

THE CHRONICLE



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CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE NEVER-ENDING CYCLE



#150

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EDITORIAL



NOW MORE THAN EVER, THE MIDDLE EAST NEEDS OUR FULL ATTENTION.

We have entered a dangerous phase, one in which war is nothing more than a backdrop. It is familiar, omnipresent, and has been almost trivialized by the media. It no longer makes much of a splash—if any at all—and yet it continues to destroy infrastructure, bodies, and minds amid a growing, deafening silence. And yet—“ceasefire,” “war,” “post-traumatic stress”—when words have lost their meaning, when they no longer describe the reality of the situation our teams witness every day, our voices must be heard.

From Yemen to Syria, from Iran to Lebanon—and never forgetting Palestine—the burden of these crises is mounting and affecting the daily lives of millions of civilians, hindering their access to healthcare, food, education, shelter, and drinking water... But beware: the protracted crises in Yemen and Syria, the ongoing genocide in Palestine, the violent and all-out acceleration of Israeli colonization in the West Bank, and Israel’s destructive campaign in southern Lebanon are also plunging populations into states of severe and persistent traumatic stress, and will continue to affect people for generations to come.

Violations of international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles are on the rise, ceasefires are not being respected, and humanitarian access is being prevented, hindered, and undermined. The dams are breaking, and it is our very humanity that is being buried. But let us never forget that behind every statistic there is a name, a life, a story, plans, dreams, and hopes that deserve our attention, our perseverance, and our determination to remain committed to the humanitarian response. These crises compel us to act, and they speak volumes about what we are willing to accept for our shared future.

Let us stand up in outrage, let us take action. Now more than ever, we need you.

Elsa Softic
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HUMANITARIAN VIEWPOINT



Gheed and Haneen, A dual perspective on Palestine

Haneen is the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Advisor of Première Urgence Internationale's mission in Palestine. She serves as the technical lead for MHPSS activities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; she oversees the implementation of MHPSS activities across various projects, ensuring the quality of services provided and adherence to best practices.

Gheed is the Communications Officer in the Gaza Strip. Her role involves managing all communications efforts—such as collecting community testimonies—and amplifying the voices and realities of these communities. She is committed to conveying, with compassion, the stories of those affected by the war and raising public awareness on a daily basis.

Haneen and Gheed are Palestinian. One is in the West Bank, the other in Gaza. Here, they share their stories from two different parts of a fragmented territory.

MAINTAINING WORK-LIFE BALANCE DURING A CRISIS

HANEEN: Creating this balance has to be done with a great deal of intention. You have to be intentional about it, work for it, and continue to practice it; it does not easily become spontaneous. Within this crisis, I try my best to carve out time to do things for myself, not for work and not for others, no matter how small, like exercising as often as I can, or go to the Latin dance group once a week, or see friends, or sit on my couch and enjoying it.

I don't pretend the crisis is not happening but considering that the impact where I live is not very direct, meaning we can still carry on with daily tasks, I remind myself that I need to do these things so I can keep going, that the crisis is there but we're still alive and can't act like we are dead until we are. I don't dissociate or desensitize from the realities, and I let myself be scared and worried when I need to but also continue to do what I love and care about.

GHEED: Helping others is one of the ways I cope with the trauma and difficult reality around me. But being the breadwinner for my family adds another layer of responsibility. At work, I feel a sacred responsibility toward the people we serve. At home, I strive to remain emotionally present and supportive for my loved ones. Witnessing people's suffering can be emotionally overwhelming: I see myself in them, I recall the memories of my home and everything I have lost. I remember the displacements and deprivation we went through with my loved ones. This overlap is what makes what I convey honest and real: I am speaking about the lives of people I belong to.

To maintain balance, I try to create moments of peace for myself by spending quality time with my team, reading, writing journals, listening to music, and going on walks. I search for small signs of life among the destruction, trees, flowers, or moments worth capturing, as a reminder that hope and beauty can still exist even in the hardest circumstances. You see hope despite pain, poverty, and harsh conditions, people who have lost everything except their hope and their love for life.

