



act for human rights

## Two Years On:

# Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

ALEF-Act for Human Rights  
September 2013



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## Acronyms

**AND-** Akkar Network For Development

**AUB-** American University of Beirut

**CLDH-** Lebanese Center for Human Rights

**GBV-** Gender-Based Violence

**IFI -** Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs

**ISF-** Internal Security Forces

**MOIM –** Ministry of Interior and Municipalities

**MOSA –** Ministry of Social Affairs

**MOFA -** Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**MOPH-** Ministry of Public Health

**MOL-** Ministry of Labor

**MEHE-** Ministry of Education and Higher Education

**MOD-** Ministry of Defense

**OCHA-** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**PSP –** Progressive Socialist Party

**SGBV-** Sexual Gender-Based Violence

**UNHCR-** United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees

**WFP-** World Food Program

## Executive Summary

At the end of September 2013, there were over 700,000 registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon according to UNHCR with more than a million on Lebanese territory according to the figures issued by the Lebanese government.

The influx of Syrian refugees in 2013 rapidly transformed the emergency into a crisis and was compounded by a sharp decrease in funding by international donors. Since there is no legal protection framework in place for refugees in Lebanon, given that it is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol, the operational framework between the Lebanese Government and UNHCR is based on a memorandum of understanding designed for the Iraqi 2003 refugee crisis. UNHCR is currently pushing for a new MoU which takes into consideration the challenges presented by the Syrian crisis. The limited resources which were available has forced UNHCR and its partners to cut back the assistance they offered refugee families, and to target only the most vulnerable according to a stringent selection criteria which took effect in October 2013.

Given the poor social and economic conditions currently found throughout the country, non-assisted Syrian families who do not meet the vulnerability criteria of UNHCR, will find it increasingly difficult to find autonomous sources for livelihood. Efforts to secure a trust fund for Syrian refugees and host communities must be expedited to avoid unemployment, poverty, and tension between both the refugee and host communities.

ALEF expresses its concern over several lingering issues stemming from the growing Syrian refugees crisis.

- 1- Syrian refugees' UNHCR registration card does not entitle them to refugees' status in the eyes of the Lebanese authorities, thus basing their stay on the Lebanese residency law which requires constant renewal.
- 2- The *refoulement* of some refugees at the border by Lebanese General Security.
- 3- Imposition of illegal curfews by municipalities on Syrian nationals.
- 4- Rising levels of violence and retaliation against Syrian refugees within host communities.
- 5- Continued arrests of Syrian refugees by security forces and deportation orders by the judiciary.
- 6- Arbitrary detention and torture of Syrian detainees and prisoners.
- 7- The involvement of representatives of political parties and official security agencies in communal conflicts
- 8- The increased vulnerability of women and girls to forced and early marriages as well as survival sex and various forms of GBV.

- 9- Although stakeholders have facilitated access to social services, health assistance conditions exclude vulnerable refugees, while the strain on educational and health services due to soaring demand has resulted in decreased quality and shortage of supply.

The impact of the growing influx of Syrian refugees on their host communities and surrounding areas has become clearly visible to observers and inhabitants of Lebanon's densely populated towns, cities and villages. The most welcoming of Lebanese have with time raised the alarm over their marginalization and threatened livelihoods. Even within more developed urban contexts, the social barrier between Lebanese and Syrians has visibly intensified, with xenophobia permeating through everyday dealings from real estate negotiations, to school ground behaviour, as well as other confrontations any city could witness on an average day.

Lebanon has been struggling to cope with the flow of refugees since the onslaught of violence in Syria. The international community has relied heavily on Lebanon's tested resilience to adapt to the rising refugee population and encouraged the country to offer "hosting solutions" while resettlement remains undiscussable.

The Syrian refugee crisis is no longer only about the management of the displaced, it has become about creating durable solutions that address the root causes of the tensions that exist with host communities which are preventing long lasting social cohesion, especially with the already fragmented nature of the Lebanese society. The broader goal of providing protection to Syrian refugees can no longer be realised without addressing security and economic concerns of host countries.

## Methodology

ALEF's Monitoring and Reporting Unit has been engaged with Syrian refugee and host communities in Lebanon, officially since October 2012, but also prior to that through the regular monitoring and reporting activities that are within ALEF's mandate. Through ALEF's analysis and meetings with stakeholders and policy makers, a serious concern was detected regarding Lebanon's capacity to host and protect a rising Syrian refugee population. Furthermore, media and field monitoring showed an increase in the number of security incidents within host communities, which are triggered by a combination of specific community dynamics (micro level) as well as the turn of events within the Syrian conflict (macro level).

In light of the above, ALEF sought to gather empirical data on the situation, as the basis for future actions to mobilize an urgent policy debate on the refugee crisis. The following report is the product of two months of data collection. It presents a situation analysis of (1) cross-cutting protection concerns for Syrian refugees, and (2) conflict risks and impact on host communities.

The report will be used by ALEF, the donor, and partners in advocacy to push for policy recommendations among stakeholders/policy makers in embassies, EU, UN, relevant ministries, agencies etc. ALEF's partners IKV Pax Christi/Pax Christi International will use the report for advocacy on the international, and particularly European level.

Due to resource limitations, ALEF was not able to conduct a comprehensive and in depth mapping of protection concerns on a national level. Instead, ALEF relied on stakeholder interviews, field visits, and literature review in order to produce a qualitative snapshot as opposed to quantified and generalizable conclusions.

The first step of data collection comprised a comprehensive literature review, covering NGO reports, field assessments, media reports, and other relevant material. The literature review was followed by secondary data collection from semi-structured interviews with local, social and community workers, humanitarian relief and protection personnel, and other stakeholders engaged in the domain. Finally, ALEF's research team conducted a series of field visits to selected locations in the North, South, Bekaa, and Beirut. Selection of locations was based on two criteria:

- (1) Needs: *needs of the study to answer the research questions + protection needs of community itself.*
- (2) Accessibility: *the availability of gatekeepers and community informants, which are imperative to the study.*

Using several sources in the community ALEF was able to produce a richer account and triangulate information. On-site visits included:

1. In-depth interviews



2. Field Observation
3. Focus groups with Syrian refugees (where appropriate/possible)

ALEF would like to thank the NGOs and individuals that facilitated access to the field, including Arcenciel and Aakar Network for Development (AND). Specifically we would like to acknowledge Mr. Raed Hanna, Mr. Wafik Hawwari, and Mrs. Mays Ziadeh for introducing us to Syrian refugees in their respective areas.

## Overview

According to official UNHCR figures, at the end of September 2013 there were 763,097 registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, over 70% of which are women and children.<sup>1</sup> The number of Syrians in Lebanon has increased dramatically in a period of just one year (2012-2013), and figures are still increasing at the date of writing. In fact, UNHCR anticipates that numbers will amount to 1,000,000 by December 2013, notwithstanding 80,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria, and 49,000 Lebanese returnees.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the Lebanese government has estimated that there are *already* 1,000,000 Syrians in Lebanon, taking into account migrant labourers and persons who have not approached UNHCR.<sup>3</sup>

Syrian refugees are hosted in over 1,200 locations across Lebanese territories.<sup>4</sup> Breaking this figure further down, Syrian refugees reside within cities and towns in about 2,800 'place-codes', which correspond to smaller geographic units within the cadastral zones.<sup>5</sup> The Bekaa and the North host the highest number of refugees, with 263,135 individuals in Bekaa and 227,210 in the North (24/9/2013). Meanwhile, 181,774 refugees can be found in Beirut and 90,978 in the South.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this massive influx in a period of one year, UNHCR has only received 44% of needed funding at the date of writing.<sup>7</sup> The total appeal was for \$1,216,189,393, of which only \$529, 659, 196 was received.<sup>8</sup> The fourth Regional Response Plan was launched in December 2012, with priorities set by UNHCR, other UN agencies, international and local NGOs, and the Lebanese government. The plan was revised and the fifth Regional Response Plan was re-launched to cover the period of January to December 2013. The Lebanese government's share of the funding appeal is just under \$450 million, none of which has been received.

Although exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, especially since there are political motivations for both upgrading and downgrading the Syrian presence in Lebanon, what is certain is that the massive influx has had direct and indirect consequences on

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (2013). Syria Regional Response Plan- January to December 2013. Available online at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR (2013) Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal. Available online at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> (last accessed: 7 October) 2013

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR (2013). Syria Regional Response Plan- January to December 2013. Available online at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>5</sup> Information Management Working Group, UNHCR and partners. Meeting Minutes 26 June 2013. Available online at: [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=2351](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=2351) . NFI Sector Coordination Group – Meeting Action Points 21 May 2013. Available online: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=2156>

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR (2013) Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal. Available online at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> (last accessed: 7 October) 2013

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR Web portal. Figure was last updated on 27 September 2013. Available online at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

all parties involved. It is well known in the literature on refugee rights that numbers do not make a difference to the assistance and protection imperative. However, in the case of Lebanon, numbers have made a difference, resulting in shortcomings in both protection and assistance. While the security situation in Syria shows little signs of improvement, the time element has also been another crucial challenge in the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and elsewhere. Two years onwards, the numbers of Syrian families receiving humanitarian assistance has dwindled, while tension with the host communities in most parts of the country has generated new protection concerns.

## I. Refugee Protection in the Lebanese Context

### Relevant International Instruments

The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (referred to hereafter as the UN Convention on Refugees) is the key international legal instrument for the protection of refugees. The Convention outlines the legal protection, social services, and forms of assistance a refugee has the right to claim from the host state as well as basic human rights including freedom of religion, movement, education, health, access to justice and accessibility to travel documents.<sup>9</sup>

Other international instruments, complementary to refugee protection is international human rights law, mainly those that cover rights by target group (e.g. women and children), in addition to others that enshrine the duty to protect, respect and fulfil human rights norms regardless of political or security situation. These include:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Right: pertaining to the civil and political rights of all individuals on a territory, regardless of nationality in addition to the freedom of movement and protection from arbitrary detention.
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: stipulates the principle of *non-refoulment*, protection from torture
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): protection and assistance of children
- Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): covers protection of women, particularly from gender-based and sexual violence etc.

