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Delegations will find attached a report on the above subject from the Netherlands delegation ¹.

¹ This document has been translated into English only.
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General report on Lebanon / Palestinians

December 2001

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1 Introduction

This official report describes the position of Palestinians residing in Lebanon. It deals with aspects of their residence relevant for the assessment of asylum applications and for decisions on returning rejected Palestinian asylum seekers from Lebanon. This report updates the official report on Palestinians in Lebanon of 15 December 1999, reference DPC/AM-568808/99.

The report is divided into fourteen chapters. Chapter 2 gives a historical background. Chapter 3 then deals with Lebanon, also covering the role of Palestinians in the Lebanese civil war. Chapter 4 contains statistics and other general information on Palestinians in Lebanon. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 outline the position of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the political and socio-economic situation of Palestinians in Lebanon. Chapter 8 gives an overview of Palestinian groups which are (or were) active in Lebanon. Chapter 9 describes inter-Palestinian relations, the security situation and Lebanese and Syrian influences inside the refugee camps. Legal aspects and the freedom of movement of Palestinians in Lebanon are dealt with in Chapters 10 and 11. Chapter 12 deals with reasons for migration, while Chapter 13 examines some aspects of relevance to the scope for internal settlement. Chapter 14 gives a general summary.

This report is based on information from the Netherlands diplomatic representation in Beirut which maintains an extensive network of contacts with representatives of both the Lebanese authorities and the Palestinian community. Information from the Netherlands representation at the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah (West Bank) has also been used as a source. Findings made *in situ* have also been taken on board.

The report also draws on information from authoritative governmental and non-governmental organisations including UNRWA, Amnesty International, the United Kingdom and Danish immigration authorities, the German Bundesamt für die Anerkennung ausländischer Flüchtlinge, the Economist Intelligence Unit and the US State Department. Specialist literature and press reports have also been consulted. In a number of cases where non-confidential sources are indicated the text is also based on information gathered confidentially. A list of the most frequently consulted public sources is given in Annex I.

2 Historical background

What was later to become the British mandate of Palestine (roughly the area which covers present-day Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) was under Arab rule from 636 to 1099 AD, when the region fell to the crusaders, who ruled for almost a century. Under Arab rule the region had been divided into two military districts, one on each side of the River Jordan. The west bank of the river was known as Filastin (after the Roman Palaestina) and the region east of the Jordan was known as al-Urdunn (Arabic for Jordan and Jordania).

The Mamluks took over rule of the region from the crusaders, followed by the Turks in 1516. For the next four hundred years Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. During the First World War the British captured the region from the Turks.

In 1897 the World Zionist Organisation was founded in Basle by Theodor Herzl. Its aim was to establish a "Jewish national home in Palestine". On 2 November 1917 A. J. Balfour, then British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, declared the United Kingdom's support for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. When the League of Nations mandated Palestine and Transjordan ¹ to Britain in 1920, an explicit reference was made to the "Balfour Declaration" ².

There had not been many Jews in Palestine before 1920, but from then on Jewish immigration rapidly increased, leading to the first anti-Jewish disturbances. In the 1930s the frequency and intensity of disturbances between the Arab and Jewish populations grew. Large numbers of Jews moved to Palestine as a result of persecution by Nazi Germany.

On 29 November 1947 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 recommending an end to the British mandate and the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, with Jerusalem covered by an international regime. The proposal was accepted by the Jewish Agency ³, but rejected by the Arab population of Palestine and by all Arab countries.

The state of Israel was proclaimed on 14 May 1948, just before the British mandate was to expire. Army units from the surrounding Arab countries almost simultaneously invaded the new state and the first Arab-Israeli war broke out. After the war, which was to last over a year, Israel controlled a predominant proportion of the former mandated territory of Palestine except for the West Bank of the Jordan and the Gaza Strip, which were under (Trans-) Jordanian and Egyptian control respectively.

¹ "Transjordan" was the name for the region to the east of the River Jordan, which is now Jordan.

² For the verbatim text of the Balfour Declaration see *The Middle East and North Africa 1996*, "Palestine Documents", p. 107, Europa Publications Limited (London, 1995).

³ The Jewish inhabitants of the region were allocated this administrative representation under Article 4 of the British mandate for Palestine. Its task was to establish a Jewish national home in cooperation with the British Administration.

As a result of the 1948/1949 war, approximately three-quarters of a million Palestinians ¹ were driven from their homes and land, and most of them fled the Israeli territories. They sought refuge chiefly in the Gaza Strip ², the West Bank ³, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where they ended up in makeshift tent camps while awaiting the opportunity to return. In 1948 smaller groups of refugees settled in other Arab countries in the Middle East ⁴. An estimated 120 000 Palestinians sought refuge in Lebanon ⁵. They mostly came from Galilee and the districts of Acre, Bet She'an, Nazareth, Zefat, Tiberias and the area around Haifa in the north of Palestine. Some 150 000 Palestinians stayed behind. In due course they acquired Israeli citizenship, thus becoming an Arab minority in the Jewish state.

It quickly became apparent that there would be no speedy return for those Palestinian who had fled. The introduction of strict border controls on the Israeli side of the border, for instance, made it impossible for them to visit their own property and relatives who had been left behind. The Israeli authorities then began to classify Palestinians who had stayed away from home for a longer period as "absentees", paving the way for denying them the right of return and declaring their property forfeit. Jewish settlements sprang up in what used to be Palestinian areas. The residence of displaced Palestinians in host regions and countries has thus assumed an increasingly permanent character. The current Palestinian population in Lebanon is still mostly made up of Palestinians who left their homes in the late 1940s, and their descendants ⁶.

¹ The Arab inhabitants of the original British mandated territory of Palestine.

² The original population of some 80 000 was swollen by around 200 000 Palestinian refugees.

³ After the annexation of the West Bank the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which had then come into being, had a population of roughly 1 280 000, some 500 000 of whom were Palestinians.

⁴ Over the decades numerous Palestinians have left the countries in which they originally sought sanctuary in order to work on the Arabian peninsula.

⁵ Danish Immigration Service, "Report on the fact finding mission to Lebanon", 9445/98 DG H I (Copenhagen, June 1998).

⁶ Institute for Palestine Studies, "Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon 2001", (Beirut, 2001).

In the meantime, the international community had decided that Palestinian refugees should not fall within the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) but that a separate UN body should be created. On 8 December 1949 the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)¹ was set up to provide healthcare, education, training, social welfare and emergency aid².

Within the space of just a few days during the Six Day War (5-10 June 1967) Israel occupied the Sinai peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank³ and the Golan Heights. These areas were not annexed but placed under military rule; only East Jerusalem was annexed. The war generated a new exodus of Palestinians⁴. Around 355 000 refugees left the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – where many of them had only just built a life for themselves – for neighbouring Arab countries. Of them, some 210 000 had never been refugees before; they were counted as "displaced" by UNRWA⁵. An estimated 120 000 Palestinians moved to Lebanon⁶.

¹ Palestinians generally refer to UNRWA as "Al-Wikala" ("the Agency" in English) or "Wikalat Al-Gawt" ("the Relief Agency" in English).

² See Chapter 5.

³ Until 1988 Jordan took the position, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution No 242 of November 1967, that the West Bank was an indivisible part of the Kingdom of Jordan. It was not until July 1988 that Jordan formally renounced its claims to the West Bank – in favour of a new Palestinian state.

⁴ In the meantime the Suez crisis occurred in 1956, but did not generate another flow of Palestinian refugees in the region.

⁵ Minorities Rights Group International, "The Palestinians", Report 97/5 (London, July 1998).

⁶ Danish Immigration Service, "Report on the fact-finding mission to Lebanon", 9445/98 DG H I (Copenhagen, June 1998).

The influx of refugees into Jordan boosted the Palestinian organisations which were already present. After armed conflict in 1970 between the Jordanian army and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) ¹, the PLO and many of its followers were forced to leave the country. The majority of PLO combatants ² settled in Lebanon, where the PLO headquarters were established in 1970. The PLO managed to expand its power base in Lebanon considerably in the 1970s.

In 1969 Lebanon and the PLO had concluded the Cairo Agreement allowing the PLO to continue the armed struggle under certain conditions against Israel from Lebanon. It also put the PLO in charge of administering the Palestinian community and the (then 16) Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

In the 1970s Lebanon was increasingly plagued by violence. The Palestinians were not only involved in attacks on Israel from Lebanese territory, but also joined in the Lebanese civil war, which began in 1975 ³. From the beginning of 1972 Israel carried out attacks on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in retaliation for Palestinian actions against Israel. Partly because of this, there were also confrontations between Palestinians and the Lebanese authorities.

In October 1973 Israel was again drawn into war when Egypt and Syria launched attacks on Israeli positions. This war did not give rise to a further stream of Palestinian refugees.

¹ Further to a decision of the Arab League the Palestine Liberation Organisation was founded by 422 leading Palestinians under the leadership of Ahmad Shuqairy in Jerusalem in May 1964. The Palestine National Council (PNC), the PLO Executive Committee, a National Fund and the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) were founded at the same time. When Al-Fatah under the leadership of Yasser Arafat took over power within the PLO in 1969, the PLO became an umbrella organisation for various Palestinian factions.

