknowledged and glorified,” Nasrallah said.

“That’s a story you don’t hear in America, but that’s the story of Arab Christians, Arab Baptists, Arab Evangelicals that live in the Middle East.”

Lebanon President Joseph Aoun has called for a new ceasefire agreement with Israel and Israeli support to help the Lebanese military disarm Hezbollah.

Aoun accused the terrorists of wanting to “buy the fall of the Lebanese state ... at the price of destroying dozens of our villages and the fall of tens of thousands of our people for the sake of the Iranian regime’s calculations,” [MSN reported](#).

As the war intensifies, ABTS is located in a heavily Christian area still considered safe, Nasrallah said.

Seminary continues education during war

The seminary is continuing its education of 250 enrolled students through online courses, Nasrallah said, while providing shelter, food, and other basic needs to refugees, and offering gospel encouragement to Christians and non-believers through community chapel services. Nasrallah has

served as ABTS president since October 2025.

“As a seminary, our goal is leadership formation for the Arab world. We have to manage the short-term emergency without abandoning the enduring, faithful task of forming leaders over the long term,” Nasrallah said.

“Just managing these two realities is difficult, and just the stress on our staff, who worry about their own safety and their own families. We’re asking more of them to serve, to love, to care, on top of the regular work of continuing the programs online.”

Southern Baptists continue to support ABTS in its mission, Nasrallah said, while the seminary remains a ministry of [THIMAR](#), nonprofit Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development.

“We were founded as an organization and as a seminary by Southern Baptist missionaries in the late 1950s. So, we stand on the legacy of our founding fathers that came from this country and really started a Baptist movement which endures today, and has become fully indigenous, fully local,” Nasrallah said March 12 as he ended a two-week stay in the U.S. and prepared to return to Lebanon.

“We are grateful for our Baptist forefathers who sacrificed a lot. They came when there was nothing in terms of Baptist churches or presence,” Nasrallah continued.

He requested prayers for the faithfulness, boldness, and endurance of Christians in the Middle East, and also encouraged Southern Baptists to visit the seminary for short-term missions work during peace times.

The seminary has trusted God to provide necessary resources for those fleeing the war, Nasrallah said.

“We do what we’re called to do,” he said, “and we rely on the Lord and on our friends for the rest.”