### National Legal and Administrative Framework

Lebanon is not party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of refugees, or its additional protocol of 1967. However, the Lebanese government still has the duty to uphold its international law commitments in accordance with Article 14 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), and other relevant human rights conventions. These conventions constitutionally take precedence over national law although this principle, theoretically, is seldom practiced in courts. Lebanon is also under customary and peremptory obligations to protect refugee rights and insure the safeguarding of human dignity and security.

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<sup>9</sup> Refugee Consortium of Kenya (2012) "Asylum under Threat". Available online at: <http://www.rckkenya.org/rokdownloads/docs/Report-Asylum-Under-Threat.pdf>

Over the course of the current Syrian refugee crisis, the Lebanese government has reiterated time and again that Lebanon is not a place for refuge. Syrians, like Palestinians, Iraqis and other refugees before them, have a volatile legal standing in the country. Article 32 of the Lebanese Law of Entry and Exit (1962) stipulates that foreigners who illegally enter the territory can be imprisoned for one month to 3 years, fined, and deported. In the absence of a legal protection framework, previous refugee situations have instead been dealt with through Memoranda of Understanding between the Lebanese government and UNHCR preventing deportation and minimizing arrests. The 2003 MOU described in the text box below does not apply to Syrian refugees.<sup>10</sup>

Syrians entering Lebanon through legal borders are admitted by the General Security for an initial period of residency for 6 months, renewable for another 6 month period. While Iraqis had third-country resettlement options, Syrian refugees have not been afforded the same option, with the exception of some countries like Germany and Sweden who have placed stringent criteria for Syrian applicants.<sup>11</sup> The only official guarantee against arrest and deportation that Syrians possess is their time-limited entry papers stamped by the General Security and the UNCHR's Registration Certificate granted upon registration for humanitarian assistance purposes.

Although the Lebanese government has thus far cooperated with UNHCR and dealt with the Syrian influx from a humanitarian perspective, commitment is restricted to an unofficial cooperation framework between UNHCR and the government. There are no legal guarantees for protection, which exposes Syrian refugees to the risk of reinterpretation and/or revocation of status at any given time.<sup>12</sup> This risk is augmented in Lebanon given the unstable security situation and the divergent political opinions towards the Syrian conflict.

In the course of 2013, UNHCR has been working on developing a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Lebanese government.<sup>13</sup>

The MoU would tackle issues such as:

- Reception of refugees
- Status determination
- Temporary permits
- Durable solutions
- Regular information exchange
- Joint training

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<sup>10</sup> Minutes of ALEF, UNHCR meeting on 20/11/2013

<sup>11</sup> Around 8,000 Syrian asylum-seekers in Sweden were granted permanent residency (See: <http://www.thelocal.se/50030/20130903/>) while Germany opened asylum applications for refugees in Lebanon with specific criteria.

<sup>12</sup> The Economist Blogs: Pomegranate (2013) "Living in Limbo" 15 July 2013. Available online at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/pomegranate/2013/07/syrian-refugees>

<sup>13</sup> UNCHR (2013) "UNHCR Global Appeal 2013 Update: Lebanon". Available online at: <http://www.unhcr.org/50a9f82824.pdf>

- Strengthening of response capacity

At the date of writing, the proposed MoU remains pending at the Council of Ministers. It has been circulated to relevant ministries including the MOSA and MOFA for feedback. However, politics continues to stand in the way of approval, particularly when it comes to interpreting the role of UNHCR. The possibility of repatriation and the demographic consequences of the surge of mainly Sunni Muslim Syrians in Lebanon continue to cause fear, translated into political hurdles. The issue of government response to the crisis in addition to the politicization of funding are elaborated in the sections below.

### Government Response

Previous refugee crises in Lebanon, such as the Iraqi one, did face political difficulties but minor ones in comparison with the Syrian refugee crisis. Lebanon's historic links to Syria, the collective fear of repeating the history of Palestinian refugees, and the divergent interpretations of the Syrian conflict are all factors that contributed to avoid adopting a systematic and coherent protection approach or policy.

The government's official stance has been one of "disassociation", or refraining from taking a stand so as to steer clear of becoming implicated in the Syrian conflict. In reality however, the 'spill-over' of the Syrian conflict in Lebanon became more tangible over the course of 2013, with visible implication of Sunni Islamist and Hizbullah fighters within Syria. The Qusayr battle in May 2013 in Syria also marked a tangible shift in the political and security situation in Lebanon due to the ostensible involvement of Hizbullah and retaliatory threats on Lebanon by the General Commission of the Syrian Revolution.<sup>14</sup> Since January 2013, security within Lebanon continued to deteriorate with a series of explosions in the Southern suburb of Beirut as well as Tripoli; fighting between pro and anti-Syrian regime supporters in Tripoli; cross-border shelling in the North and the Bekaa; as well as attacks on army checkpoints and municipal convoys in the Bekaa.

Beyond the security situation, the government has been blamed for its slow reaction to the rapidly rising numbers of Syrian refugees in the course of 2012-2013. It was not until December 2012 that a government plan to deal with the refugee crisis was issued. The slow reaction is attributable to the above-mentioned political disputes in addition to the fact that the Lebanese government has not received funding from international or regional donors despite repeated appeals. Governance vacuums further stalled the implementation of the government's response plan, due to the postponement of parliamentary elections, the resignation of former Prime Minister Nagib Mikati in March 2013, and the continued difficulties in forming a new government.

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<sup>14</sup>Naharnet. "Rebels say they lost battle for Qusayr but vow to fight 'Lebanese mercenaries'". 5 June 2013. Available online at: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/85746>

Despite the plan, a unified response by the Lebanese government is missing, as can be noted in the divergent discourses used by Ministers and politicians in media statements. The President and Ministers associated with PSP leader Walid Jumblatt echoed speeches of caretaker PM Mikati, in favour of a quick response, at the time. Meanwhile, the foreign minister and cabinet members (now care-takers) associated with General Michel Aoun have repeatedly either downplayed the impact of the refugee crisis, or called for closing of the borders and more recently, expulsion or *refoulement* of Syrians from Lebanon.<sup>15</sup>

Contention was also reflected in disagreement over terminology, whereby it was agreed that Syrians would be referred to as “displaced” as opposed to “refugees”, seeing the word displaced has a milder and more temporary connotation.

Moreover, whereas debates have proposed the role of local governments in coordinating the refugee crisis, the sensitivity of the decentralization debate in Lebanon adds another layer of complexity to the policy debate. There is a clear resistance on the part of the central government, through its mandated parties including the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Council of Ministers to delegate responsibility and funding to local governments.

So far, the international and regional community has encouraged and commended the Lebanese government for its “open border” policy, despite the influx of refugees and repercussions. The U.N. is in the lead in advocating the continuing of this policy. Nonetheless, as per international standards and from a humanitarian perspective, the Lebanese government continues to uphold this policy and there are no signs of change in the near future.

The government through the Higher Relief Committee was registering incoming refugees alongside UNHCR initially, but the effort stopped in 2012, allegedly due to insufficient capacity to track the growing numbers of incoming refugees.<sup>16</sup> In 2012, an inter-ministerial committee composed of the MOSA, the MOPH, MOIM, MEHE, MOL, MOD, and Higher Relief Committee prepared a plan aiming to regulate the situation of Syrian refugees when the numbers started to reach around 150,000. The initial plan was launched in December 2012, but was revised at the beginning of 2013 due to an influx. Criticism circulated over the presence of two separate plans, one of the UN and partners and the other for the government so efforts were exerted to integrate the government plan into the Fifth Regional Response Plan.

Since then the inter-ministerial committee head has led a campaign to warn against the negative repercussions that non-intervention will have on both the refugee and host populations. It can be noted that this strategy has sought to inter-link the problem of refugees with that of host communities, in light of the economic and

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<sup>15</sup> Crisis group (2013). Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon. 13 May 2013. Available online at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 6

social impact of the influx. Representatives of the Lebanese government in the Council of Ministers have thus raised the warning alert for potential conflict and insecurity due to labour market competition, strain on infrastructure among other consequences.