² Often known as "fedayeen", which stands for "those who sacrifice themselves".

³ See chapter 3.

3. The Lebanese Civil War

Civil war raged in Lebanon from 1975 to May 1991. Tensions which had been mounting over previous decades between the various communities in the country were unleashed in this bloody struggle¹. Not long after the outbreak of the civil war, Palestinian movements also became involved in the conflict. Palestinian involvement during that period is still resented and has a large bearing on their present position in Lebanon.

3.1 Beginnings

When the Ottoman Empire disintegrated at the end of the First World War, the five Ottoman provinces which now form modern-day Lebanon were mandated to France by the League of Nations². The population of the region was very heterogeneous. Unlike its neighbouring countries, Lebanon had a flourishing Christian community consisting, *inter alia*, of Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Catholic and Armenian Orthodox groups. Many Muslims, both Sunnit and Shi'ite, and Druzes also inhabited the mandated territory.

The Christian and Muslim communities did not initially differ greatly in size. Both groups were nevertheless alive to shifts in the demographic balance which could, after all, have far-reaching consequences for relations between the various religious communities and thus for the distribution of power within the country. Moreover, many Muslims envied the prosperity enjoyed by many Christians.

¹ It is difficult to draw a clear picture of the course of the war given the number of parties involved, the intervention of Syria and Israel, the long duration of the war and the constantly changing alliances. This report will concentrate on shedding light on events in which Palestinians played an important role.

² The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, 47th Edition, Europa Publications Limited (London, 2000).

To forestall tensions, since the days when Lebanon was a French mandate there had been an agreement that the President of Lebanon would be a Christian and the Prime Minister a Muslim. They were jointly supposed to safeguard the country against sectarian conflict. Parliamentary seats were also proportioned out to the various religious groups. Nevertheless, relations between the various groups remained tense. Tension mounted with the growth of the Shi'ite section of the Muslim community, which was not translated into political power, and the arrival of the Palestinians, who gradually began to intervene in internal affairs.

3.2 First signs of unrest

Long before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war there had been problems between Christians and Muslims over the distribution of power and wealth. In the late 1950s the latent tension rose to the surface for the first time. The direct cause was the Suez Crisis of 1956 which forced Lebanon to choose between the opposing sides. Under pressure from Christians, who were generally pro-Western, the Lebanese government opted for a compromise, declaring its support for Egypt without breaking off diplomatic ties with France and Britain. This created bad blood with left-wing Muslims in particular, who saw the Lebanese government as betraying a fellow Arab state. The divide between Christians and Muslims was widened by disagreement over reform of the electoral system ¹.

Nor did Palestinians stand by on the sidelines during the conflict between the Lebanese Christians and Muslims. Many of them took sides with the rebel Muslims and participated in the riots which broke out in various cities. The government then adopted measures restricting Palestinians' freedom of movement. With the help of American troops, peace returned to the country in the course of 1958 ².

¹ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, 47th edition, Europa Publications Limited (London, 2000).

² Ibid.

Palestinians continued to cause headaches for the Lebanese government. In the 1960s Palestinian strikes on Israeli targets from Lebanon became more frequent, subsequently leading to reprisals. Civilian Lebanese targets did not escape unharmed. In 1968, for instance, the Israeli airforce attacked Beirut airport, destroying thirteen Lebanese aircraft. The immediate reason was the shooting down of an Israeli aircraft in Athens. The underlying message was, however, that Israel wanted to make it clear that the Lebanese government should keep a tighter rein on the Palestinian combattants in its country ^{1 2}.

In actual fact the opposite occurred. In 1969 the conflict between Christians and Muslims flared up again. There were still great differences of opinion between the two groups over matters such as the distribution of power and the position to adopt towards Israel. The government's room for manoeuvre was restricted even further when it appeared powerless against Palestinian guerrillas who had infiltrated Lebanon from Syria and taken up arms against both Israel and the Lebanese army. Palestinians in Lebanon began openly to arm themselves and transform their camps into military training centres ³.

The situation flared up when the Lebanese army took action against a number of Palestinian guerrilla groups which had moved their bases to the south of Lebanon to launch raids on Israel. In so doing the Lebanese army hoped to prevent Israeli reprisals, which would also hit the Lebanese population. However, the Lebanese government claimed not to have given any such orders and handed over rule of the country to the President and the armed forces. The response was an uprising in which radical Lebanese Muslims and Palestinian guerrillas took over rule of the northern city of Tripoli for a while. There was much sympathy in the Arab world for the insurgents; Syria and Iraq publicly threatened military intervention on behalf of the insurgents ⁴.

¹ Ibid.

² The Middle East and North Africa 1999, Arab-Israeli Relations 1967-2000, Europa Publications Limited (London, 1999).

³ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, Europa Publications Limited, 47th edition (London, 2000).

⁴ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, Europa Publications Limited, 47th edition (London, 2000).

In order to prevent a full-blown war, the Lebanese authorities and Palestinian guerrillas began talks. This led to the signing of a cease-fire agreement in the Egyptian capital Cairo on 2 November 1969. The Chief of Staff of the Lebanese army and the Palestinian representative, Yasser Arafat, also agreed that the guerrillas' freedom of movement would be confined to certain parts of Lebanon, that refugee camps should be moved outside the cities, that military training in the camps would be forbidden and that armed operations could only be conducted on Israeli territory ¹.

The aim of the Cairo Agreement was not so much to make Palestinian action against Israel impossible as to prevent innocent Lebanese citizens from being hit by Israeli reprisals. However, the Agreement did not succeed in its intentions. Palestinian operations against Israel continued to provoke tough reprisals. The civilian population in the south of Lebanon (mainly made up of Shi'ites and Christians) suffered heavily under Israeli violence and called for action against the Palestinians. At the same time in Beirut there were frequent clashes between militant Christians and Palestinians. Certainly after the arrival of guerrillas who had been driven out of Jordan ², the Palestinians were by no means prepared to renounce Lebanon as a operational base for their fight against Israel. It was not until May 1973 that the Lebanese army silenced the Palestinians for a brief period with massive ground and air raids ³.

3.3 Outbreak of the civil war (1975 – 1976)

In 1975 civil war broke out between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon. The cause of the conflict was the uneven distribution of power and wealth between the two groups. There was also deep dissatisfaction among the Christians with the presence of the Palestinians, who were interfering increasingly with internal affairs and made Lebanon vulnerable to Israeli attacks.

¹ Ibid.

² See Chapter 2.

³ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, Europa Publications Limited, 47th edition (London, 2000).

Official PLO policy was to stay out of the conflict. This policy was swiftly dropped when it emerged that more and more Palestinians, including members of the PLO, were joining the radical left-wing Muslims. Moreover, PLO leader Yasser Arafat also had to deal with the pro-Syrian Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) in Lebanon, which was challenging his leadership ¹.

In June 1976 the Syrian army entered Lebanon. The aim of the invasion was not just to restore peace to Lebanon, but also to oust the PLO from its position of power. Bloody battles between the Syrian army and Palestinian resistance fighters followed, leaving many thousands dead. In October 1976 the warring parties concluded a cease-fire under pressure from the Arab League. Peace was kept by the so-called Arab Deterrent Force (ADF), which mainly consisted of Syrians ^{2 3}.

3.4 Israeli raids on Lebanon

While calm returned temporarily to Beirut and other parts of Lebanon, battles broke out in the south of Lebanon between the PLO and radical left-wing Lebanese on one side and Christian militias on the other. After a bloody PLO attack on a bus in Tel Aviv in 1978, the Israeli army also joined the conflict. Israeli troops crossed the border and occupied the territory south of the Litani river. When they left the area in June 1978, against the wishes of the international community they did not transfer power in the border region to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) but to the Christian militia of Major Saad Haddad ⁴.

¹ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, 47th edition, Europa Publications Limited (London, 2000).

² Ibid.

³ The Middle East and North Africa 1999, Arab-Israeli Relations 1967-2000, Europa Publications Limited (London, 1999)

⁴ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, 47th edition, Europa Publications Limited (London, 2000).

See also the general official reports on the position of members of the former South Lebanon Army (SLA) in South Lebanon, reference DPC/AM-675948, of 18 May and 28 December 2000.

In June 1982 the Israeli army mounted a second campaign in Lebanon under the codename "Operation Freedom for Galilee". The aim of the Israeli operation was, once more, to remove the PLO threat from the northern border. In less than one month Israeli troops pushed forward to Beirut and surrounded the Muslim part of the city. Israel then declared a cease-fire and demanded that the surrounded Palestinians and Syrians disarm and withdraw. An agreement was reached in August through mediation by the American envoy Philip Habib. The evacuation of PLO combatants and the Syrian military began on 21 August and was completed on 1 September 1982. Thousands of Lebanese lives were lost as a result of the Israeli invasion ¹.