NAVIGATING THE CRISIS AS A HUMANITARIAN WORKER

HANEEN: For me working not only in humanitarian aid, but in the field of psychology in general brings meaning to my life. I think, for many Palestinians, what helps to stay, survive, be resilient is that they find meaning in their struggle (faith, belief in their right, etc.). When suffering is meaningless, it becomes much harder. When there's meaning there's purpose and will to live or change. And this is something you create; it's not given to you by others. We assign meaning to our own suffering if that works for us.

GHEED: Humanitarian work gives me a deep sense of purpose, gratitude, and fulfillment. It reminds me of the value of solidarity, teamwork, and the importance of using our skills to support others during difficult moments. I love working with people in the field; it is what drives me like a compass. The most important aspect of humanitarian work is how it strengthens your humanity. It teaches empathy, ethics, humility, and compassion, while creating meaningful connections between people regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances.

MANAGING TRAUMA DURING A PROLONGED CRISIS

HANEEN: This is a difficult question: it is hard to measure the effect of traumatic events when the crisis is still ongoing. Some examples might be observed more directly and reflect on behavior fast (for example bed wetting for children), but others could be long term and more difficult to observe. My perspective is that many people can cope with traumatic events, have internal and external resources and networks to manage their reactions to the event, so it does not develop into severe distress. I strongly believe in group psychosocial support. Most people can find support in peer networks, sharing experiences, knowing they are not alone in their suffering, and learning basic stress management techniques, few people after this need specialized interventions. Within this ongoing crisis, in order for traumatic events to not develop into trauma, group support is essential.

COMMUNICATING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

GHEED: The most critical aspect of working as a Communication Officer in a humanitarian context is ethical advocacy. Humanitarian communication must balance the urgent need to raise awareness and mobilize support with the absolute responsibility to protect the dignity, privacy, and safety of affected communities.

Unlike commercial communication, humanitarian storytelling must always follow the "Do No Harm" principle. It should never exploit vulnerability or reduce people to stereotypes for the sake of visibility or fundraising. Our role is to act as a responsible bridge between affected communities and the outside world by conveying their realities truthfully, transparently, and respectfully.

While all humanitarian work is grounded in ethics, I believe communication is one of the professions that demands the greatest level of personal conscience. It involves carrying people's stories, suffering, and realities as a sacred trust, and delivering them with honesty, transparency, and deep respect for their privacy and dignity.



1,140
PEOPLE SUPPORTED

10 COLLECTIVE SHELTERS
SUPPORTED

AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN
IMPLEMENTED WITHIN
48 HOURS



→ THANKS TO YOU

PROVIDING AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

On March 2, 2026, the conflict escalated once again following rocket and drone attacks launched from southern Lebanon toward northern Israel, followed by large-scale Israeli military operations and repeated airstrikes across Lebanon that are still ongoing. This intensification of violence has resulted in heavy civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and massive population displacements.

In response to the escalating situation and thanks to your support, we launched a rapid and targeted emergency response for newly displaced populations in the Southern and Nabatiyeh governorates, with operations beginning as soon as the crisis started. Many families were displaced and housed in collective shelters under precarious conditions, requiring immediate assistance to meet their basic needs.

In total, 1,140 emergency aid kits (mattresses, blankets, pillows) were distributed across 10 collective shelters, which helped improve living conditions and reduce immediate safety risks for the affected populations.

This support played a vital role in enabling displaced families to enjoy basic living conditions, reduce their exposure to protection risks, and improve their immediate well-being upon arrival at reception sites.

The speed and effectiveness of the response were made possible by Première Urgence Internationale's well-established logistics systems, which enabled distributions to begin within 48 hours of the crisis's escalation. This operational efficiency maximized the impact of the allocated funds and ensured a rapid humanitarian response during the most critical phase of the emergency.



SPECIAL REPORT: THE MIDDLE EAST: REGIONAL CHAOS WITH GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN REPERCUSSIONS

On February 28, 2026, the Middle East entered a new phase of turmoil. The joint Israeli-U.S. attack on Iran, followed by a cascade of retaliatory strikes across the region, has plunged populations already weakened by years of crisis into a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented severity. For Première Urgence Internationale, the reality faced by civilians caught in this vise and the humanitarian consequences of this conflict must take center stage in the debate—beyond military logic and geopolitical calculations.

