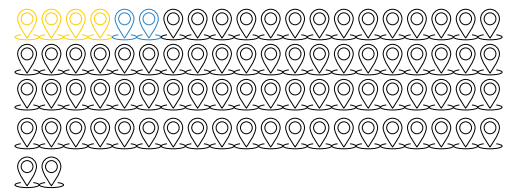


**SECTION 1: TENSIONS SUMMARY**

Aley’s diverse demographic and political makeup reflects Lebanon’s complex social structure, The region’s mix of Sunni, Druze, Shiite, and Christian communities makes it prone to sectarian frictions and conflict. Economic hardship, disparities, and gaps in services, particularly in the western parts of Aley, further exacerbates tensions and social unrest. Specific tensions hotspots such as Hay El Selloum, Choueifat, and Khalde frequently experience incidents driven by spillover effects from the neighboring Beirut Southern Suburbs. Additionally, strained resources and job competition heighten inter-communal tensions in areas like Aley, Choueifat, Bshamoun, Bayssour, and Aramoun.



**6 cadastres out of 82** are characterized as **high** or **moderate** tensions levels as of Q4 2024

The tensions landscape is mainly characterized by:

- **Sectarian diversity and conflict:** Aley’s blend of communities make is susceptible to sectarian tensions, with historical incidents underscoring these challenges.
- **Economic hardship and disparities:** Western parts of Aley face poverty and limited essential services, often linked to social unrest, community disputes, and crimes like theft and drug-related offenses.
- **Crime and insecurity:** In particular drug trafficking, continue to increase tensions and fuel instability.
- **Inter-communal tensions:** Strained resources and job competition fuel tensions particularly in the western parts of the district.

**SECTION 2: TENSIONS OVERVIEW**





Given the intricate socio-political landscape and historical dynamics of Aley, understanding potential conflicts and tensions requires an analysis of both local dynamics and broader national trends. Aley, with its diverse demographic makeup and a history marked by both communal harmony and tensions, shows Lebanon’s wider socio-political challenges. The western parts of Aley are characterized by a significant Sunni presence, alongside Druze communities and, in specific areas like Hay El Selloum (Beirut Southern Suburb), a Shiite community. These areas are known for their socio-economic challenges, with many communities facing issues related to poverty and limited access to services. On the coast, Khalde is an important location, linking Beirut with the South. The area is known for its complex local dynamics, in particular within the ‘Al-Arab’ clan. The eastern regions of Aley present a different demographic profile, predominantly Druze, with a notable Christian minority. The eastern areas may generally have better economic conditions and services. Northeastern Aley, centered around Aley city and Choueifat, is another area which faces economic hardships and high vulnerabilities.

Overall, the more disadvantaged areas of Aley, particularly in the western and northwestern regions of the district, exhibit higher levels of poverty, lower state presence, and increased population density. Additionally, the influence from Baabda appears to correlate with a higher incidence of crimes such as theft and drug-related incidents in these areas. In other areas in Aley, the relatively low number of incidents can be explained by the strong support to municipalities from political parties, enabling municipalities to provide better services and maintain effective security measures.

Intra-sectarian tensions are significant, primarily arising from personal and family disputes, but typically remaining contained within this sphere without escalating further. Additionally, tensions can emerge within Aley City's bustling souks, especially during the tourist-heavy summer season, often driven by disputes among restaurant and hotel owners. Sectarian tensions remain rooted as of the Lebanese civil war. Hotspots such as Hay El Selloum, Choueifat, and Khalde indicate underlying socio-economic grievances and sectarian divides.

On the inter-communal level, tensions are present in Aley especially that it hosts a large Syrian community that added pressures on livelihoods in the already socio-economically challenged area. Tensions are often exacerbated through security incidents and state-led restrictive measures against Syrians. These tensions are particularly high in Aley City, Choueifat, Bshamoun, Bayssour, and Aramoun.

The observations and trends identified suggest several key tensions areas:

Key Tensions Drivers	Analysis
 <p><b>Sectarian Diversity and Conflict</b></p>	<p>Although inter-sectarian tensions have been relatively contained, the risk of conflict persists among the different sectarian communities. Many such incidents take place in Khalde, on and around the main highway connecting Beirut and the South. Historical clashes underscore the potential for specific incidents to trigger volatility. Also, judicial developments following historical events of armed clashes between non-state armed actors provoke significant tensions regularly, making Aley among one of the districts most prone to State-Citizen Relations-related incidents.</p>
 <p><b>Economic Hardship and Disparities</b></p>	<p>Economic hardships and access to jobs and services access vary widely across Aley, with some areas facing severe socio-economic challenges such as Choueifat. The combination of high poverty and a lack of state presence often lead tensions of various sorts. For example, competition for resources is often an underlying trigger of intra-Lebanese tensions in the form of personal disputes and conflicts based on political and sectarian affiliations. The more disadvantaged areas of Aley, particularly in the western and northwestern regions of the district, exhibit higher levels of poverty and increased population density. This has materialized in crimes, drug trafficking, thefts, and personal – sometimes armed – disputes.</p>
 <p><b>Crime and Insecurity</b></p>	<p>Crime and insecurity, in particular drug trafficking, continue to increase tensions and fuel instability. The influence from the Southern Suburbs of Beirut in connected areas appears to correlate with a higher incidence of offenses such as theft and drug-related incidents in highly populated areas of the district, namely Choueifat, Aramoun, and Aley city. Aley's significance in drug trafficking, particularly near areas bordering Baabda and close to Dahr Al Baidar, introduces a factor of organized crime that fuels instability. The involvement of local communities in these networks, driven by economic necessity or coercion, adds complexity to the social fabric and harbors conflicts between rival groups. Given Lebanon's strained security infrastructure, drug-related and broader organized crime incidents are particular and ever-present risks in Aley.</p>
 <p><b>Inter-Communal Tensions Mainly Driven by Pressure on Resources, Competition Over Jobs, and Perceived Community Insecurity</b></p>	<p>Aley hosts a large number of displaced Syrians. Thus, intercommunal tensions are high in Aley with several reported incidents in certain areas. High inter-communal tensions are mainly driven by perceptions of community insecurity and crimes, pressure on resources, and competition over jobs materializing through restrictive measures imposed by local authorities and political parties on displaced Syrians, namely closure of shops, confiscation of motorcycles, and challenging access to organizations supporting Syrians in areas such as Choueifat. The inter-communal tensions manifest also through blaming Syrians for crime incidents.</p>