In July 1983 the Israeli troops withdrew to the Awali river. As a result of inadequate coordination by the Lebanese army, which was supposed to take over the cleared area, heavy fighting broke out between Christian militias and Druzes in the Chouf mountains in central Lebanon ². From September 1983 heavy fighting also took place in Tripoli in north Lebanon, where followers of PLO leader Yasser Arafat and those of Abu Musa and Abu Saleh ³ fought over control of Al-Fatah ⁴. Syria supported Abu Musa and Abu Saleh. After months of heavy fighting, in which many Lebanese civilians also died, a cease-fire was concluded between followers of Yasser Arafat and those of Abu Musa and Abu Saleh. The cease-fire gave Yasser Arafat the opportunity to evacuate his armed followers to Algeria, Tunisia and Yemen ⁵. Most PLO members fled to Tunisia under the protection of an international force made up of American, British, French and Italian troops; the new PLO headquarters were established in Tunisia. The political leadership of the PLO also moved to Tunis in 1983 under Yasser Arafat. The PLO leadership remained there until 1994.

¹ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, 47th edition, Europa Publications Limited (London, 2000).

² Ibid.

³ See chapter 8.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, 47th edition, Europa Publications Limited (London, 2000).

In February 1985 Israel began the full withdrawal of its troops from Lebanon. In mid-1985 the withdrawal was complete. Israeli soldiers remained in only one strip to the north of the Israeli border in order to support the South Lebanon Army (SLA) ¹. As in 1983, the Lebanese army did not seem capable of keeping the peace in the area evacuated by Israel. In Sidon, Christian militias launched an offensive against the Palestinian refugee camp Ein El-Hilweh. The Muslims took the side of the Palestinians and put thousands of Christians to flight ².

3.5 War of the Camps (1986 – 1987)

The withdrawal of Israeli troops also led to the return of an estimated 5 000 PLO combatants to Lebanon, most of whom were supporters of Yasser Arafat. Syria wanted to prevent Yasser Arafat rebuilding a power base in Lebanon. Together with the Shi'ite Amal militia and the predominantly Shi'ite Sixth Brigade of the Lebanese army, Syrian troops engaged in fighting with the Palestinians. This led to Amal's siege of the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra, Shatila and Burj El-Barajneh in Beirut. With the help of the pro-Syrian Palestinian National Salvation Front (PNSF), the Palestinians were able to withstand the siege by Amal despite heavy losses. In June 1985 the warring parties agreed a truce ³.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, 47th edition, Europa Publications Limited (London, 2000).

Yasser Arafat's supporters used the truce to strengthen their position in the refugee camps, with the help of Sunni Muslims and Druzes. In May 1986 the Shi'ite Amal militia's patience with the new situation ran out and fighting broke out once again. The conflict in Beirut soon spilled over into the cities of Tyre and Sidon, where Amal also besieged the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidieh to the south of Tyre, and Mieh Mieh and Ein El-Hilweh camps near Sidon. Amal tried to force the Palestinians to surrender, cutting off food and medical supplies. The conflict is known as the "war of the camps", or "camp war" ¹.

Under intense pressure from the international community the siege, which had cost over 2 500 Palestinian lives, was lifted in April 1987. Syria then had the opportunity to deploy Amal in fighting the Shi'ite Hezbollah movement. Hezbollah's Shi'ite colouring and pro-Iranian stance meant that it posed a threat to both Amal and Syria. However, Hezbollah appeared to be much too strong an opponent for Amal in Beirut. When Amal seemed on the verge of complete collapse in May 1987, Syrian troops entered the Shi'ite districts of Beirut to restore order. Amal then withdrew to the south of Lebanon ².

3.6 Infighting

While Amal and Hezbollah fought in Beirut, fighting broke out in Palestinian refugee camps between supporters of Yasser Arafat and the pro-Syrian Al-Fatah Intifada of Abu Musa ³. The Syrian troops did not intervene, but made sure that Abu Musa was able to obtain reinforcements. The position of Yasser Arafat's supporters thus became untenable and they were forced to surrender. The most important combatants, led by Sultan Abu El-Einein, were allowed to retreat freely and settled in the refugee camp Ein El-Hilweh near Sidon ⁴.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ See Chapter 8.

⁴ The Middle East and North Africa 2001, Lebanon, 47th edition, Europa Publications Limited (London, 2000).

In May 1987 the Lebanese parliament decided to abrogate the 1969 Cairo Agreement between Yasser Arafat's PLO and Lebanon ¹. The Agreement stipulated, *inter alia*, which activities the PLO could conduct in Lebanon and legalised the PLO presence there. In theory, the PLO was no longer able to rely on official Lebanese protection as a consequence of abrogation of the agreement. In practice, the PLO had been deprived of such protection for years.

Although the civil war continued until 1991, the Palestinians' role in the conflict had more or less come to an end. This was still the case after the implementation of the 1989 Taif Agreement, which heralded the end of the civil war and provided for the partial disarmament of a number of militias active in Lebanon. Before 1991 there had been only sporadic fighting involving Palestinian groups. Thereafter Palestinian groups have not occupied a significant military position in Lebanon.

Following the Oslo Agreements, which once again revealed a rift within PLO ranks, the PLO-headquarters moved to Gaza in 1994.

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war no further large-scale internal fighting has taken place in the Palestinian camps. However, there have been occasional armed skirmishes owing to internal rivalries, some causing deaths. However, given the risk of escalation such conflicts are quickly quelled by the Palestinians themselves and in general the various Palestinian factions in the camps tolerate one another.

¹ See section 3.2.

4. Palestinian refugees

Some 3.7 million Palestinians are officially registered with UNRWA, approximately 380 000 in Lebanon ¹, making up roughly 11% of the Lebanese population. It is estimated that around half of them live in camps. They are refugees from the 1948/1949 war and their descendants. A number of them apparently do not live (any longer) in Lebanon, despite being registered. Over the last ten years, some 75 000 to 100 000 Palestinians are reported to have left Lebanon ². Many of those registered with UNRWA have apparently not withdrawn their registration. Estimates of the number of Palestinian refugees who are not registered with UNRWA Lebanon but with the Lebanese authorities range from 15 000 to 60 000. They are mainly Palestinians (and their descendants) who did not come to Lebanon as a result of the 1948 war, but later ³. Only a very small number of Palestinians are not registered with either UNRWA or the Lebanese authorities ⁴, thought to be somewhere between 700 and 1 000. Sources other than UNRWA say there are "closer to 200,000, perhaps less" ⁵ or "some 200,000 Palestinians living in semi-permanent refugee camps" ⁶. On the basis of these statistics, the total number of Palestinians in Lebanon can only be roughly estimated: 200 000 to a maximum of 400 000.

Approximately 90% of Palestinians in Lebanon are Muslim, most of them Sunni, and some Shi'ites. Roughly 10% are Christians. The majority of Christian Palestinians in Lebanon have acquired Lebanese nationality over the years.

¹ UNRWA, map of area operations (Gaza, March 2000).

² See Chapter 11.

³ After 1948 well-to-do Palestinian refugees were reluctant to register with UNRWA, as they associated UNRWA with tent camps and basic care for indigent compatriots.

⁴ See paragraph 10.1.

⁵ Middle East International, 15 October 1999.

⁶ The Economist Intelligence Unit, EIU Country Profile Lebanon 2000-2001.

5. UNRWA

Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war do not come under the international protection of the UNHCR¹ or the framework of the 1951 Convention on Refugees. Pursuant to Article 1D of the Convention on Refugees, it does not apply to persons who enjoy the protection or assistance of UN organs or agencies other than UNHCR. When protection or assistance from other UN organs or agencies such as UNRWA ceases for any reason, those persons automatically come within the scope of the Convention².

UNRWA defines a Palestinian refugee as "any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict". UNRWA distinguishes between (descendants of) refugees who came to Lebanon as a result of the 1948/1949 war and (descendants of) refugees who subsequently came to Lebanon. The latter do not come under the official UNRWA mandate. Nevertheless, Palestinian refugees who are not registered with UNRWA may be eligible for special UNRWA emergency assistance programmes³, which include emergency medical assistance and any food parcels.

¹ Pursuant to paragraph 7 of the Statute of the UNHCR, which is annexed to UN General Assembly Resolution No 428 (V) of 14 December 1950, "... the competence of the High Commissioner ... shall not extend to a person: ... Who continues to receive from other organs or agencies of the United Nations protection or assistance."

² Article 1D of the Convention on Refugees reads: "This Convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance. When such protection or assistance has ceased for any reason, without the position of such persons being definitely settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, these persons shall ipso facto be entitled to the benefits of this Convention."

³ In Resolution No 2252 (ES-V) of 4 July 1967, the UN General Assembly supported "the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis and as a temporary measure, to other persons in the area who are at present displaced and are in serious need of immediate assistance as a result of the recent hostilities." (source: Takkenberg, Lex, "The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law", Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, pp. 77 and 82)

UNRWA was mandated to carry out relief and works projects, in collaboration with the host countries, for Palestinian refugees from the 1948/1949 war. UNRWA concluded bilateral agreements with various host countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Egypt); the agreement with Lebanon was concluded by the exchange of diplomatic notes on 26 November 1954¹.

UNRWA has always played a crucial part in the position of Palestinians in Lebanon. UNRWA provides healthcare through a network of its own doctors and hospitals and Lebanese private clinics. Treatment is free for UNRWA-registered refugees living in the camps. If particularly complicated medical interventions are needed they are performed outside the UNRWA system (in local private hospitals) with a financial contribution from UNRWA.