IRAN: WHEN THE FIRES OF WAR RAGE THROUGH CIVILIAN AREAS

The Iranian people are paying a heavy price in a conflict they did not choose. U.S.-Israeli strikes

have hit an urban area whose economy was already in shambles after decades of sanctions: overwhelmed hospitals, massive water and electricity outages, and families forced to flee. The strike on a school in Minab on February 28, documented by Amnesty International, serves as a stark reminder that international humanitarian law cannot be suspended on the grounds of strategic urgency. Added to this is the expulsion of 1.5 million Afghan refugees since early 2025—an exploitation of vulnerable populations as a political bargaining chip that Première Urgence Internationale strongly condemns, and which justifies the monitoring mechanism we have put in place to assess our capacity to intervene should the crisis worsen and the tipping point in the country's ability to cope be reached. A meeting with the Iranian Ambassador in Paris was held in this regard.

IRAQ: A FORGOTTEN STAGE OF WAR

The campaign of airstrikes against Iraq—targeting both pro-Iranian Shiite militias and U.S. bases—has received very little media coverage despite its intensity. The prime minister summoned the U.S. ambassador to protest the civilian deaths and denounced an objective violation of sovereignty, one that has, moreover, been met with general indifference, the most extreme example of which is the revelation of a secret Israeli military base on Iraqi territory. For the local population, this new cycle of violence is compounded by a chronic inability to access basic services, growing vulnerability to the consequences of climate change, and an increasingly restricted operational space for humanitarian actors, who are also severely affected by a lack of funding.

LEBANON: THE FORETOLD DISASTER COMES TO LIFE

The bombings of Beirut's southern suburbs, southern Lebanon, and the Bekaa Valley have triggered massive displacement, pushing the country to the brink of collapse and raising fears of an implosion of its social fabric. Prime Minister Nawaf Salam spoke of a "humanitarian disaster" in the making, in a country that had not yet recovered from the destruction of 2024. What is striking is the brutality of the repetition: a country already on its knees, once again crushed in a conflict whose decisions are made elsewhere, and successive (and unobserved) ceasefires that perpetuate unbearable uncertainty for all the victims. The Israeli army's invasion of part of southern Lebanon, coupled with a systematic campaign of destruction targeting villages, infrastructure, and farmland, rules out any short-term resolution to the crisis and buries what little hope remains for a return to normalcy.

PALESTINE: WAR AND OBLIVION

While October 7, 2023, will forever be remembered as the day everything changed, the genocide of the people of Gaza is gradually (and cynically) being silenced. The war against Iran has not brought an end to the operations in Gaza—

it has simply pushed them out of the media spotlight. In the West Bank, the total blockade of Palestinian cities has completely cut off the population's access to healthcare, water, and food. Palestine tragically illustrates the saturation effect of simultaneous crises: when everything is burning, the oldest fires are the least visible. Première Urgence Internationale rejects this hierarchy of suffering and continues to operate on the fringes of a humanitarian space that is being openly and directly attacked.



SYRIA AND YEMEN: HOPES DASHED BY REGIONAL CHAOS

Syria, which had been trying to rebuild since the fall of the Assad regime, has once again been drawn into the regional turmoil, notably by taking in Lebanese refugees. With more than 12 million displaced people, the needs remain enormous.

Yemen remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The Houthis' alliance with Iran, the Transitional Council's offensive

in the south since December 2025, and the structural collapse of the healthcare system paint a picture of unrelenting severity that the international community continues to observe from afar—all the more so with the withdrawal of United Nations agencies from the north of the country.

THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ, A NEW FAULT LINE

In addition to the direct consequences of the conflict, Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz in response to U.S.-Israeli strikes—and the

people were facing acute food insecurity even before the outbreak of the conflict in Iran. Net food-importing countries—Lebanon, Yemen, Somalia, and Egypt—are on the front lines, with grain reserves in some cases amounting to less than two months' supply.

For humanitarian organizations like ours, operating precisely in these contexts, this dual pressure—armed conflict and the collapse of food access—poses an unprecedented operational challenge that requires a coordinated, massive, and immediate response from the international community.