### Funding Policies

In January 2013, a donor conference was held in Kuwait during which the Lebanese government made an appeal for \$370 million.<sup>17</sup> A pledge of \$1.5 billion was given, with Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia pledging \$300 million each.<sup>18</sup> The money would be channelled through UN agencies as opposed to the government.<sup>19</sup> The government has accused this policy of being politicized given the Gulf countries' stance towards the Hizbullah-backed government at the time. Meanwhile, other international donors have allegedly withheld funding due to distrust of the transparency and efficiency of the Lebanese government in managing the funds, in light of previous experiences. Nonetheless, the delay in establishing an adequate fund with international transparency standards has been criticized and many called for more effort by donor countries in finding alternative solutions.<sup>20</sup>

Since the issuing of the second government plan in conjunction with UNHCR's fifth Regional Response Plan, the government has been advocating for international aid. On 24 September 2013, the Lebanese President spoke before the UN General Assembly to present the latest trends in the Syrian refugee crisis and to appeal for funding through a multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank.<sup>21</sup> As a result, the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) was formed, which is a new model for donor cooperation that takes into account the developmental needs of host communities in addition to direct assistance to Syrian refugees. This model has been described as "forming a nexus between humanitarian aid and development".<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Naharnet. "Lebanon asks for \$370 million aid for Syrian Refugees at donor conference". 30 January 2013. Available online at: <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/70184>

<sup>18</sup> Westall, Sylvia. "Donors meet target of \$1.5 billion aid or stricken Syrians: U.N." Reuters, 30 January 2013. Available online at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/30/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE90S0GU20130130>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of round-table organised by LCPS and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: "Challenges of Managing the Syrian Refugee Influx". 30 May 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Alkantar, Bassam. "Syrian Refugee Relief in the Hands of the World Bank". Al Akhbar English. 18 July 2013. Available online at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/16460>

<sup>22</sup> World Bank, feature story. "Lebanon bears the brunt of economic and social spill-overs of the Syrian conflict". 24 September 2013. Available online at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/09/24/lebanon-bears-the-brunt-of-the-economic-and-social-spillovers-of-the-syrian-conflict>



## Aid Distribution

One of the key criticisms surrounding the distribution of assistance to Syrian refugees has been the lack of effective coordination among humanitarian agencies. As reported by the Crisis Group earlier this year, initially, “the absence of an early identification and monitoring mechanism harmed aid distribution; in several regions, where needs far exceeded local capacity, resources quickly depleted”. As time passed, duplication of assistance became a problem, wherein some areas supply exceeded demand.<sup>23</sup> Previous reports as well as ALEF’s field research show that many refugees complained of receiving too much of one type of assistance, such as mattresses, and too little of what they truly need such as food and rent assistance. Furthermore, refugees complained of the conditions under which they had to collect assistance, reporting overcrowding, shoving, and humiliation by humanitarian workers and Lebanese security officers at the locations of collection. Aid workers interviewed by ALEF admitted that many staff responsible for distribution are not adequately trained, and demonstrated arrogant and aggressive behaviour towards refugees. Some distribution centres were understaffed and under enormous pressure, resulting in their inability to deal with overcrowding and persistence of refugees. ALEF points out, however, that the above-described criticisms are mainly related to some NGOs outside the coordination framework with UNHCR and partners, who are operating with limited accountability and evaluation mechanisms.

According to World Vision, “the presence of non-traditional donors, such as those from the Gulf States, has provided both welcome resources and new challenges for coordination. These donors often fund programmes outside of the UN system, meaning that it is very difficult to get an accurate overall picture of the resources contributed and to coordinate effective implementation on the ground”.<sup>24</sup> ALEF’s interviews with Syrian refugees revealed that refugees often regard these ‘non-traditional’ donors as an alternative or additional source of assistance to UNHCR. Separate funding from Gulf countries often fills gaps in assistance by UNCHR, but ALEF raises the concern that some funded implementing partners do not necessarily operate according to international standards and beneficiaries are concentrated in areas of a specific sect or political allegiance.

Aid workers interviewed also informed ALEF that UNHCR’s relationship to implementing and operational partners was unclear, wavering unpredictably between a partnership and a donor-recipient relationship. UNCHR has been criticized for its shortcomings in effective facilitation during coordination meetings, which are still occurring through sectorial working groups, as opposed to a cluster

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<sup>23</sup> Crisis Group. Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon. 13 May 2013. P.6 Available online at: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

mechanism.<sup>25</sup> These meetings have also been criticized for being too focused on fundraising and for being primarily for information sharing as opposed to operational decision-making.<sup>26</sup>

UNHCR has also been criticized for its centralized approach whereby the capacity and reach of local actors has not been properly harnessed for the improvement of registration and easing of the large caseload. Whereas waiting periods for registration have decreased over time (waiting periods reached over three months for some refugees that ALEF interviewed), there is still a minimum forty-days waiting period. Although usually the trend is that registration is usually done by UNHCR or the state agents with UNHCR's support, the current centralized approach to registration is particularly concerning when it comes to newcomer refugees that enter the country irregularly. Depending on where they enter, some of these refugees have to travel a distance to reach the closest UNCHR registration centre. This distance may involve crossing at least one checkpoint, which puts them at risk of arrest and detention.

Currently, one of the key challenges in managing the Syrian refugee influx has been the severe funding shortage faced by UNHCR and other relevant agencies. For this reason, as of October 2013, UNHCR, WFP and partners will be cutting back on assistance to families as they can no longer afford a blanket coverage.

The WFP with funding by ECHO has been conducting a 'profiling exercise' since March 2013 to determine vulnerability criteria upon which the targeting will be based. The resultant formula was inputted on UNHCR's bio-data information, with each input having a certain weight, in order to categorize Syrian refugee families according to vulnerability. Some exceptions were allowed included households with young children, elderly, women-headed households among other criteria.

The majority of Syrian families and individuals that ALEF met with for this report expressed confusion over UNCHR's and WFP decision to stop funding. Families informed us that they received a message saying that the monthly vouchers they have been receiving will be stopped as of October 2013. Several families inquired as to how they can reverse the decision if they believe they were unfairly eliminated. Families noted that they had been depending on WFP's vouchers for food and now they are lost as to how to proceed in the absence of job opportunities or support. Many of them have already started searching for alternative sources of assistance through local NGOs.

ALEF raises questions regarding the effectiveness of the appeal process. Families need to be better informed about the possibility and procedure of appeal. In

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

principle, individuals can fill out an appeal form at the nearest centre (municipality, community centre...); the form is reviewed and followed by a home visit to investigate the claim. It is unclear from thereon how a decision is taken, how long the process takes, and more importantly to what is the capacity to reverse exclusion decision if a large number of eligible appeals are submitted. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent UNHCR's database are up to date, especially for families that registered two years ago in Wadi Khaled for example. The conditions of these families may have deteriorated over time. Furthermore, the exemption criteria such as 'women-headed household' and young children or elderly may not necessarily be a vulnerability criteria in reality as for example they can be supported by Lebanese hosting families if inter Syrian-Lebanese marriage exist. Although it is understandable that targeting on a case-by-case basis is impossible given the caseload, it must be noted that there is a risk that this targeting exercise has excluded vulnerable families as a result of its automated nature. Furthermore, the fate of families who will no longer be covered by assistance is concerning from both a humanitarian and protection perspective. This is ultimately the responsibility of the international community and the Lebanese government, who need to expedite efforts, raise funds necessary to support Syrian refugees and host communities.

## II. Cross-cutting Protection Concerns

### Access to Asylum in Lebanon

According to UNHCR, 88% of refugees enter Lebanese territory regularly through official border crossings controlled by the Lebanese General Security Office.<sup>27</sup> For those that enter irregularly, mainly through the Northern and Northeastern borders but also on the main border crossings, their stay in Lebanon is restricted to specific areas with little possibility for movement. Lebanon's borders with Syria in the North, Northeast, and Southeast have been historically porous and not demarcated. For example, in the villages of Wadi Khaled, both sides of the border share an obvious geographical contiguity in addition to shared customs, economic activity, and lineage. However, irregular crossings which were previously commonplace are becoming increasingly dangerous due to the proliferation of landmines.

The Lebanese government has showed no signs of a change regarding the open-border policy it has maintained since the beginning of the conflict. So far, the international and regional community has encouraged and commended the Lebanese government for its open-border policy, despite the influx of refugees and its repercussions.

The General Security has fortified its border control in the course of 2013 in response to the influx of Syrian refugees. In July 2013, the General Security announced that border agents would no longer admit Syrians coming from what were deemed 'safe' areas in Syria.<sup>28</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that such measures come in response to allegations that many Syrians are crossing the border for collection of humanitarian aid, then returning back to Syria after collection. ALEF has not been able to verify this but urges further investigation and closer cooperation between UNHCR and partners and the Lebanese government so as to avoid blanket measures that harm vulnerable refugees.

In August 2013, the media reported that the General Security was denying entry to Palestinian refugees coming from Syria, which was later denied by the General Security.<sup>29</sup> Upon investigating this further, ALEF found viable allegations that

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<sup>27</sup> UNHCR (2013). Syria Regional Response Plan- January to December 2013. Available online at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>28</sup> Now Media. "Lebanon imposes entry restrictions on Syrians". 24 July 2013. Available online at: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/lebanon-imposes-entry-restrictions-on-syrians>

<sup>29</sup> Kullab, Samya. Daily Star. "General Security denies new border measures as agencies seek clarity". 15 August 2013. Available online at: "<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Aug-15/227432-general-security-denies-new-border-measures-as-agencies-seek-clarity.ashx#axzz2gZct3RfM>;

Now Media. "Abou Faour rules out deportation of Syrian refugees". 30 September 2013. Available online at: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/abou-faour-rules-out-deportation-of-syrian-refugees>

Palestinian refugees are in fact being systematically refused at the Masnaa border in addition to being denied exit permits within Syria by the Immigration and Passports Directorate. Palestinian refugees that *are* being admitted usually have proof of travel arrangements with Lebanon being only a pit stop.

Other types of refusals at the border occur mainly when Syrian refugees' official documentation has minor or severe damages (rips, breakage etc.) This is an immediate cause for refusal. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence shows that whereas the majority of women and children are admitted, there are cases of refusals for single men or men without families. Refusals have also been reported in cases where Syrian refugees exit the borders temporarily to renew their entry permits and return back to Lebanon. In such cases, Syrian refugees have reported that there is no guarantee that they will be allowed back into Lebanon. It must also be noted that Syrian families/individuals that are refused at the border cannot attempt to enter again before a year has passed; this is a grave protection concern considering the proliferation of violence within Syria and the retaliatory consequences that these individuals may face upon returning to the areas they fled.