UNRWA also provides its own education service for Palestinians registered with the organisation, as well as social assistance and emergency aid².

The regular budget for Lebanon was USD 43.5 million for 2000. Additional contributions are regularly received from donor countries.

All Palestinians registered with UNRWA can avail themselves of the facilities under UNRWA auspices³. UNRWA-registered refugees' children who were born outside the UNRWA mandate region can also benefit from UNRWA assistance in Lebanon.

In practice, around half of the Palestinians living in Lebanon regularly make use of the aid facilities. The fact that Palestinians who never or only rarely use the facilities still want to be registered with UNRWA has to do with possible compensation to Palestinians from the Israeli government for their lost possessions when a peace settlement is reached.

¹ The text of the agreement can be found in United Nations Treaty Series (UNTS) 202, No 2748.

² More information about housing, education and healthcare is given in Chapter 7.

³ This has not always been the case. Palestinians who went to work in the Gulf states in the 1950s and 1960s were excluded from UNRWA facilities upon their return. This restriction has now been lifted.

Under its current mandate, UNRWA cannot offer protection to Palestinians who claim fear of persecution. The organisation does not legally represent the Palestinians, while the UNHCR can. UNHCR Lebanon does not represent Palestinians resident in Lebanon under UNRWA auspices or other Palestinians there.

It is also difficult for UNRWA in Lebanon to provide security against potential physical threats to Palestinians. In the event of potential conflicts UNRWA Lebanon does everything in its power to prevent further disaster by means of mediation, frequently with success.

6. Political factors

6.1 Integration

The position of Palestinians in Lebanon is very different from that in Israel's other neighbouring countries. Lebanon has never really accepted the arrival of the Palestinians. Unlike those in Jordan and Syria, who are treated more or less like regular residents, Palestinians in Lebanon – apart from some naturalised Palestinians – have few rights, if any. Integration of Palestinians into Lebanese society is discouraged on principle. The preamble to the Lebanese Constitution itself explicitly states that: "There shall be no (...) settlement of non-Lebanese in Lebanon." ¹. This principle is not disputed by a single Lebanese party. In this way the Lebanese authorities outwardly show their solidarity with the Palestinians' struggle for their own state. However, internal political motives are much more important. The ban on definitive settlement by Palestinians ("tawteen" in Arabic) has various causes.

First of all there are fears that the integration of a few hundred thousand, mainly Sunni Palestinians would seriously upset the delicate political, religious and demographic relationships between the various groups in Lebanon. This fear is imaginary to a certain extent, given the large number of Palestinians and the small size and dense rate of population of the country.

¹ Preamble to the Lebanese Constitution, Article I, 21 September 1990.

Secondly, Palestinians are unpopular with large sections of the Lebanese population. The presence of Palestinians in Lebanon is seen by many Lebanese as the greatest cause of the civil war. The active involvement of Palestinians in the civil war has also given them a bad name. Moreover, many Lebanese regard the presence of Palestinians as a security risk, since any armed action against Israel – as in the past – could prompt reprisals. The Israeli campaigns and occupation of their country are far from being forgotten ¹.

Finally, Lebanon's poor economic situation has a negative impact on acceptance of Palestinians. Lebanese are not especially inclined to let Palestinians genuinely share the limited number of jobs available.

Instead of integration into Lebanese society, the Lebanese authorities adhere firmly to the idea of the return of Palestinians to their country of origin. Quite a number of Lebanese also assume that in the event of a final peace settlement in the region the majority of Palestinians would leave and only a small group would remain in Lebanon. Under the current circumstances, however, it is difficult to imagine this happening in the near future.

Relations between Palestinian organisations and UNRWA on the one hand and the Lebanese authorities on the other are awkward when it comes to matters relating to more permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon. Every effort in that direction is immediately dismissed by the Lebanese side. The reconstruction of partly destroyed UNRWA camps, runs up against vetos and there is no willingness to discuss the construction by UNRWA of homes for Palestinians outside the camps.

¹ See Chapter 3.

6.2 Risk of persecution

Palestinians are not persecuted merely in Lebanon on grounds of their identity. However, both the Lebanese and Syrian authorities may show an interest in Palestinians affiliated to the PLO who return to Lebanon. This particularly applies to those who left Lebanon in the period directly following the Israeli invasion of 1982 and stayed abroad to work for the PLO. On their return to Lebanon they could run the risk of disappearing in Syrian detention for a long time, depending on their individual background and antecedents. This risk is much greater if they have been involved in confrontations or other problems with, for example, the Syrian army or the Syrian secret service in the past.

The Lebanese interview almost all Palestinians who arrive at the international airport in Beirut after a long period abroad. If a Palestinian is registered because he is known to have been affiliated to the PLO and to have left Lebanon in 1982/1983, he is almost certain to be detained by the Lebanese authorities for a certain period. In some cases he will be handed over to the Syrian authorities. This category of Palestinians are extremely frightened of returning to Lebanon. It is very rare for such persons to be able to return to, for instance, the Palestinian camps in Beirut without problems, unless they only do so once and use a false passport.

It is said that Lebanon and Syria deliberately want to deter Palestinians of that category in order to prevent the PLO regaining power in Lebanon. On the other hand, Syria apparently perceives them as an actual security risk.

There have been various cases of Palestinians who have been arrested by the Syrian authorities because they have the same name as a wanted person. Such cases of mistaken identity are frequently not discovered until after some time. The relevant investigations can last up to two years.

In recent years there have not been many Syrian arrests in Lebanon of Palestinians with a political background. Syria has such complete control over the Lebanese security services that, instead of intervening directly themselves, the Syrian security services usually leave arrests to the Lebanese authorities themselves. Moreover, Palestinians with a political background are well aware of what awaits them if they attempt to return to Lebanon. Such cases are therefore few and far between. The Lebanese authorities show a marked interest in PLO Palestinians if they have good reason to suspect offences committed during the civil war. The Lebanese amnesty for offences committed during the civil war does not apply to Palestinians. Palestinians who committed offences during the civil war can therefore be prosecuted.

The reason for the differential treatment the Syrian and Lebanese authorities afford to PLO Palestinians who remained in Lebanon and those returning to Lebanon after having left in 1982/1983 is that in the meantime, the Lebanese and Syrian authorities have gained control over the Palestinians who stayed behind. The stayers-on are generally no longer viewed as a threat to security whereas PLO Palestinians who return to Lebanon from abroad after having left in 1982/1983 are regarded as a potential security risk.

It can generally be said that the Syrian and Lebanese authorities show less of an interest in PLO-Palestinians who left Lebanon after 1982/1983 and return to Lebanon after a period abroad ¹. Arrests and persecution cannot, however, be ruled out.

As a rule Palestinians reportedly have no reason to fear persecution by Amal or Hizbollah.

¹ However, they can, depending on the camp to which they return, be subject to pressure from the Palestinian side to become active members of the PLO again or can simply be told to distance themselves from the PLO. The political past of such returnees has not been forgotten and they are often suspected of having returned with political intentions.

7. Socio-economic Position of Palestinians

7.1 Place of residence and accommodation

At the start of the civil war in 1975 there were sixteen official refugee camps for Palestinians. There are currently twelve left. The twelve official UNRWA camps date back to the beginning, post-1948. Over the years Palestinians have also settled elsewhere in Lebanon, in concentrations of Palestinian communities known as "unofficial camps". UNRWA does not provide any services there and living conditions are sometimes worse than in the official camps. The Palestinian inhabitants of unofficial camps are, however, mostly registered with UNRWA and can therefore lay claim on UNRWA facilities elsewhere (mainly in the twelve UNRWA camps).

Below is a summary per region of camps *officially recognised* by UNRWA, with the number of Palestinians registered with the UNRWA in those camps in brackets ¹.

Tripoli (northern Lebanon)

Nahr el-Bared (26 792)

Beddawi (15 004)

Beirut (central Lebanon)

Dbayeh (4 184)

Mar Elias (1 397)

Shatila (11 436)

Burj el-Barajneh (18 385)

Baalbek (east Lebanon)

Wavell (El-Jalil) (7 078)

¹ UNRWA, "UNRWA and Palestine Refugees ... 50 Years" (Gaza, 2000).

Sidon (south Lebanon)

Ein El-Hilweh (42 369)

Mieh Mieh (5 018)

Tyre (south Lebanon)

El-Buss (9 498)

Burj el-Shemali (17 457)

Rashidieh (23 705)

In addition to the above camps officially recognised by UNRWA, there are a number of *unofficial* camps in Lebanon, namely:

North Lebanon

El-Mina and El-Muharjerin

Beirut region

El-Daouq, El-Na'emeh, Shadiem, Wadi El-Zeina, Sabra

Tyre region

El-Shabriha, El-Burgholieh, El-Mo'ashoeq, Jall El-Bahr, El-Waast / El-Antanieh, El-Qaasmieh, Abu El-Asoed

Beqa'a (valley)

Bir Elias, Ta'albaya

Finally, a number of official and unofficial camps were *completely destroyed* during the Lebanese civil war and Israeli invasions:

Beirut region

Dekwaneh, Tell El-Za'atar, Karantinah, Jisr El-Pasha

South Lebanon

Nabatieh

Although the refugee camps Dekwaneh and Nabatieh no longer exist, UNRWA still has 15 569 Palestinians registered as inhabitants of those camps. Another 10 331 Palestinians are registered as camp residents although it is not clear in which camp they are staying. Sabra refugee camp has partly been absorbed by nearby Shatila and is currently mainly inhabited by Syrian guest workers.