TAKING ACTION, DESPITE EVERYTHING AND BECAUSE OF ALL OF THIS

As bleak as this picture may be, it is not a call for inaction. It is precisely in the most complex, politicized, and violent situations that neutral and impartial humanitarian action is most needed. We know this from experience: civilian populations cannot wait for the warring parties to reach an agreement. They need access to healthcare, water, food, and shelter—right now. What this regional crisis reveals with brutal clarity is the chronic inadequacy of mechanisms to protect civilians and the gradual shrinking of humanitarian space. When hospitals are struck, when refugees are expelled as bargaining chips, when ceasefires collapse within hours, the entire framework of international humanitarian law is shaken. Première Urgence Internationale intends to continue advocating, alongside its partners and donors, for a space for dialogue because human dignity is non-negotiable, and because emergencies must never serve as an excuse for abandonment.



Olivier Routeau
Operations Director
Première Urgence Internationale

subsequent U.S. blockade— have introduced a major destabilizing factor into an already fragile global food system. Not only does 20% of the world's oil pass through this maritime chokepoint, but so do considerable volumes of fertilizer produced in the Gulf region, on which agriculture in many parts of the world directly depends. As early as March 2026, the World Food Programme and the FAO warned that this disruption to supply chains risked exacerbating an already critical situation: nearly 300 million

FOCUS ON Yemen

ONE OF THE WORST CRISES IN THE WORLD

Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the world, has been ravaged by a war that has lasted for 11 years. This conflict, with its severe humanitarian consequences, has upended Yemeni society as a whole, making the country the site of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with 21 million people in need of aid—more than 50% of the country's population.

The conflict between Iran-backed Houthi rebels and a Saudi-led coalition supporting the Yemeni government has plunged the country into widespread famine, accompanied by economic collapse and the destruction of infrastructure. Schools, hospitals, roads, and other critical infrastructure have been destroyed. The economy has collapsed. Devastating diseases such as diphtheria and cholera made a resurgence as early as 2017.

Yemen is one of the countries most affected by food insecurity in the world. Approximately 18.2 million people, including about 5 million children under the age of five, require treatment for acute malnutrition. It is estimated that more than 80% of the country's population lives in multidimensional poverty.

There are now only 12 international NGOs, including Première Urgence Internationale, operating in northern Yemen, where two-thirds of the population lives. The suspension of U.S. funding and World Bank support has had a massive impact. Like all other humanitarian actors, our activities in Yemen have been severely affected by these budget cuts. Drastic funding cuts and the closure of programs in Yemen are severely impacting our ability to meet needs. The worsening economic crisis, conflicts, epidemics, and climate-related shocks are putting the most vulnerable segments of the population at even greater risk.

A child is being treated at the Première Urgence Internationale health center in Al-Najiba, in the Taizz Governorate, in the western part of the country © Première Urgence Internationale / 2022



THE SYRIAN CRISIS

In figures

The Syrian civil war, which broke out in March 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring, is one of the most devastating conflicts of the 21st century. Initially triggered by the violent crackdown on peaceful protests against Bashar al-Assad's regime, it quickly escalated into a complex war involving multiple regional and international actors. Over the years, this conflict has evolved into an internationalized proxy war, involving the intervention of several foreign powers that have come to support various groups in order to defend their own interests.

After 14 years of war, the toll is deeply alarming: 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line, essential infrastructure has been destroyed, generations of children have known nothing but war, and numerous war crimes have been documented...

THE MAIN ACTORS

The regime of Bashar al-Assad

President of Syria since 2000, heir to the authoritarian regime founded by his father, Hafez al-Assad.

The Syrian opposition

Composed of armed groups, ideologically and militarily divided: the Free Syrian Army (FSA); Islamist groups; local factions; Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)...