## SECTION 3: TENSIONS HOTSPOTS

Aley district, with its diverse demographic and socio-political landscape, is a microcosm of Lebanon's broader complexities. The district is home to various hotspots where tensions are heightened due to socio-economic disparities, sectarian diversity, and spillover effects from the neighboring Beirut Southern Suburbs.

### **Khalde**

While inter-sectarian tensions are relatively well contained throughout Aley, recent years have seen increasing tensions between different sectarian groups. Between 2020 and 2021, clashes emerged in and around Khalde. These clashes also fueled tensions and grievances against the state. Further, and as seen since 2021, any development related to the Khalde clashes risk triggering tensions between clans, on one side, and some political groups or state-actors, on the other side due to the strategic location of the area on the main highway connecting Beirut and the South.

### **Choueifat & Hay El Selloum**

These are areas in Aley that share a similar context to neighboring Baabda. Tension dynamics in these areas are not really connected to dynamics specific to Aley but rather to Baabda, namely Beirut Southern Suburbs.

### **Dahr Al Baidar**

The area represents a connecting point between the governorates of Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa which makes it an area of concern as it witnesses drug-smuggling incidents leading to tensions, often between security forces and smugglers. So, Aley became a hotspot for drug trafficking, ranking third behind Baabda and Tripoli in terms of the total number of incidents, although these drug-related incidents tie in as well with the dynamics at play in Beirut southern suburbs (extending over Baabda and Aley).

### **Aley**

Aley city is the center of Aley district and witnesses personal disputes, inter-communal tensions, and restrictive measures imposed by local authorities. It represents a microcosm of the Aley district, also taking into consideration the large Syrian community living here and the heterogenic demography.

### **Kahale**

One major incident with inter-sectarian undertones occurred in the eastern parts of the district, in Kahale, on 9 August 2023 which highlighted the risk for inter-sectarian tensions even outside traditional hotspots. A truck carrying ammunition overturned in Kahale on the Beirut-Bekaa Road, triggering clashes between local residents a non-state actor. The incident, linked to broader national political tensions, resulted in two fatalities before being de-escalated by the Lebanese Armed Forces and political leaders.

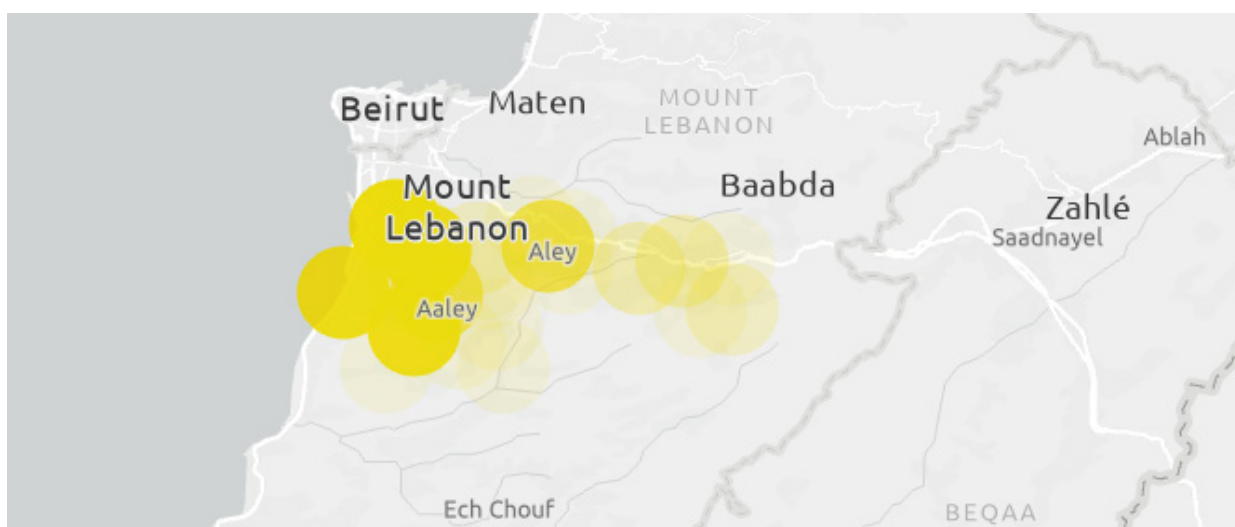


Figure 1: Heat map of reported safety and security incidents