Some 200 000 "Lebanese" Palestinians are registered in the twelve refugee camps in Lebanon in which UNRWA is present. This is a sizeable population compared with other countries in the region in which Palestinians live. The main reasons for the large number of camp inhabitants is poverty: most Palestinians in Lebanon simply cannot afford to live outside a refugee camp.

Most Palestinians in Lebanon live in one of the country's twelve official UNRWA refugee camps, which resemble slums. The number of access roads to the camps is often limited. Military posts are often located in the vicinity of the camps.

Palestinian camps in Lebanon are overpopulated. The Lebanese authorities are wary of allocating more territory to the camps or rebuilding camps destroyed during the civil war. Palestinians who can afford it therefore live outside the camps, but face huge problems. Since the reconstruction of Lebanon many Palestinians have had to leave their homes to make way for housing projects, with only a few receiving a small amount of compensation. Most are not allocated a new home. In April 2001 a law was adopted implicitly banning Palestinians from owning houses in Lebanon. Lebanese law had already long stipulated that foreigners have to pay 10% more registration fees than Lebanese when buying immovable property. Many Palestinians had therefore registered their own homes in the name of a Lebanese acquaintance, establishing with a notary who the real owner of the home was. The new law has made such practices impossible. It also stipulates that "aliens without a passport or with a passport of a non-recognised nationality" (Palestinian, in this case) may under no circumstances own homes. This law provoked much unrest among Palestinians in Lebanon ¹.

¹ According to as yet unconfirmed reports, the Lebanese parliament is to submit a new rent law enabling sharp increases in the rents of "aliens without a passport or with a passport of a non-recognised nationality" (Palestinians).

7.2 Financial assistance

The general economic and financial situation of the Palestinian community in Lebanon has deteriorated since the civil war. After the departure of the PLO leadership from Lebanon in 1982, contributions to the Palestinian community in Lebanon out of PLO coffers were reduced. This was compounded by the fact that the oil states on the Arabian peninsula substantially cut back their financial aid to the Palestinians after 1991 in view of the PLO's pro-Iraqi stance. Moreover, in recent years the PLO has mainly used its budget to develop the areas under the control of the Palestinian authorities in Gaza and the West Bank. Since 1993 the PLO has also drastically cut its expenditure on Palestinians in Lebanon. International organisations have also transferred a large part of their financial support for Palestinians to the autonomous Palestinian territories in recent years. Finally, cuts in the UNRWA budget have also played a role; UNRWA assistance to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank has been at the expense of operations in Lebanon.

7.3 Work opportunities

Non-Lebanese can, in principle, work legally in Lebanon on condition that the alien's country of origin also allows Lebanese to do the same. This principle of reciprocity is a great hindrance to Palestinians, since they do not have their own state. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for Palestinians (and other stateless persons) to work in Lebanon.

In most cases, Palestinians who want to work outside the camps or start a business must have a work permit, just like other non-Lebanese nationals. The work permit has to be applied for from the Lebanese Ministry of Labour. The chance that a permit will actually be granted is slight since a large number of occupations are almost exclusively reserved for Lebanese. For instance, Palestinian and other non-Lebanese doctors, engineers, chemists, lawyers and teachers are not allowed to practise their professions and are barred from joining professional associations. In the so-called liberal professions, legal working status cannot be obtained without membership of an association. Some highly-educated Palestinians do manage to obtain work in those professions against that legal ban, but earn considerably less than their Lebanese colleagues and cannot benefit from social welfare such as pensions, health insurance, etc ¹.

As a result of the restrictions in force, Palestinians outside the camps can in practice only find work in sectors which are of little or no interest to Lebanese and which do not require a permit. In practice, this is mostly unskilled labour. Palestinians are thus mostly employed as seasonal labour in agriculture, as construction workers, factory workers in the textile industry or cleaners ². The relatively large informal sector also offers job opportunities. Since the end of the civil war Palestinians have been faced with rising competition from cheap Syrian day labourers. It is often easier for Palestinian women to find work than men. In most cases, it is not possible to obtain social insurance.

There are scarcely any restrictions on practising a profession or opening a shop or business in the camps, where there are many small shops and workshops as a result. Nor is it possible for Palestinians to register their businesses with the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce unless it is run with a Lebanese partner.

¹ Republic of Lebanon, Ministry of Labour, Decision No 621/1, "... stating jobs and occupations restricted to Lebanese citizens", 15 December 1995.

² US Department of State, Lebanon Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2000 (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour) (Washington, 26 February 2001).

UNRWA is a major employer of Palestinians, with more than 2 000 Palestinians in its service. Palestinian political and social organisations active in the camps also have employees.

All in all, employment opportunities for Palestinians are limited. Unemployment is therefore very high. It should be borne in mind that by far the majority of working Palestinians are active in the informal sector. Palestinians who do not succeed in finding some form of employment are dependent upon their families¹ and UNRWA facilities. UNRWA has a special programme for "hardship cases", families without "able-bodied males in the age 19-60".

7.4 Education

In principle Palestinians have access to Lebanese primary and secondary education in (state and private) schools, as well as to scientific and higher education. In practice, however, access is rather limited. Fees are high for all private schools. Lebanese children are given priority access to state schools.

Registered Palestinians can also use the education facilities provided by UNRWA. There are dozens of schools set up by UNRWA. UNRWA pays for part of the teaching expenses for refugees who are actually resident in a refugee camp.

The average class size of UNRWA primary schools is over 40 pupils. A double programme of lessons is taught daily in a number of places owing to the large numbers of pupils and the lack of facilities. The lack of resources is one of the reasons why the level of education is not very high. There is a high drop-out rate.

¹ Until the Gulf War many Palestinians in Lebanon could count on transfers of income from relatives working in the Gulf states. This source of income largely dried up after 1991 because many Palestinians were forced to leave the Arab oil states.

There is a special institution known as Bait Atfal Al-Somoed for the education and care of orphans, which also operates in the former refugee camp of Sabra. The institution in principle supports children until the age of twelve. Older orphans are also assisted as a sideline.

Further education after basic schooling is only possible to a limited extent. Only a few are able to attend state or private secondary schools at their own expense or with UNRWA support. Because UNRWA and PLO grants are no longer available, access to higher vocational training and university is very limited. That aside, many children are forced to find work in view of their families' poor economic circumstances. The rate of illiteracy, which was 8% for men and 19% for women in 1996, is thought to have increased over recent years.

7.5 Health care

Most Palestinians in Lebanon do not have sufficient resources to make use of the Lebanese health care system. They have to rely on facilities provided by UNRWA.

UNRWA provides medical care for refugees registered with the UN body who actually live in the UNRWA camps. Medical care within the official camps is free for those Palestinian refugees. There is, however, a shortage of medicines and medical facilities. UNRWA has 18 medical centres which are mainly located in the camps.

When particularly complex medical interventions are required, they are performed outside the UNRWA structure (in local private hospitals) with a financial contribution from UNRWA up to a maximum of USD 2 500 and which can be used for 2/3 of the total cost of treatment. The chronically ill suffering, for instance, from leukaemia, kidney disorders or epilepsy can often not receive adequate treatment.

Medical services from the Palestinian Red Crescent, which established a medical infrastructure which was also open to the local population in south Lebanon in the 1970s, have greatly declined since.

Many children suffer from serious illness. Limited sanitation, undernourishment and poor diet have led to a deterioration in general health over the last few years. Some of the refugees registered with UNRWA are dependent upon UNRWA food rations.

7.6 Social structures

In many cases traditional family ties have been disrupted or dispersed by the civil war and the poor general situation. War widows are responsible for their families. UNRWA has set up 11 women's centres which run development programmes specially geared towards women. Islamic organisations also undertake charitable activities. Many Palestinians join Islamic groups; some are trained as resistance fighters. The revival of Islam has had negative repercussions for the position of women ¹. The loss of political prospects and the resultant despondency create a breeding ground for social tension and radicalisation, which are a growing phenomenon especially in the camps. Crime and prostitution are also on the increase ². Drug problems are a growing trend ³.

¹ Slagt, R. "50 jaar Palestijnen in Libanon, verloren generaties" (50 years of Palestinians in Lebanon : the lost generations), *Onze Wereld* (No 6, June 1998).

² US Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000 – Lebanon, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour (Washington, 26 February 2001).

³ Ibid.

8. Palestinian factions

Palestinians in Lebanon are organised in a multitude of different factions. A distinction can be drawn between factions which form part of the PLO and those which do not. It cannot be ruled out that Palestinians who are or were members of the various groups in Lebanon have been guilty of violence, terror, attacks, war crimes and human rights abuses in the past. Although the political landscape is constantly changing, with shifts in allegiances and the balance of power, five basic political strands can be distinguished.