At the outset of the conflict in 2011, the Lebanese government was initially resorting to arrests and detention of Syrians entering illegally in the Wadi Khaled region. In May 2011, human rights watchdogs denounced the arrest of 9 Syrians including a minor.<sup>30</sup> In August 2012, 14 Syrians were deported by Lebanese authorities, four of whom reported a fear of persecution by the Syrian authorities.<sup>31</sup> In response to a local and international outcry, several statements by government officials have ruled out the policy of deportation.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, official policy towards Syrian refugees remains unclear and divided along political lines, with March 8 ministers and politicians being in support of more stringent measures to restrict the entry of Syrian refugees.<sup>33</sup> Since then, with the advocacy work of UNHCR and human rights NGOs, deportation cases have ceased due to a moratorium in place since August 2012.

Despite the current government commitment, ALEF is concerned that official policy towards Syrian refugees remains unclear and divided along political lines, with March 8 ministers and politicians being in support of more stringent measures to restrict the entry of Syrian refugees.<sup>34</sup> For example, caretaker energy minister

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<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch (2011) "Lebanon: Stop Detaining Syrian Refugees" 20 May 2011. Available online at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/20/lebanon-stop-detaining-syrian-refugees>

<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch (2013) "Country Summary: Lebanon". January 2013. Available online at: [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related\\_material/lebanon\\_3.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/lebanon_3.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Dakroub, Hussein. Daily Star. "Deportation of anti-regime Syrians creates political storm". 3 August 2012. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Aug-03/183256-deportation-of-anti-regime-syrians-creates-political-storm.ashx#axzz2gZct3RfM>

<sup>33</sup> Crisis Group. Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon. 13 May 2013. Available online at: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Crisis Group. Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon. 13 May 2013. Available online at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.pdf>

affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement called in a press conference in September 2013 for the denial of entry to Syrians and the deportation of those already in the country.<sup>35</sup>

The army intelligence in cooperation with other security agencies have mobilized local informants in order to crackdown on the infiltration of combatants into Lebanese territory. Whereas enhanced security measures are necessary, particularly from a national security and refugee protection perspective, it must be noted that forced deportation of army defectors that are at a risk of torture and persecution by the Syrian regime amounts to *refoulement*, which contradicts Lebanon's obligations under the UNCAT and relevant international instruments. Furthermore, ALEF warns against the politicization of security policies, noting that refugees have reported fear of the army intelligence and the influence of pro-regime political parties on refugee and security policies.

Renewal of papers has also emerged from the data as a recurrent problematic. Syrians are granted entrance permits for a period of 6 months, renewable for another 6 months for free. After this period, each family member should renew papers at the General Security for a fee of \$200, or exit and re-enter the country. The majority Syrian families, already living in destitute are unable to pay such renewal fees. Whereas UNHCR had been previously assisting financially with such renewals, lack of funding has caused a halt to this policy. Families that are scared of exiting the border and re-entering it in order to renew papers for free are now a precarious situation. The numbers of Syrians in need of financial assistance to renew their papers as we approach the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of conflict has become too huge to be covered by assistance programs. ALEF urges the General Security to revise its payment policy.

Furthermore, cases of falsification of papers and entry stamps have been reported, which places Syrian refugees at risk of arrest and detention. Those that are particularly vulnerable are families/individuals with little awareness that are tricked by smugglers at the border into paying a sum of \$100 or \$200 for provision of documentation, which they do not know is false.

### Freedom of movement

In general, Syrian refugees have chosen to reside in areas where they feel safe, according to religious, political, and/or kinship considerations.<sup>36</sup> However, many families have moved from one area to another since their initial arrival (secondary

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<sup>35</sup> First Post, Fwire. "Lebanese minister calls for deporting Syrian refugees" 28 September 2013. Available online at: <http://www.firstpost.com/fwire/lebanese-minister-calls-for-deporting-syrian-refugees-1139137.html>

<sup>36</sup> Crisis Group. Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon. 13 May 2013. Available online at: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.pdf)

displacement within Lebanon), while newly arriving refugees have also spread to new parts of the country. As the crisis progressed in the second half of 2013, the imperative to move to a certain area has moved beyond purely political or safety considerations, and has been overshadowed by priorities of livelihood, shelter, and services. Increasing rent prices and hostility of the host community have also been reasons for secondary displacement within Lebanon.

Syrian refugees, whether in urban or rural settings, generally resort to self-imposed restriction of movement in order to protect themselves. Their fears vary from crime, verbal and physical harassment, to the unstable security conditions in the country. Trips around cities and towns are generally restricted to necessary matters, such as collection of aid, registration/interviews with UNHCR, or visits to the health clinic. Refugees that have entered irregularly, or those that have not renewed their papers for one reason or another, are also restricted to their places of residence for fear of arrest and detention, particularly if they have to cross checkpoints. Families associated with combatants or ex-combatants, or those that have strong political affiliations in Syria, generally fear being tracked down by the Syrian regime or pro-regime Lebanese authorities. Fear of persecution even drives some to avoid approaching UNHCR for registration.

As for externally imposed restrictions on movement, ALEF observed grave protection concerns particularly for Syrian men working in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs as well as Syrian refugees living among hostile host communities. The most concerning practice is the curfew on Syrian nationals imposed by a number of municipalities across the country. Earlier this year, the media reported that the municipalities of Baskinta, Benih (Aley), and Betshai-Mardashe imposed night curfews on Syrian nationals.<sup>37</sup> It was reported that residents in Aley (Benih) for example, voluntarily formed night-watch vigilant groups to patrol the movement of Syrians in the area past curfew and that patrollers physically beat Syrians that did not comply.<sup>38</sup> ALEF's field research confirms that curfews are imposed in Niha, Jezzine, Roum, Ankoun, Mazraet Yachouh, Mansourieh, Ain Saade, Qornet Shahwan, Haret Saida, and Zekrit among others. UNCHR and partners have also reported that curfews are imposed in some areas of Tripoli, Bekaa and Nabatieh regions.<sup>39</sup> ALEF also observed evidence of harassment of Syrian men in particular in the Southern suburbs of Beirut with perpetrators being representatives of dominant political parties that act as 'vigilantes' who monitor the movement of Syrians in the area.

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<sup>37</sup> Fleming-Farell, Niamh. "Aley vigilantes enforce nighttime curfews on Syrians". 8 April 2013. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Apr-08/212903-aley-vigilantes-enforce-nighttime-curfews-on-syrians.ashx#axzz2PrAPqCUB>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR. Protection Working Group Meeting- Minutes. 17 July 2013, Beirut. Available online at: [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=2473](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=2473)

In Jezzine, the municipality has been taking severely discriminatory measures against Syrians residing in the area. In August 2013, 30 Syrian men who were gathered in public in the evening were reportedly rounded up by the municipal police and beaten up in the Serail building. Local sources informed ALEF that this was one of several similar incidents that were occurring in Jezzine previously. After this particular incident, however, the army intervened and overt harassment reportedly abated for a short while after. Nonetheless, upon ALEF's visit to Jezzine in September 2013, we found that harassment continues in a covert manner and touching on Syrian migrant workers. Interviewed Syrian labourers confirmed that they cannot leave their residence after 7:00 p.m. and that they are no longer allowed to wait for their employer's truck to pick them up on the street. The municipality has obliged Lebanese employers to pick up their employees from their place of residence due to the prohibition of public congregation for Syrians. Reports have also shown that Syrian families in general have been warned to keep their windows closed in order not to cause disturbance. (See: Swiss Solidare Assessment August 2013)

Interviews with local citizens showed that they are in support of such measures as they do not believe Syrians have the right to wander the streets of Jezzine as they please. Residents fear Syrian labourers in particular as they associate them with theft due to a previous incident of theft in Jezzine involving a Syrian national. ALEF found no traces of Syrian families in the streets, who remain in their places of residence in a specific neighborhood.

ALEF interviewed a local lawyer who informed us that these measures are arbitrary and have no legal grounds. The army police has tried to intervene to abate them, but they continue due to the mayor's personal inclination and in response to local complaints. ALEF asked current and previous members of the municipality, Syrian residents, the local hospital and the Red Cross office about the whereabouts of the 30 men that were beaten. We were told that they left the area since the incident and nobody knows

Confiscation of IDs from refugees by municipalities is also a highly concerning practice. It has been reported that municipalities confiscate the IDs of Syrians that do not comply with curfews for a few days in some areas. In Der El Ahmar in Rashaya, the municipality (under the previous mayor) had been obliging newly arriving Syrian refugees to register at the municipality but once they do, their IDs are taken away and kept at the municipality. In Bikfaya, refugees reported being taken into questioning by men in civilian clothing claiming to be security officers.

The law of municipalities stipulates that municipal police are responsible for ensuring security in their respective jurisdictions with the support of the Internal Security Forces.<sup>40</sup> However, the law does not adequately delineate the respective roles of the MOIM and municipalities. Media statements by the Minister of Interior have confirmed that municipalities do not have the legal grounds to enact security

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<sup>40</sup> Government of Lebanon, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities. Municipal Act: Decree-law no. 118 (30/6/1977 and amendments). Available online at: [www.moim.gov.lb/ui/moim/.../Municipal\\_Act\\_Eng.doc](http://www.moim.gov.lb/ui/moim/.../Municipal_Act_Eng.doc)



measures without coordination and approval by the MOIM, particularly if these measures infringe on the authority of the ISF.<sup>41</sup>

More recently, the Minister of Interior proposed a security plan that envisions the strengthening of municipal police in response to the tense security conditions that have prevailed in recent months. The plan calls for arming of municipal police and installing street cameras, among other items. The plan, however, has generated considerable debate as many fear that it would bolster a trend of 'self-protection', which is prone to politicization with little to no oversight.<sup>42</sup> The security plan does not address the discriminatory policy of curfews on Syrian refugees, and may in fact be encouraging the continuation of ad hoc security measures by municipalities. In an atmosphere of rising distrust and discontent among host and refugee communities, leaving security at the discretion of elected local governments may heighten protection and security concerns.