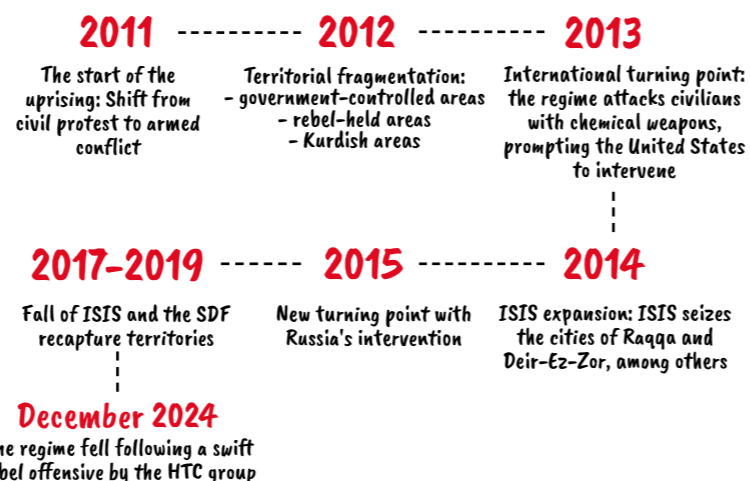
Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

A coalition led by the Syrian Kurds (YPG).

Jihadist groups (Islamic State)

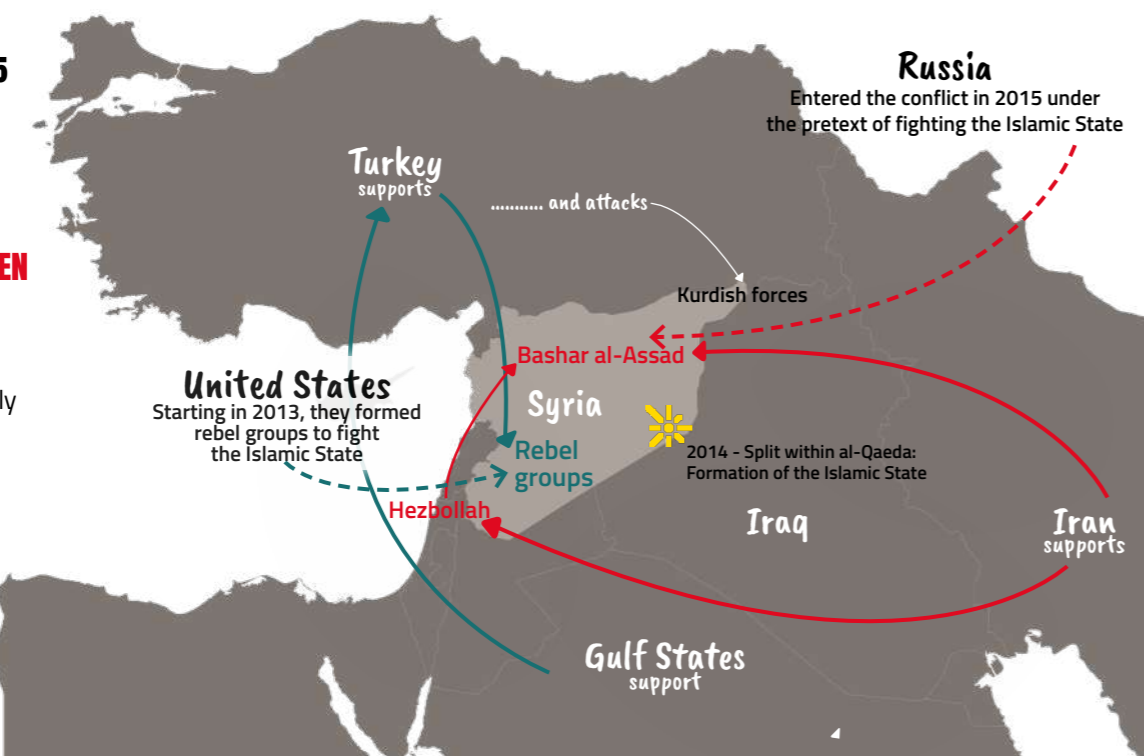
Foreign countries
Supporting the Bashar al-Assad regime: Russia, Iran
Supporting rebel groups: Turkey
Fighting the Islamic State: United States

TIMELINE OF EVENTS



KEY FIGURES BETWEEN 2011 AND 2025

- more than **528,000 DEATHS**
- including **182,000 CIVILIANS** and **25,000 CHILDREN**
- 1 MILLION** injured
- 7.2 MILLION** internally displaced persons
- 6 MILLION** refugees abroad
- 16.5 MILLION** people in need of humanitarian aid



Sources : SOHR, ONU

MEETING OUR PARTNERS



Long-term support

Since 2019, the *Fondation pour le Logement* has been supporting Première Urgence Internationale in its efforts to address the needs of Lebanese populations made vulnerable by years of crisis, as well as refugees and internally displaced persons in the country.