The first strand is Al-Fatah under the leadership of Yasser Arafat. The second strand is composed of four independent movements which are associated with Arafat to varying degrees. The third is made up of pro-Syrian groups which share an aversion to Arafat. The fourth strand is characterised by the Islamic nature of the movements. The last is a residual category made up of splinter parties and marginal groups.

An overview of each strand is given below. It should be noted that the influence of a movement is not always commensurate with the size of its membership. It should also be borne in mind that some movements should be regarded as relics of the past which have long been dormant. This applies particularly to a number of movements in the last category ¹.

Al-Fatah

The **Palestinian Liberation Movement (Al-Fatah)** is under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and is by far the largest Palestinian group in Lebanon. "Fatah" is an acronym for Harakat Al-Tahrir Al-Filistiniya. In the reverse order, the first letters spell the word "Fatah", which means "conquest" in Arabic.

¹ Palestinian Academic Society for the study of international affairs (PASSIA), "Diary 2000" (Jerusalem, 2000).

Most PLO sections moved to the Palestinian autonomous areas, namely Gaza, following the Oslo accords. Farouk Kaddoumi, who leads the political arm, is responsible for representing Palestine abroad and is resident in Tunis. The Al-Fatah armed forces, which are under the command of Arafat, are known as Al-'Asifa ("the storm").

Al-Fatah's position in Lebanon was weakened by the war of the camps, which started in 1985. Al-Fatah was forced to leave Beirut and transfer its fighters under the command of Sultan Abu El-Einein from the camps of Shatila and Burj el-Barajneh to the south of Lebanon. All that remains now is Rashidieh camp to the south of Tyre which is led by El-Einein and fully under the control of Al-Fatah faithful. However, also in the two other camps near Tyre, El-Bas and Burj el-Shemali, the degree of control exercised by Arafat faithful is more or less complete ¹. In June 1999 Al-Fatah considerably strengthened its position in Ein Al-Hilweh camp.

In late October 1999 El-Einen was sentenced to death in absentia by a Lebanese military court. He was convicted of leading an armed militia and carrying out attacks against the state. Although the charges had been pending for years, El-Einin's freedom of movement in the vicinity of the southern camps was not restricted in 1999 until the final judgment was handed down. The verdict weighed on relations between the PLO and the Lebanese authorities. The military courts in Lebanon, like the rest of the Lebanese military apparatus, are open to Syrian influence.

¹ Although Al-Fatah had previously had to confine itself to refugee camps near the city of Tyre in south Lebanon, Syrian security forces apparently restored Al-Fatah the freedom to conduct activities openly outside those camps as well. For instance, Arafat posters were openly carried during a demonstration in June 2001 in Badawi camp, which is near the city of Tripoli (north Lebanon).

El-Einen can be regarded as Arafat's most important representative in Lebanon. The verdict on El-Einen and the arrest on 24 November 1999 of two high-ranking Al-Fatah commanders for past violent crimes were a consequence of tougher security measures against PLO representatives in Lebanon. For years PLO representatives had been able to move more or less freely in Lebanon, even if they had already been sentenced. Observers saw Syria as pulling the strings behind Lebanese pressure on the PLO in Lebanon and a possible hardening of its line towards Palestinians.

Movements affiliated to Arafat

Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

The DFLP was born in 1969 when it splintered away from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and was known as the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine until 1974. The main office of this Marxist-Maoist movement is in Damascus. The DFLP is led by Nayef Hawatmeh (Abu Nouf).

During the conflict between Arafat and Syria (1983-1985) the DFLP adopted a neutral position, along with the PFLP. It formed the Democratic Coalition together with the Jordanian Communist Party and the Palestine Liberation Front. The DFLP played an important role in the occupied territories during the first Intifada.

The DFLP split in the early 1990s: one faction went under the leadership of Yasser Abed Rabbo, the Palestinian Authority's Minister for Information, as the Democratic Palestinian Union (DPU), and took Arafat's side, while the leadership of the DFLP was critical of the peace process. Since 1993 the DFLP and PFLP have been negotiating a joint leadership.

The DFLP is a fairly active movement in Lebanon, both inside and outside the Palestinian camps. It maintains regular contact with the Lebanese authorities and UNRWA. It is represented by Suheil Natour, who lives in Lebanon. The party has its largest pocket of support in the southern Lebanese camps.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

The Marxist-Leninist PFLP (Arabic name: Al-Jabha Al-Sha'biyya li-Tahrir Falastin) was founded by George Habash in 1967. The head office is in Damascus.

The PFLP has always been considered the radical wing of the PLO and has used guerrilla action and terrorism for political ends. The PFLP and the DFLP are the largest Palestinian movements in Lebanon after Al-Fatah. The PFLP was originally financed by Iraq and subsequently by Libya. Libyan assistance ceased after 1991. Most PFLP supporters in Lebanon are in the camps in the south. The PFLP funds the hospital in Ein El-Hilweh camp. In early October 2001 the hardliner Ahmed Saadat was appointed new secretary-general of the PFLP to succeed Abu Ali Mustafa, who was killed in an attack at the end of August 2001.

Palestine People's Party

The PPP was founded in 1982. Until 1991 the party was known as the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP). At the time it was working with the Israeli Communist Party. Under pressure from the Soviet Union it recognised the State of Israel from its inception. In 1991 the movement broke with its Leninist past and was re-baptised the Palestinian People's Party (Hizb Al-Sha'b).

The PPP is one of the more moderate forces within the PLO. The party leader is Hana Amira. The party has an office and an official representative in Lebanon (Dr Maher Sharif) and is represented in the camps where there are a relatively large number of Arafat supporters.

Palestine Democratic Union

The PDU (also known as the DPU or FIDA) splintered away from the DFLP in 1990. The movement is led by Yasser Abed Rabbo, the Palestinian Authority's Minister for Information and Arafat's right-hand man. The PDU is seen as one of Arafat's most loyal allies. The PDU can therefore be regarded as belonging to Al-Fatah. This fairly small party is not really represented in Lebanon.

Anti-Arafat, pro-Syrian movements

Fatah-Intifada

This group was formed in 1983 as a result of a split – instigated by Syria – within Al-Fatah. The movement is led by Sa'ed Musa (Abu Musa, a former Jordanian army officer) and Khaled Al-Amlah (Abu Khaled). The late Nimr Al-Saleh (Abu Saleh) was also a member of the leadership. Fatah-Intifada is an important opponent of PLO leader Arafat. Its headquarters are in Damascus.

The movement is a relatively important Palestinian faction in Lebanon. It is represented in the camps in the north, in Beirut and in the Beka'a valley.

Fatah-Intifada funds a hospital in Nahr el-Bared camp.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command

In 1968 the pro-Syrian PFLP-GC split from the PFLP. It is under the leadership of Ahmad Jibril, a former officer in the Syrian army, and has offices in Syria and Iran. It is known for its terrorist attacks. Its base in Naameh, to the south of Beirut, has frequently been the target of Israeli attacks. PFLP-GC is fervently opposed to Arafat.

The movement is above all close to Syria and also maintains good ties with Iran. The PFLP-GC is represented in all camps from Sidon to north Lebanon. The only place it has no representatives is in the fully Arafat-controlled camps around Tyre.

Al-Saiqa

This pro-Syrian Palestinian Baath party, also known by the English name "Vanguard of the Popular Liberation War", is led by Issam Al-Qadi. The group was set up by the Syrian Baath party in 1968 and broke with the PLO in 1983. During the Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1976 Al-Saiqa (which means "lightning bolt") supported the Syrians against the other PLO forces. This movement is not present outside Lebanon and Syria. In Lebanon the movement's main strongholds are in the camps in Beirut and around Tripoli.

Popular Struggle Front

The PSF, which is small in both size and influence, was established on the West Bank in 1967. The PSF has little influence in Lebanon.

Palestinian Communist Revolution Party

The PCRP is led by Arabi Awad (Abu Al-Fahd).

This organisation is funded by Syria and has few members. It was set up in 1992 and its headquarters are in Damascus. The PCRP is represented in the northern camps.

Palestinian Liberation Front

The PLF was founded in 1977 under the leadership of the Tal'at Ya'qub, who died in 1988, as an offshoot of the PFLP-GC. In 1984 the PLF split into several loose factions. In 1987 they were reunited under the leadership of Mahmoud Zaydan (Abu Abbas). The PLF now has two currents, one under the leadership of Mahmoud Zaydan (Abu Abbas). The PLF was responsible for a series of sensational acts of terror including the hijacking of the Italian cruise liner Achille Lauro in 1985 and an attack on the Israeli coast in 1990. The movement only has marginal representation in Lebanon.

The party is reported to have received support from Syria, Iraq and Libya in the past.

Hamas

Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) stands for Harakat Al-Mouqawama Al-Islamiyya. Hamas is a Sunni fundamentalist organisation which was created shortly after the beginning of the first Intifada in January 1988. Hamas has declared a holy war on Israel and is fighting for the establishment of a fundamentalist Islamic Palestinian state in the former mandate territory of Palestine.

Hamas is mostly represented in the Palestinian territories and is active in the Gaza Strip, in particular. It is led by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, who was released from an Israeli prison in October 1999. Hamas has an office in Damascus. The Hamas office in Amman was closed on 31 August 1999. Hamas has scarcely any representation in Lebanon. There is a small political office but the movement has not made any real effort to establish a base in Lebanon. Although the presence of Hamas in Lebanon is slight, it is of more importance than the Islamic Jihad.