Syrian refugees are also deliberately targeted around major security incidents such as the explosions in Dahye and the clashes between the Lebanese army and Sheikh Assir supporters in Saida. During the incidents in Saida in July 2013, Syrians were allegedly being targeted at checkpoints instated by Hizbullah. Two Syrian men were arrested by Hizbullah at Ain Delb checkpoint in Haret Saida on 24 July 2013. They were taken to Sayyedat Al Shuhada' in Haret Saida where they were detained for four days before being handed to the army. The army released one man, and transferred the other to the General Security as he did not have expired legal papers.

### Security from Violence and Exploitation

In terms of trends of violence affecting Syrian refugees since January 2013, ALEF has monitored both micro-level threats such as crime or host community feuds, as well as macro-level threats related to security incidents along the borders and within the country. It can also be argued that the levels of violence against Syrian nationals usually coincide with varying levels of anti-refugee sentiment by host communities.<sup>43</sup> (Please see section 4)

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<sup>41</sup> Fleming-Farell, Niamh. "Aley vigilantes enforce nighttime curfews on Syrians". 8 April 2013. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Apr-08/212903-aley-vigilantes-enforce-nighttime-curfews-on-syrians.ashx#axzz2PrAPqCUB>

<sup>42</sup> Annahar. "Charbel launched plan to include municipalities in security keeping and providing safety net". (Translated from Arabic by author). 6 September 2013. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/dUkn0x>

<sup>43</sup> Lutz, Meris. Daily Star. "Activist video targets anti-refugee sentiment". 7 February 2013. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Feb-07/205395-activist-video-targets-anti-refugee-sentiment.ashx>

Daily Star. "Tensions between host communities and refugees". 15 February 2013. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Feb-15/206542-tensions-between-host-communities-refugees.ashx#axzz2WqOlcAaN>

Syrian shelling on Lebanese borders in the North and the Bekaa continued in the course of this year, putting the lives of local and refugee communities at risk.<sup>44</sup> During a visit to Wadi Khaled in September 2013, ALEF observed damages to buildings wherein Syrian refugees reside as a result of shelling a few days earlier. We were also informed of the danger of cross-border snipers as well as landmines, which restricts all residents' movements. Isolated incidents of violence were also reported throughout the year. These include a shooting attack on a truck driver in Tripoli transporting fuel to Syria;<sup>45</sup> the shooting of two Syrian nationals by a Lebanese citizen in Kab Elias;<sup>46</sup> kidnapping of Alawite Syrians in Wadi Khaled by a local tribe etc.<sup>47</sup> Kidnappings have occurred in reaction to instances where Lebanese nationals have gone missing in Syria such as the case of the nine Lebanese hostages in Aazaz (Syria).

A trend observed by ALEF was the tendency for personal conflicts between Syrians and Lebanese (e.g. landlord-tenant; employee-employer) to escalate into a politicized confrontation, often drawing forth the involvement of individuals from official agencies and/or political parties. This trend is notable in particular in areas with a majority Shiite population and a strong presence for Hizbullah and Amal. Conflicts rapidly escalate into a pro vs. anti-regime dimension, and often puts the safety of Syrian refugees at risk. Often, the Lebanese party to the conflict invites the involvement of a local political faction or representative to resolve the conflict in his/her favor, which manifests in threatening behavior or verbal threats towards the Syrian individual. For example, ALEF compiled a case of a personal feud between a Lebanese and a Syrian in the North; the Lebanese individual involved his acquaintance in the army who subsequently sent threats by text message to the Syrian individual.

In fact, Syrian refugees are at risk in places where they are a minority (political/sectarian). In Tripoli, the ongoing conflict between Jabal Mohsen and Bab El Tebbeneh as well as the presence of a dominant Sunni population with links to the fighting in Syria create a risky atmosphere for Alawite refugees. Alawites in Tripoli have been subjected to violence, discrimination and material losses due to attacks on their shops. For example, in April, three young men sabotaged a barber shop in Al-Tal owned by Rabi' al-Sayid from Jabal Mohsen. The assailants forcefully

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<sup>44</sup> Daily Star. "Syrian shells hit north Lebanon border villages". 22 February 2013. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Feb-22/207446-syrian-shells-hit-north-lebanon-border-villages.ashx>.

<sup>45</sup> Daily Star. "Gunmen fire on Syrian fuel trucks, driver wounded". 3 April 2013. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Apr-03/212405-gunmen-fire-on-syrian-fuel-trucks-driver-wounded.ashx>

<sup>46</sup> L'Orient Le Jour. "Syriens hospitalisés" 4 April 2013. Available online at: [http://www.lorientlejour.com/category/Liban/article/808322/Syriens\\_hospitalises.html](http://www.lorientlejour.com/category/Liban/article/808322/Syriens_hospitalises.html)

<sup>47</sup> Abdallah, Robert. Al Akhbar. "Army continues search for kidnapped Syrians". (Translated from Arabic by author). 3 March 2013. Available online at: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/180498>

evacuated the owner and set fire to the shop. This had happened simultaneously with another attack on a cellular phone shop in the same area; gunfire was also used. This falls within the context of prolonged tensions and reciprocal attacks between Jabal Mohsen and Bab Al-Tabbaneh. The youth in Tabbaneh had started a campaign aimed at “Cleaning Tripoli” and burning all the shops of the “Nusayriyi” as they called the Alawites. The campaign also targeted Alawite municipality staff and merchants belonging to the Alawite community.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, a high protection concern for Syrian labourers or migrant worker men was detected in many parts of the country. Syrian labourers, some of whom have families registered with UNHCR as refugees, are subjected to discrimination by citizens and municipal police officers. They are subject to exploitation by employers who can manipulate wages and dismissals arbitrarily. Furthermore, ALEF detected cases of theft targeting Syrian migrant workers, who have little recourse to justice. Organized theft targeting Syrian labourers had also been reported early this year in the media.<sup>49</sup> During our visit to Haret Saida in September 2013, a Syrian labourer residing in the area informed ALEF that the day before we met him, his wallet had been robbed by individuals who approached him claiming to belong to a political party.

With the continuing secondary displacement of Syrian refugees within Lebanon, it is unlikely that the above-described forms of targeted violence and exploitation will cease. Schools, clinics, and other services are overwhelmed in the areas with the heaviest Syrian presence, such as the North and the Bekaa. These areas, however, have been the most accommodating to the Syrian influx due to shared political, religious, and tribal links. Should Syrian families resort more and more to other areas with less pressure on services and infrastructure and lower rental prices, stakeholders should take note of the protection concerns that have surfaced thus far, and take preventative and not just reactionary measures.

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<sup>48</sup> Boulous, Karen. Now Media. “Zo’oran try to kill Alawite staff in the municipality of Tripoli”. (Translated from Arabic by author). 1 June 2013. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/U7lo45>  
Annahar. “the battle of burning shops in Tripoli” (Translated from Arabic by author) 9 April 2013. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/FHdkvn>

<sup>49</sup> Daily Star. “Syrian refugee shot in the leg by unidentified man”. 9 February 2013. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Feb-09/205725-syrian-refugee-shot-in-the-leg-by-unidentified-man.ashx>

Daily Star. “Wave of muggings targets foreigners, man found hanged”. 8 February 2013. Available online at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Feb-08/205551-wave-of-muggings-targets-foreigners-man-found-hanged.ashx#axzz2WqOlcAaN>

### Snapshot

A Syrian refugee with a protection problem in one village in the South was offered re-location to a new residence in a different village, also in the South. He refused the new house, for fear that its location is also dominated by the same sect/political line that had been a threat to him previously. He has been searching for accommodation in a 'friendly' area of his choice but has been unable to find affordable rental prices due to the high concentration of refugees in that area.

### Safety and Access to Law Enforcement Agents

When ALEF asked Syrian refugees in Beirut, Saida, Wadi Khaled, Tripoli, Tyre, and Bar Elias whether they feel safe in Lebanon, their initial reaction was that yes they do in comparison with the conditions they left behind in Syria. However, upon further probing, refugees in each area complained of safety-related issues in accordance with the environment they live in.

For example, in the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut, Syrian refugees with affiliations to anti-regime forces in Syria felt threatened by their Shiite, pro-regime environment. Others also feared for their safety from what they referred to as "gangs", "drug-dealers", and "militia men" that dominated the camp, in the absence of the rule of law and official security forces. One family told us that even the young men of the family cannot walk through the camp safely without being subjected to some kind of harassment.

*"Syrians that are not Palestinian originally are worse off because they are completely unprotected; if I walk in the street and a little child hits me, I can't do anything to defend myself; I have to belong to a certain faction to be able to defend myself".*

As a coping mechanism, some young men, at times under the age of 18, resort to joining armed factions within the camp in order to guarantee protection for themselves and their families. ALEF was informed of a case of a sixteen-year old Syrian refugee from Douma who volunteered for Fath Al Intifada; he was armed and tasked with night-time security keeping in the camp. The extent to which camps are utilized as recruitment grounds cannot be proven with the limited allegations that ALEF collected, but there is a need for Palestinian leadership and Lebanese authorities to investigate and control the extent to which armed factions within Palestinian refugee camps are embroiled in the conflict in Syria.

In Nabaa and Bourj Hammoud, Syrian refugees informed us that they felt safe and had not previously encountered any violence or security problem. When asked who

they would resort to in case of such an incident, the families described an absence of official security forces in their immediate surroundings. Due to lack of awareness of judicial procedures compounded by a sense of fear, families would merely resort to personal Lebanese contacts if they have them. For example, one refugee informed us that he has a friend in Hizbullah, who helps him in case he needs anything legally. Others resort to local community centers, especially religious-based organizations, which provide a safety net particularly for members of the same faith/sect. This trend was also observed in the Bekaa, in the towns of Bar Elias and Majd El Anjar.