In September 2024, when the bombings began in Lebanon, attacks on residential areas were widespread—nearly 99,000 homes were destroyed—and the risks to vulnerable communities, particularly women and children, increased significantly. In response to this situation, the foundation answered the call from Première Urgence Internationale's teams, enabling a rapid adaptation of on-the-ground interventions.

- 99,000** homes destroyed in 2024
- 5** collective shelters rehabilitated
- 100** households receiving financial support



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A key tool for rapid and appropriate emergency responses

Starting on March 2, 2026, a new escalation of the conflict led to heavy civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and massive population displacements. In response to this emergency, the *Fondation pour le Logement* has renewed its support for our efforts. Thanks to its support, five collective shelters—housing approximately 200 people—have been rehabilitated. Emergency and mobility kits (containing items such as blankets, mattresses, sleeping bags, flashlights, etc.) and hygiene kits are also being distributed. In addition, financial assistance is being provided to 100 households, or nearly 400 people. Finally, awareness-raising activities on protection and social support are being carried out to identify the most vulnerable individuals and address their specific needs.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the *Fondation pour le Logement* for its responsiveness and trust, which play an essential role in the implementation of our emergency responses in Lebanon.



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OUR RECOMMENDATIONS



Two years immersed in the hell of Gaza

➔ available on Charles Villa's YouTube channel

Documentary | 109 minutes |

This gripping documentary delves into the daily lives of civilians caught in the war. Through personal accounts, on-the-ground footage, and long-term coverage, the film depicts the violence of the conflict, the human toll of the blockade, and the constant struggle to survive in a devastated region.

A film by Suhail Nassar and Charles Villa, directed by Elie Dupont and Mathias Hillion.

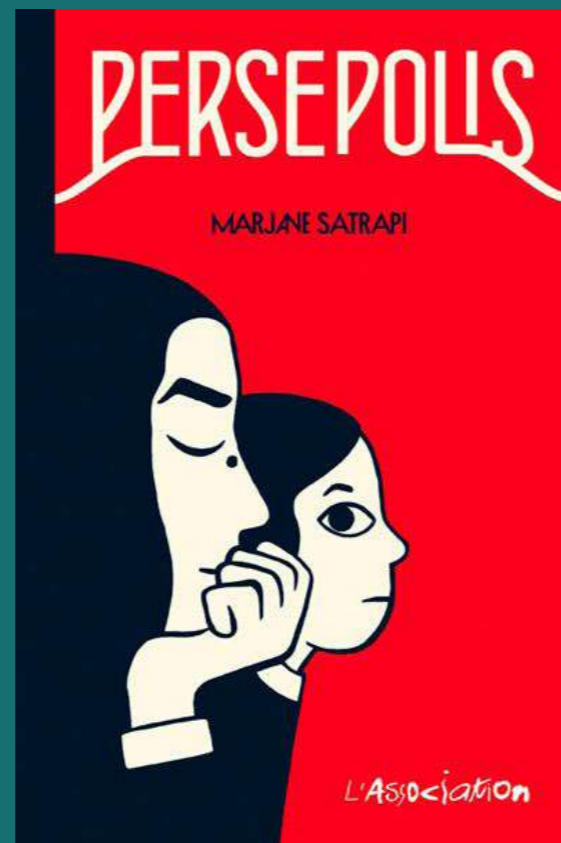


Palestiniens

➔ Available on the rfi.fr website

Podcast | 5 episodes, 45 minutes | RFI | French

A former correspondent in Jerusalem, Guilhem Delteil gave Palestinians a platform to tell their stories. This immersive five-part report uses personal stories to trace the course of past events and shed light on the present.



Persepolis

Comic Book | 4 volumes | 2000–2003

Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* is an autobiographical graphic novel that recounts her childhood in Iran during the Islamic Revolution, followed by her adolescence in Europe. The story blends humor, emotion, and a critical perspective on Iranian society at the time. It quickly became one of the biggest hits in the European independent comics scene. In 2007, the animated feature film adaptation won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

**TO SUPPORT
OUR INTERVENTION**

MAKE A DONATION