Jihad Al-Islami

Jihad Al-Islami (Islamic Jihad) emerged in the mid-1980s. Its founders were Sheikh Abdul Aziz Odeh and Fathi Shiqaqi, both Palestinians from Gaza. Sheikh Abdul Aziz Odeh was banned from the occupied territories in 1987. Fathi Shiqaqi was murdered on Malta in 1995 and was replaced by Ramadan Abdallah Salah, secretary-general of the movement. Jihad Al-Islami is a small and very extreme organisation with a cellular structure which is supported by Iran. The fundamentalist Jihad is said to be working together with PFLP-GC.

Partisans' League

The Partisans' League is a fundamentalist Muslim group under the leadership of Ahmad Abdul Karim Al Saadi (Abu Mohjen), who was sentenced to death in absentia for the murder of a Muslim priest in 1995. He is reportedly hiding in Ein El-Hilweh camp. This group, which is also called the "Ansar group", is said to be supported by Saudi Arabia and to mount operations against rival Muslims.

Fatah Revolutionary Council

Fatah-RC is better known as the Abu Nidal group ¹ (the pseudonym of the leader Sabri Khalil Al-Banna). Fatah-RC splintered from Al-Fatah in 1973. This strictly secret organisation was originally founded with assistance from Iraq. For a long time the movement viewed the PLO as traitors and saw the party as a legitimate target for attacks. The office in Damascus was closed in 1987. The headquarters are suspected to be in Libya or Iraq.

For a long time Fatah-RC was based in Lebanon with a few dozen combatants. There were a few training camps and an operations base outside Sidon where weapons and munitions were stored. In September 1990 fighting broke out with Al-Fatah supporters in the Palestinian camps Ein El-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh, near Sidon. In 1992 and 1993 there was also fierce fighting between the two groups, in which murders were constantly committed. In early 1994 Lebanese and Syrian troops took firm action against the remnants of the Abu Nidal movement: their bases were closed, weapons and munitions confiscated. There are reports that the movement has improved its relations with the Lebanese government. Nevertheless, members of the Abu Nidal faction are likely to receive particular attention from the Lebanese and Syrian authorities on returning to Lebanon.

¹ The movement also conducted operations under the name "Black September".

The movement now appears highly marginalised and has, to our knowledge, a small political office in Lebanon and a limited number of followers. In the northern camps the Syrian or Lebanese authorities will take direct action against active followers of Abu Nidal. It can also be assumed that Al-Fatah, which strengthened its influence in the southern camps in 1999, will take action against active Abu Nidal sympathisers.

Arab Liberation Front

The ALF was set up in 1969 on the initiative of the Iraqi Baath party. It was later seen as the counterpart of the pro-Syrian Al-Saiqa group. Its founder was Dr Abd al-Wahhab Kayyaleh, who was murdered in 1981. ALF supporters were involved in terrorist attacks such as that on Paris airport in 1975. Abd Rahim Ahmad was the leader until his death in 1991.

The ALF is a left-wing militant movement under the direct command of the Iraqi army. Syria views the ALF as a very significant opponent in view of its ties with Iraq. ALF members run the risk of arrest by the Syrian secret services. In Lebanon the ALF is an entirely secret movement and, to all appearances, leads only a marginal existence.

9. Relations inside the refugee camps

Various different Palestinian groups have representatives in the Palestinian camps. Al-Fatah has a strong influence among Palestinians in Lebanon where, despite the Syrian presence, it is still the largest party in terms of followers. However, this does not mean that Al-Fatah can appear openly everywhere. In the Syrian-controlled areas (Beirut, north Lebanon and the Bekaa valley) a wide range of pro-Syrian groups appear to be in charge. This is largely on outward appearance: in many cases Al-Fatah's following has not really declined in those regions, but does not show itself so much in public. Al-Fatah is only openly in charge in the three UNRWA camps around Tyre and the seven unofficial camps in south Lebanon. The camps near Sidon (Ein El-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh) are mostly under the influence of those loyal to Arafat, but in the past they have also been marked by disputes between various Palestinian currents. In the important and large camp of Ein El-Hilweh, various factions control (smaller) parts of the camp.

To the south of the Awali Syrian units do not have any direct influence. The river forms an imaginary border in Lebanon up to which the Syrians exert control. South of that line there is no visible Syrian presence. It is unlikely that Syrian security forces can obtain access to the southern camps in which Palestinian groups affiliated to Arafat are in charge.

North of the Awali river is where the Palestinian parties predominantly under Syrian influence are based. Syrian influence inside the camps there is fairly strong. Leadership of the seven camps north of Tripoli, near Beirut and south of Baalbek is largely in the hands of pro-Syrian groups. Al-Fatah is visibly present through women's movements, youth organisations and nursery schools, *inter alia*. It is assumed that in special circumstances Syrian security forces can obtain access to (parts of) camps in which pro-Syrian Palestinian organisations are in charge.

Lebanese influence in most camps is very weak. Although Palestinian camps are under Lebanese jurisdiction, in various camps the Lebanese police are in practice unable to enforce the law. Despite arrangements in the Taif agreement, Lebanese troops have not been able to disarm Palestinian militia inside the camps. Palestinians can therefore almost entirely elude the control of the Lebanese authorities inside the camps. The Lebanese authorities do not intervene in conflicts and problems between Palestinians in the camps either.

The Lebanese authorities are very keen to maintain law and order in the immediate vicinity of some camps. For instance, the Lebanese military presence near the Ein El-Hilweh camp, which is known as unsafe, is relatively heavy. There are Lebanese checkpoints near the entrances of a number of camps. In some cases (criminal offences etc.) Palestinians have been known to be handed over to the Lebanese authorities by the camp authorities.

Following the death sentence against Sultan Abu El-Einein, the Lebanese authorities stepped up pressure on the PLO/Al-Fatah in November 1999. Palestinian camps in the south in particular have faced difficulties as a result: Lebanese checks at the entrances and exits were tightened considerably. From November 1999 army and security services directed their efforts to arresting members of PLO/Al-Fatah who had previous convictions for violent crimes. Control of the smuggling of weapons and building materials, *inter alia*, was also tightened considerably. At times there have been queues of over an hour at the entrances.

Most camps have a Palestinian camp committee which forms the political administration and leadership of the camp. They also have their own legal system and prisons. A person can be a member of one of the other factions without any problem as long as the authority of the camp leadership is not undermined. A council of camp elders also operates in a number of camps alongside the committees.

Camp inhabitants who have problems with Palestinian factions or parties can – depending on the circumstances – call for protection by the party or faction to which they belong or to which they are affiliated. In many cases they cannot turn to the Lebanese authorities with any results if they experience problems inside the camps.

There are Palestinian checkpoints at the entrances to some camps. A sort of Palestinian police operates in a few camps. Some inhabitants carry their weapons openly inside the camp. This is the case in Ein El-Hilweh camp, for instance.

The administration of justice within the Palestinian camps is an almost entirely Palestinian affair. There are cases in which disputes are settled according to traditional customs or people take the law into their own hands. Private matters in which family honour is at stake often claim victims.

A number of factors conspire to reinforce political and social tensions in the camps. Firstly, the fact that many Palestinians see no progress in the peace process with Israel. Secondly, the feeling that the position of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is hopeless is also of importance. Moreover, the extensive internal political divisions and dwindling support from UNRWA and other organisations serve to heighten the tensions. There are also cases of protests and violence.

Although the internal security situation varies from camp to camp, it can generally be termed poor. Fighting between followers of various religious and political groups is a regular occurrence in Ein El-Hilweh camp which, as the largest Palestinian camp, is regarded as something of a "Palestinian capital" of Lebanon, and is thus accorded great symbolic significance. The nearby smaller camp of Mieh Mieh is a mirror image of Ein El-Hilweh. The presence of Arafat supporters and opponents is one of the reasons why tension runs higher in these camps than in others. The situation in Rashidieh camp is generally calmer. With the possible exceptions of Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi, there is a great "conflict potential" and a risk of escalation in most camps.

Tensions between factions or political influence over camp dwellers often play a part in conflicts, but financial and economic questions are at the root in many cases.

The popularity among Palestinians of Islamic movements which are not allied to Al-Fatah, such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas, has risen since the suicide attacks in Israel over the past years. It should, however, be borne in mind that while these movements are politically represented in Lebanon and able to disseminate propaganda, they do not have armed forces. Moreover, they have a pan-Arab agenda which does not square with the Palestine ideal cherished by most Palestinians. Neither the Lebanese authorities nor Hezbollah (which practically controls the south of Lebanon) are willing to give these movements room to conduct operations against Israel from Lebanon.

10. Legal position of Palestinians

10.1 Residence status

Most Palestinians in Lebanon have what is known as a blue card. This identity card is issued by the Department for the Administration of Palestinian Refugees (DAPR) ¹, which is under the Ministry of the Interior. The document grants the holder the right to remain in Lebanon. Blue cards are issued to Palestinians who were registered by the Lebanese authorities during the 1952 census, and their descendants. The issue of blue cards is independent of UNRWA registration.