Meanwhile in Tripoli as well as towns in Wadi Khaled, the same 'self-protection' trend was noted. Refugees do not trust or rely on official security forces to provide them with safety. In Wadi Khaled, refugees informed us that they are effectively 'on their own' and need to fend for themselves when it comes to protection. In some neighborhoods in Tripoli, refugees rely on a key, influential community member who facilitates protection for the community through his connections with local political parties, armed factions, religious figures/groups etc. Similarly, in the Bekaa and Rashaya, religious groups provide protection to vulnerable refugees. However, the extent to which this protection covers gender-based violence and more 'sensitive' protection issues is questionable as will be discussed in the section: Gender Issues and GBV.

### Arbitrary Detention and/or Torture

In detention, Syrians are subjected to the systematic torture and ill-treatment that all prisoners and detainees in Lebanon face. Torture is practiced during arrest, during investigation, and during detention, according to NGO sources. The arrest process often involves verbal abuse and humiliation at the least, especially when the army or army police are involved.

Syrians currently present in Lebanese prisons are either detained for crimes or illegal/irregular stay. Documentation-related arrests increase and decrease sporadically but there are no systematic arrests.<sup>50</sup> Most often, those that are detained for documentation reasons are also detained for other crime-related reasons.<sup>51</sup> ALEF was unable to collect accurate figures although estimates that have been previously announced place the number at around 6,000 detainees.<sup>52</sup>

Arbitrary Detention occurs when Syrian refugees are obliged to stay in prisons or the General Security detention center after having completed their sentence; delays in

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Ms. Julie Khoury, AJEM. 28 August 2013; Interview with Ms. Marie Daunay, CLDH. 9 September 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Minutes of Panel Discussion organised by Carnegie Middle East Center: "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Impact and Recommendations". 25 June 2013, Beirut.

transferring inmates who completed their sentence from ISF prisons to the General Security also cause a situation of arbitrary detention.<sup>53</sup> On this allegation, UNHCR has commented that it is not aware of arbitrary detention of Syrians and its detention monitoring team confirms that in general, Syrians *are* released upon completion of their sentence. Another point of contradictory information found by ALEF is the issue of legal assistance. Whereas UNHCR holds that Syrian inmates receive legal assistance on the same basis as non-Syrian persons of concern, local NGOs monitoring places of detention have noted that Syrian refugees are not offered legal assistance systematically.<sup>54</sup>

Government policy towards 'illegal' entry or stay has not been commensurate with international customary law, which is binding even if Lebanon is not party to the 1951 Convention. The very notion that a refugee should be arrested, detained, and prosecuted for 'illegal stay' goes against international refugee law. Regardless of the way they sought refuge, Syrian refugees must be considered as such and should be protected from the legal prosecution that applies in normal circumstances. Rather than conduct periodic crackdowns, the Lebanese government should improve reception, registration, and management of Syrian refugees.

UNHCR estimates that 250,000 refugees out of the expected one million by the end of the year will face legal issues regarding their legal status. This amounts to 25% of the refugee population, who will probably be unable to renew papers, and thus face protection risks such as restriction of movement and thereby access to services.<sup>55</sup>

It has also been reported that during detention, Syrians are subjected to racism and politically-motivated abuse. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Syrian detainee's vulnerability to this kind of treatment depends on the area of detention (e.g. pro or anti-Syrian regime area). This is especially the case when arrests are related to crimes linked with the conflict in Syria.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> CLDH (2013). Arbitrary Detention and Torture in Lebanon. Available online at: <https://docs.google.com/a/cldh-lebanon.org/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=Y2xkaC1sZWJhbm9uLm9yZ3xjbGRofGd4OjQ5YzYwOGM4YzY5NjEwMDc>

<sup>54</sup> Minutes of ALEF, UNHCR meeting on 20.11.2013. Interview with Ms. Marie Daunay, CLDH. 9 September 2013.

<sup>55</sup> UNHCR (2013). Syria Regional Response Plan- January to December 2013. Available online at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Ms. Marie Daunay, CLDH. 9 September 2013.

## Gender Issues and GBV

The impact of the Syrian refugee crisis takes on different dimensions once examined from a gendered lens. In addition to the protection concerns mentioned thus far in this report, Syrian refugee women and girls face additional gender-specific risks. Previous assessments have revealed that types of gender-based violence (GBV) faced by Syrian women and girls in both Syria and Lebanon include sexual, physical, verbal, and psychological violence. At the same time, the changing gender roles within the family, the lack of opportunities for livelihood, and the impact of violations experienced in Syria have impacted Syrian refugee men, compounding feelings of powerlessness and helplessness.<sup>57</sup>

Reports and field research confirm the high vulnerability of women and children to domestic violence in almost all areas and living arrangements (urban; rented apartments; collective shelters).<sup>58</sup> Overcrowded conditions and lack of privacy exacerbate psychological pressure, and render women and children more prone to sexual or physical harassment. This is made worse in collective shelters and the informal tented settlements in rural areas, which are not equipped for gender-sensitive safety (e.g. lighting; distribution points; privacy).<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, UNFPA reported in 2012 that an estimated 10% of Lebanese and refugee women have subjected to some form of SGBV.<sup>60</sup>

Adolescent girls are confined within the home for 'protection' from the risks they may face in the street or during distribution of assistance. Reports have confirmed that early marriages, whereas previously common in parts of Syria, have increased for young girls in Lebanon, particularly for protection reasons. Furthermore, Syrian refugee women have resorted to 'survival sex' as a source of much-needed income. Informants in the Bekaa and the North confirmed the prevalence of this phenomenon in the villages; while ALEF compiled two cases of Syrian refugee women resorting to 'survival sex' to pay off debts, and provide livelihood for their families. It is not necessarily the case that this occurs within women-headed households, as there are some instances when the husbands, unable to work or find work, urge their wives to engage in survival sex as a desperate measure.

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with Mrs. Rola El Masri, Abaad. 17 September 2013.

<sup>58</sup> See for example: Abaad and Oxfam (2013) "Shifting Sands: Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon". September 2013. Available online at: <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/rr-shifting-sands-lebanon-syria-refugees-gender-030913-en.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> International Rescue Committee. "Syrian Women and Girls facing ongoing threats and humiliation". GBV Rapid Assessment. August 2012. Available online at: [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=900](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=900)

<sup>60</sup> UNHCR (2013). Syria Regional Response Plan- January to December 2013. Available online at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

*“Our neighbor’s 14 year old daughter was spotted once by a man who lives nearby and is 15 years older than her. He went to the family to ask for her for marriage; the family didn’t want and she refused by he kept on pressuring them that in the end they married her off”.*

Mental health problems related to the war in Syria as well as living conditions in Lebanon have harmed domestic relationships, and the increased pressure and sense of helplessness among men has increased their resorting to physical, verbal, and sexual violence with their wives and children. Since their arrival in Lebanon, Syrian refugee women have also had to take on new leading roles within the family, including searching and collecting aid assistance. During our visits to families, it was the women that automatically acted as spokespersons for the family and community. Their husbands and sons have been unable to find jobs in a volatile and highly saturated labour market for semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. Meanwhile, they are responsible for not only taking care of the children but also ensuring they receive assistance for the mental health problems they have incurred as a result of their circumstances. One refugee women we spoke to broke into tears as she told us how her son has tried to kill himself involuntarily several times.

*“The children are so restless, they are so bored and can’t leave the house and they are being a lot more difficult. Even my husband is a lot more irritable now and he’s changed with me even. For me, I don’t have anyone to talk to when I am feeling down”.*

ALEF was not able to verify allegations regarding rape and molestation in collective shelters because of the difficulty of accessing the sites and the alleged victims. Based on secondary information, ALEF found that where there are alleged victims of SGBV, they do not resort to justice or services due to cultural taboos. Even where services are available, SGBV cases are usually detected indirectly through other forms of services such as health check-ups.<sup>61</sup>

ALEF expresses concern over ‘local’ forms of protection that are afforded to refugees by religious groups in certain areas. Sometimes, it is members of local NGOs, community-based organisations, or religious/community leaders themselves that contribute to stigmatising gender-based violations. There is no guarantee that a woman or girl who is referred to a local community or religious-based organisation is afforded protection in line with international standards. For example, from a traditional religious perspective, protection of women amounts to marrying them in order to protect their honor. There is a high risk that these marriages are forced, and if not, the woman’s financial, psychological, and livelihood vulnerability is manipulated in order to achieve her consent. In this regard, ALEF calls for capacity

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<sup>61</sup> Interviews with Restart (22/8/2013); AND (22/8/2013); Arc En Ciel (21/8/2013); Himaya (21/8/2013); Caritas (17/9/2013)



building of local activists and leaders on gender-sensitive protection and women's rights and heightened monitoring efforts on a local scale.

### **The Case for Preventive Protection**

M. is a young married woman who moved 6 months ago to Beirut with her two young children, leaving her husband behind in Syria. She came to the neighbourhood in Beirut to be close to her old sick father. For a dim, window-less single room with unhealthy levels of humidity, she is paying 250,000 L.L., with help from her husband who works in Syria as well as a network of relatives and donations around her. Her landlord has accepted repeated delays in the rent as she struggles to gather the money monthly. Her biggest fears are being kicked out from her home into the street and her biggest problem is that "there is nobody here for me". There is only a curtain that separates her from the crowded alleyway, unless she blocks the air out and closes her big metal door. She has been subjected to foul language by young men in the streets. She says young men started to congregate outside her house once they saw that she is a young woman and alone. For protection, she resorted to other Syrian families to admonish the young men. In a risky neighbourhood, M. has no other protection other than a phone number from UNHCR that she can call in case one day, one of those young men should trespass the curtain that separates her from the street.

S. came to Lebanon a year and a half ago with her children. All she knows about her husband is that he has been in detention in Syria for two years now. Given the conditions that S. found herself in, and the lack of opportunities for livelihood, she resorted to survival sex to provide for her children. One day, S. went to collect assistance from a local NGO; the Lebanese aid worker kept her on the side and once her turn came, he told her to come back at night to collect it.

H. is a recent divorcee with one child. After her divorce, without a source of livelihood and protection, H. was desperate for help. In her time of need, she was visited by 2 men who introduced themselves as a Salafist group from a nearby village. H. did not trust the men but needed all the help she can get. In their subsequent correspondence and second visit, they told H. that they cannot offer her financial assistance with her rent but they can offer her accommodation in their residential compound in the nearby village. H. had heard before about cases of 'jihad marriages' in that village, and refused their offer for fear that the same would happen to her and her daughter.

## Access to Social Services: Health and Education

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) first granted Syrian refugees access to public schools for the school year 2011-2012, following advocacy efforts by UN agencies and international and national NGOs. UNHCR/UNICEF and partners for example supported the enrolment of over 20,000 children for the first school shift, and are now looking to process a waiting list of 30,000 students for the second shifts, which will be open in schools across the country.<sup>62</sup>

Although the MEHE has been engaged with stakeholders and relevant UN agencies on a policy making level, on the ground, financial, administrative and logistical hurdles are still preventing thousands of children from accessing education. Currently, it has been estimated that about 30% of Syrian refugee children residing in Lebanon are attending schools.<sup>63</sup> For those that *are* attending schools, another set of problems arise in relation to retention rates. In July 2012, UNICEF reported that dropout rates among Syrian refugees are twice the national drop out average in Lebanon.<sup>64</sup>

Findings of previous reports,<sup>65</sup> confirmed by ALEF's field research, have summarized problems in the educational domain as follows:

- Language difficulties
- Inability to afford registration and other school fees (books, materials, transportation to & from schools)
- Lack of space in schools (quota in public schools...)
- Discrimination
- Violence/ corporal punishment
- Absence of identification papers/legal proof of previous schooling
- Lack of maintenance of school buildings and inadequate infrastructure
- Inability to afford remedial schooling

The problems facing integration of Syrian refugee children into the educational system are multi-dimensional. Firstly, the rapid increase of the number of school-aged children has strained policy responses from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) who claimed that in a period of one year, school-aged children to be integrated went from 1,500 (2011-2012) to 30,000 (2012-2013). Although the public schooling system in Lebanon can absorb up to 450,000 students, while only 37% of children in Lebanon are in public schools, this has not made the

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<sup>62</sup> Minutes of ALEF, UNHCR meeting on 20.11.2013

<sup>63</sup> Minutes of Discussion forum organised by LCPS, Centre for Lebanese Studies, and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: "Towards Improving Access to Education for Syrian Refugees". 30 July 2013, Crowne Plaza, Beirut.

<sup>64</sup> UNICEF and Save the Children (2012). Education Rapid Needs Assessment for Displaced Syrian Children: In Schools, Community and Safe Spaces. July 2012. Available online at: [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php) [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=535](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=535)

<sup>65</sup> For example see World Vision (2012) Robbed of Childhood, Running from War.

<http://wvi.org/sites/default/files/Running%20from%20War%20FINAL%20UPDATED.pdf>

challenge easier. Public schools that are more or less empty and able to enrol many Syrian refugee children are located in geographic areas that do not correspond with demand. The biggest demand is found in the North where purportedly in some areas Syrian refugee children make up 90% of the students in schools.<sup>66</sup> In places with high demand, such as the town of Aarsal, public schools have had to open double-shift classes, with teachers and staff working mainly on a volunteer basis in the afternoon with Syrian refugee children. Moreover, it is important to note that the North of Lebanon has historically been neglected and the educational sector is not maintained. In some places, school buildings amount to the first floor of a residential building, and in most cases building standards are inadequate and risky.

The MEHE has developed consultation and planning mechanisms such as an internal committee on education during emergencies, which has been mandated with developing the ministry's policy on Syrian refugees. The MEHE however has complained of lack of funds and adequate assistance from UN agencies. From the UN perspective, the challenge of funding cross-cuts issues beyond education, considering that the crisis is entering its third year while emergency budgets are designed from short-term responses only.

On the ground, educational interventions are being carried out by an array of actors, including local and international NGOs, donor agencies, and the government. The multiplicity of actors and lack of coordination has been cited as a major challenge in achieving positive impact. More importantly, Lebanese actors have complained of donor approaches that exclude Lebanese children from interventions, which creates a tension between Syria and Lebanese communities, especially in rural and impoverished areas. Furthermore, projects that are being implemented by international agencies and donors do not always correspond to the realities on the ground, especially when they are "ready-made" as described by local actors.<sup>67</sup>

Among the solutions that have been proposed and implemented is the Accelerated Learning Program developed in conjunction with UNESCO and partners; this gives younger Syrian students that chance to "catch up" on the curriculum more rapidly. This program is easier for younger children whereas integration becomes harder in the intermediate and higher levels. School dropout rates have already been a major problem in the Lebanese schooling system, and is reportedly just as bad if not worse for Syrian refugee teenagers who either cannot cope with the new curriculum, or need to drop out to get married or support their families financially.

Corporal punishment is another problem, already endemic in the Lebanese educational system. Violence in schools among peers as well as from teachers to students has been reported as a major problem that school directors are having difficulty dealing with. A ministerial memorandum dating back to 2001 prohibits use

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<sup>66</sup> Minutes of Discussion forum organised by LCPS, Centre for Lebanese Studies, and Konrad Adenaur Stiftung: "Towards Improving Access to Education for Syrian Refugees". 30 July 2013, Crowne Plaza, Beirut.

<sup>67</sup> Minutes of Discussion forum organised by LCPS, Centre for Lebanese Studies, and Konrad Adenaur Stiftung: "Towards Improving Access to Education for Syrian Refugees". 30 July 2013, Crowne Plaza, Beirut.

of violence by teachers for disciplinary purposes but monitoring is low and prevention often depends on the involvement and personal initiative of school directors and parents through traditional conflict resolution.

Finally, the problem of documentation papers and proof of previous schooling is preventing the integration of refugee children into schools. The MEHE is adamant on obtaining legal papers before registering children. Currently, evaluation of educational level of the child is left to the initiative of the school directors, who determine what grade a child is admitted into. Syrian refugees are also barred from taking official examinations, although an exceptional measure was taken for 350 students this year after advocacy efforts by UNHCR. The results of the examinations however remain pending until documentation papers are obtained. According to UNHCR, most of the refugees involved were able to obtain the required documents from their home country while the rest were unsuccessful despite attempts by UNHCR to coordinate with the Syrian embassy. ALEF was informed by UNHCR that cross-border advocacy of this kind was deemed too sensitive after consultation with UNHCR-Syria and therefore this role has been passed on to UNICEF.<sup>68</sup>

ALEF's interviews with families and informants in Beirut, the North, Bekaa, and South revealed that most families value education for their children and would like to register their children but cannot for several reasons including: no space in schools nearby; distance of schools that do have space from the place of residence; costs of registration, books, and other fees; the difficulty of the curriculum and the inability of their children to integrate and learn in the Lebanese system. The French language has been a major hurdle for families that have been able to register some of their children. Parents with no educational background and/or no knowledge of French are unable to help their children cope and cannot afford to provide them with remedial classes. Some of the families we visited in Beirut informed us that they have been able to adapt to this challenge through the help of neighbors and when the mothers themselves have put in the effort to learn French. In most cases however, refugee families are living in an overcrowded and confined space, the mother faces enormous pressures, especially with smaller children who do not attend school, and so Syrian students do not have the space and support they need to integrate properly. One of the families we met in Nabaa, Beirut informed us that their eldest daughter, 8 years of age, is registered in a nearby semi-private schools, which she hates to attend. The child has been subjected to corporal punishment by her teachers who punish her for her inability to read in French and keep up with her peers. "She is always asking mama is it the weekend yet?"

One of the biggest fears that the families had for their children is the risk that they will not be educated. In response to the problems their children face in accessing quality education in Lebanon, some families have opted to sending their children back to Syria to live with relatives in order to receive better education, which denies them the right to family unity and puts their children in harm way.

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<sup>68</sup> Minutes of ALEF, UNHCR meeting on 20.11.2013

Families interviewed by ALEF have also cited health as a concern; fearing that their children may one day fall ill and require hospitalization or expensive treatment. Due to the severe funding shortages, UNHCR had to scale down its co-payment from 85% of care cost to 75% in April 2013.<sup>69</sup>

Families reported expenditure on health services as a major strain, especially purchase of medicine which is expensive and usually in low supply. It should be noted that Syrian refugees were used to a free public health care system in Syria, unlike the privatized system in Lebanon, which helps to interpret the dissatisfaction that some Syrian refugees express when it comes to accessing health care in Lebanon.

*“They make things difficult for you; you have to go to a doctor and pay diagnosis then you get a referral from the doctor in order to be accepted into the hospital; what if I don’t the cost of a diagnosis? I don’t have money for x rays”. (Beirut)*

Persons with chronic diseases are not covered by UNHCR; families that ALEF met with members who suffer from chronic diseases have had to struggle in the collection of disparate donations to cover treatment. Families’ savings have been depleted due to for example operations that they had to cover themselves for family members.