Palestinians registered with UNRWA also have an UNRWA card, which is usually issued in the name of the head of the family and bears the names of the other family members. The card holder and his family are entitled to use UNRWA facilities. The card is not a residence permit.

¹ This department was formerly known as the Directorate-General for Palestinian Affairs (DGPA).

Not all Palestinians have a blue card, and Palestinians who originate from other regions in which UNRWA has a mandate (Syria, Jordan, West Bank, Gaza Strip) but who have come to Lebanon for one reason or another are often not registered at all. This is because transferring UNRWA registration from one country to another is – especially for those who do not have any contacts – particularly problematic. Many such Palestinians and their descendants therefore remain illegally in Lebanon. As long as such illegal Palestinians stay in camps in which the Lebanese authorities do not dare intervene, they have no reason to fear arrest for illegal residence. If they are arrested, they are detained for a week, after which they are sent back to their camps. The number of Palestinians without any form of registration is limited, and is estimated at between 700 and 1 000.

Palestinians are seen as temporarily resident and, like other foreigners, do not enjoy the rights that come with Lebanese citizenship. A number of legal restrictions arising from their residence status therefore apply to Palestinians in Lebanon. For instance, Palestinians are not entitled to a Lebanese passport, employment in an official function or access to public health care. They do not have the right to stand or vote at elections ¹.

10.2 Naturalisation

Several tens of thousands of Palestinians have acquired Lebanese nationality over the years. The number of Palestinian applications for naturalisation is unknown. There is a Lebanese naturalisation law which stipulates, *inter alia*, that a foreign woman married to a Lebanese man can become a naturalised Lebanese. Naturalisation is not possible otherwise.

It is also striking that a substantial proportion of the relatively limited number of Christian Palestinians have in the meanwhile acquired Lebanese nationality.

¹ See Chapter 7.

10.3 Legal process

To our knowledge, the legal system does not structurally treat Palestinians any worse than other nationals, even though a degree of discrimination is claimed in a number of cases ¹.

Access to legal representation is, however, more difficult for Palestinians owing to their generally limited financial resources. Those who are unable to pay for legal counsel themselves are assigned a lawyer. Palestinians may apply for financial legal aid from the Legal Aid Commission of the Lebanese Law Society. In almost all criminal cases reported to the Commission, Palestinians are defended by Lebanese lawyers. Palestinians are not allowed to practise legal professions.

Officially, Palestinians, like Lebanese, can turn to the Lebanese authorities for (legal) protection in the event of problems. However, this does not apply to disputes which occur in the refugee camps themselves. According to the Lebanese Attorney-General, equal treatment exists in practice ².

According to the Centre for Strategic Studies, Research and Documentation (CSSRD) in Beirut, Palestinians cannot obtain such protection "... as no-one would listen to them". Palestinian inhabitants of the camps near the capital are said to be an exception.

¹ Danish Immigration Service, "Report on the fact-finding mission to Lebanon", 9445/98 DG H I (Copenhagen, June 1998).

² Danish Immigration Service, "Report on the fact-finding mission to Lebanon", 9445/98 DG H I (Copenhagen, June 1998).

11. Palestinians' freedom of movement

11.1 Internally

There is almost complete freedom of movement in Lebanon. Checkpoints and roadblocks, which have been substantially cut back, are not directed against a specific population group. The checkpoints at the entrances to the Palestinian camps are an exception. The Lebanese army exerts strict to very strict control around the camps near Sidon and Tyre where the Syrian army has less influence and the pro-Syrian Palestinian groups are not so widely represented. In general, checkpoints in Lebanon are part of the general security system, and are manned by the Lebanese army. There are also checkpoints operated by the Syrian army and the Syrian security forces.

Palestinian camp inmates do not need permission from the Lebanese authorities to settle outside the camps but they do have to register officially with the authorities. Palestinians who want to move to another Palestinian camp do not need permission from UNRWA. In order to remain eligible for UNRWA assistance, however, they do have to have their registration number changed. Officially, permission from the Lebanese authorities is required in order to move to another Palestinian camp, but this is rarely applied in practice without leading to problems with the Lebanese authorities.

Palestinians living outside the camps are able to choose and change their place of residence freely on condition that they inform the Lebanese authorities.

11.2 Externally

Controls at Beirut airport are strict but not disproportionate. There is not much evidence of direct Syrian influence on controls, which does not mean that they do not occur.

Unhindered travel out of Beirut airport indicates that there is no special negative attention on the part of the Lebanese and Syrian authorities. Thorough controls are also carried out on return to Lebanon.

Various official border crossing points can be taken to travel to Syria by land. Lebanon has some ports with international maritime traffic.

Palestinians from Lebanon are able to return to Lebanon if they have valid travel documents (such as a Lebanese travel document for Palestinians or a laissez-passer). The visa requirement for exit and re-entry introduced in 1995 for Palestinians was abolished at the beginning of 1999.

In principle, the Lebanese authorities cooperate in the return to Lebanon of former Palestinian asylum seekers who originate in Lebanon. The Lebanese authorities first verify whether the person concerned really did originate in Lebanon and is registered there. On returning to Lebanon, former Palestinian asylum seekers do not encounter any problems solely by reason of their application for asylum; an application for asylum abroad does not attract adverse attention from the authorities ¹.

Palestinians intending to travel outside Lebanon who are registered with UNRWA and have a blue card are issued a "Document de voyage pour les réfugiés palestiniens", a special travel document for Palestinians.

Palestinians intending to travel outside Lebanon who only have a blue card are only entitled to a national laissez-passer, which carries fewer options than the abovementioned "Document de voyage". Palestinians who have never registered with the Lebanese authorities are not entitled to Lebanese travel documents. If they stay abroad they cannot obtain Lebanese travel documents in order to return to Lebanon.

Palestinian camp inmates who want to transfer their UNRWA registration to a camp in Syria need the permission of the Syrian authorities. *Vice versa*, transfer from a camp in Syria to a camp in Lebanon requires permission from the Lebanese authorities. Such permission is, however, rarely granted.

¹ See also Chapter 6.2.

Palestinian passports issued by the Palestinian authorities in the Gaza Strip and Ramallah are not recognised by the Lebanese authorities.

12. Motives for migration

The Lebanese civil war and the poor socio-economic position of Palestinians in Lebanon have caused over 100 000 Palestinians to leave Lebanon in recent years. They have emigrated to the United States, Canada and Western Europe. Many Palestinians who are members of the PLO left Lebanon in the past (in 1982/1983) for fear of persecution by the Syrian authorities ¹. Others left the country because they were under the threat of criminal prosecution by the Lebanese authorities for activities during the civil war. Inter-Palestinian problems may also have acted as grounds for Palestinians seeking shelter outside Lebanon ².

Poor prospects for the future have amplified this exodus. Returning to their families' original homes seems illusory in the near future. Even if a peace agreement is concluded, the question is whether Israel will allow Palestinians to return to their original homes. Staying in Lebanon is not an attractive prospect. Lebanese policy towards the Palestinian population is not geared towards "tawteen" ³ and offers little or no hope of anything more than mere maintenance of the status quo. Moreover, Palestinians have little scope for work and development.

¹ See Chapter 6.2.

² See Chapters 8 and 9.

³ See Chapter 6.

13. Scope for internal settlement

The political make-up of Palestinian camps varies, sometimes enabling Palestinians who encounter problems with a certain group to settle in a (part of a) camp outside the sphere of influence of the faction in question. Such scope for internal settlement can also apply to Palestinians faced with problems from the PLO or PLO-affiliated factions as well as those seeking protection from measures by pro-Syrian groups or Palestinian splinter groups. Rashidieh camp under the leadership of Arafat faithful is an example for Al-Fatah members experiencing problems from other groups. Of course, in a number of cases there is also scope for settling outside the camps. Whether internal settlement is possible must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

14. Summary

There are an estimated 200 000 to 400 000 Palestinians living in Lebanon. Many of them live in difficult socio-economic circumstances, mostly in refugee camps supported by UNRWA. They have fairly limited scope for integration in Lebanese society. Inter-Palestinian conflicts in the camps are one of the reasons why the (shifting) security situation in the camps can generally be termed poor.

Many tens of thousands of Palestinians left Lebanon during and after the civil war. Poor prospects for the future as well as fear of persecution by the Syrian authorities and other reasons played a role.

Almost all Palestinian political organisations are represented in Lebanon. Basically Al-Fatah has a major part of the camps in south Lebanon under its control; in the northern camps pro-Syrian Palestinian movements have more influence. Lebanese influence in most camps is not huge, although Lebanese control near the southern camps in particular was considerably tightened in 1999.

Palestinians do not suffer from any adverse attention or treatment on the part of the Lebanese authorities or the Syrian authorities in Lebanon in the sense of suffering persecution simply by fact of their Palestinian identity. It is known that both the Lebanese and Syrian authorities show a particular interest in Palestinians returning to Lebanon who are affiliated to the PLO, in particular those who left Lebanon during the period directly after the 1982 Israeli invasion and subsequently continued to work for the PLO abroad.

The Lebanese amnesty for offences committed during the civil war does not apply to Palestinians.

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