*“Giving birth is the biggest problem we are facing because most hospitals nearby are not letting pregnant women in without proving that they can pay for the delivery. We usually either ask {local aid worker}, or a sheikh to help us out in this situation”. (Tripoli)*

In places like Saida, we found a cross-cutting satisfaction with the health services provided by the two clinics contracted with UNHCR to provide health care at a reduced cost. However, some families informed ALEF that they are unable to cover even the small clinic cost, especially if they have many children that require health care regularly.

It has been reported that in December 2012, Syrian refugees made up 40% of all primary health care visits in Lebanon. The strain on the health care sector has resulted in shortages of medicine and healthcare in general impacting both Syrian refugees and the Lebanese population.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Minutes of ALEF, UNHCR meeting on 20.11.2013

<sup>70</sup> World Bank. “Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian conflict”. September 2013. Available online at: <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/LB%20ESIA%20Fact%20Sheet%20English.pdf>

### III. A Double-Edged Crisis: Impact of the Refugee Influx on Host Communities

The World Bank in cooperation with partners (IMF, EU, UN Agencies...) has conducted an Economic and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) of the Syrian Crisis in Lebanon, at the request of Lebanese government.<sup>71</sup> The assessment has revealed alarming economic and social trends as a result of the Syrian crisis. Some of the findings are summarized below:

- The government's cumulative loss of revenues between 2012 and 2014 is estimated at \$1.1. Billion, with an expanded fiscal deficit.
- Lebanon's GDP growth is expected to decrease by 2.9% each year.
- Between 220,000 and 324,000 Lebanese are expected to be unemployed by 2014.
- Demand for water and sanitation infrastructure rose by 7%,
- Production of solid waste has more than doubled, which has led to contamination of water resources and spreading of disease.<sup>72</sup>

Other reports have also pointed out a fall in wages, for example wages in the agricultural sector have decreased by 50% in the past two years.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, housing and food security has also been threatened, with increased prices and lower supply.

In terms of demographic factors, in some villages in the North and the Bekaa, the number of Syrian refugees is beginning to exceed the number of Lebanese residents. According to the MOSA, the number of Syrian refugees exceeds Lebanese in 30% of municipalities.<sup>74</sup> UNHCR has predicted that by the end of the year 1 in 5 residents in population live under the poverty line, with 8% being extremely poor (living on less than \$2.4 a day). The regions that host the highest numbers of refugees are the poorest. 38% of the poor and 46% of extremely poor Lebanese live in the North of

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<sup>71</sup> World Bank. Feature Story. "Lebanon bears the brunt of economic and social spillovers of the Syrian conflict". 24 September 2013. Available online at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/09/24/lebanon-bears-the-brunt-of-the-economic-and-social-spillovers-of-the-syrian-conflict>

<sup>72</sup> World Bank. "Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian conflict". September 2013. Available online at: <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/LB%20ESIA%20Fact%20Sheet%20English.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> International Rescue Committee. "Reaching the Breaking Point: An IRC briefing note on Syrian refugees in Lebanon". June 2013. Available online at: <http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/Lebanon%20Policy%20Paper,%20Final%20-%20June%202013.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> Minutes of Panel Discussion organised by Carnegie Middle East Center: "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Impact and Recommendations". 25 June 2013, Beirut.

Lebanon.<sup>75</sup> 170,000 Lebanese are expected to fall into poverty by 2014 as a result of the Syrian crisis, while around one million will become poorer than they already are.<sup>76</sup>

Lebanese unskilled and seasonal labourers as well as widowed women with more than three children are the poorest and most vulnerable.<sup>77</sup> As can be seen, the vulnerability criteria that UNHCR and partners have utilized for targeting assistance to Syrian refugees are very much similar to the vulnerability characteristics of the Lebanese poor.<sup>78</sup> For this reason, and perhaps for the first time in history, the Syrian refugee crisis has highlighted the contradictory rationale underpinning development vs. emergency assistance. Managing the refugee crisis is arguably no longer solely about meeting the needs of the refugee population, but also meeting the development and poverty-reduction needs of the host country.

In Lebanon's case, UNHCR's mandate is too restricted to provide sustainable solutions. More than ever, what is needed is better coordination between donors, proactive leadership by the Lebanese government, and the effective involvement of UN and development agencies. In the continued governance vacuum that has ensued since the resignation of Prime Minister Mikati in March 2013, the ability of the government to step up and take responsibility for the deteriorating conditions of its own population is unlikely. For this reason, diplomatic and conflict resolution efforts on a global scale by regional and international actors are imperative.

According to government sources, 45 municipalities have been identified as being most at risk of conflict as a result of the socio-economic impact of the Syrian crisis. Immediate risk mitigation interventions are needed in these locations, with support targeting both refugee and host communities.<sup>79</sup> ALEF compiled a series of cases in Nabatieh, Jezzine, Shouf, Tyre, Saida, Metn, and Wadi Khaled that demonstrate the impact of tensions between host and refugee communities on safety and security. Below we summarize our conclusions:

- Tension is evident in formal and informal settings, as Lebanese people are frustrated with the social services being provided solely to the Syrian community.
- Frustration by the Lebanese community has resulted in violent confrontation with Syrian nationals, particularly Syrian males and migrant workers.

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<sup>75</sup> UNDP. "The Millenium Development Goals in Lebanon". Available online at: <http://www.undp.org.lb/WhatWeDo/MDGs.cfm>

<sup>76</sup> World Bank. "Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian conflict". September 2013. Available online at: <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/LB%20ESIA%20Fact%20Sheet%20English.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> UNDP. "The Millenium Development Goals in Lebanon". Available online at: <http://www.undp.org.lb/WhatWeDo/MDGs.cfm>

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Mr. Ramzi Naaman, Council of Ministers. (11/09/2013)

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

- Lebanese residing in areas with a high concentration of Syrian refugees reported fear of kidnapping and crime, especially in the evening and at night, which has restricted movement of residents after certain hours.
- Even for Lebanese who were previously sympathetic to the humanitarian plight of Syrian refugees, competition for jobs has left them resentful and frustrated. In some areas, this has resulted in the looting, beating, or shutting down of commercial establishments owned or operated by Syrians.
- Syrian refugees expressed significant disillusionment with the discrimination they face from Lebanese on a daily basis, with the recurrent sentiment “I didn’t know Lebanese people hated us this much”.

Several assessments and opinion surveys have been conducted in the course of 2013, which have also confirmed increasing levels of tensions between refugee and host communities.<sup>80</sup> For example, a survey conducted by FAFO and IFI at AUB revealed that three out of four Lebanese believe that Syrian refugees pose a threat to national security. Meanwhile, seven out of ten believed that the UN should establish refugee camps for Syrian refugees. According to the policy brief, “the initial Lebanese hospitality towards Syrian refugees has become strained due to the increased competition for scarce employment, particularly in the unskilled sector”, with youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds being the most harmed.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See for example: World Vision, World Bank, FAFO, IRC.

<sup>81</sup>IFI-AUB, Fafo. “Policy Brief: Lebanese Contradictory Responses to Syrian refugees include Stress, Hospitality, Resentment” June 2013. Available online at: [http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/policy\\_memo/20130705ifi\\_memo\\_Fafo\\_IFI\\_Policy\\_brief\\_Syrians\\_in\\_Lebanon.pdf](http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/policy_memo/20130705ifi_memo_Fafo_IFI_Policy_brief_Syrians_in_Lebanon.pdf)



## Snapshots

In Kab Elias in the Bekaa, local residents commonly refer to tented settlements wherein Syrian refugees reside as “*musta’amarat*”, which translated from Arabic connotes the settlements being built by Israel on Palestinian lands. This terminology reflects the resentment that the host community has engendered in Kab Elias and surrounding villages over time.

An eye-witness to a street feud in Saida on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 recounted to ALEF that a fight had broken out spontaneously between a Syrian national and a local Lebanese man for unknown reasons. The Syrian man who was involved was disabled and unable to walk. During the verbal brawl the Lebanese man shouted to the Syrian “you are disabled you are not even a human being, all Syrians are animals”.

In Beirut on 16 September 2013, a woman’s purse was robbed in the Sin El Fil neighborhood. She was left with a bleeding ear and an injured right arm as a result of the attack. Residents called the Red Cross and the municipal police arrived to the scene. As the woman was being aided by the Red Cross, her son arrived armed with a pistol and was shouting “who robbed you, who did this to you?” He disappeared and showed up a few minutes later with a random Syrian man he grabbed off the street. Gripping him by the neck, he forced his head on the floor near his mother’s feet and pointed the pistol to his head asking his mother “is it this one?” The Syrian man was crying and pleading “how could I have robbed her if I am still standing here?” The municipal police eventually calmed the Lebanese man down and convinced him to let the Syrian man go.

The fear of the Syrian refugee crisis developing into a situation of prolonged displacement compounds fears of policy makers, aid agencies, and the general public in Lebanon. Threats can be categorized as direct and indirect threats as follows:

| <b>Direct Threats</b>   | <b>Indirect Threats</b>  |
|---|--|
| Infiltration of armed combatants and ex-combatants  | Host community economic and social grievances  |
| Spill-over of the Syrian conflict (e.g. fighting in Tripoli; explosions in Southern suburb of Beirut) | Social unrest as a result of economic deprivation                                    |
| Cross-border shelling   | Competition for local resources  |
| Retaliatory kidnappings   | Attribution of crime and disease to a specific group                                 |
| Lebanese armed groups' involvement in fighting in Syria   | Some political and religious motivated driven donations from certain donor countries |
| Delays in formation of cabinet in Lebanon and controversial security sector appointments              | Opportunities to mobilize pre-existing grievances (e.g. sectarian tensions)          |
| Landmines and unexploded ordinance  | Reduced basic services as a result of infrastructural strain                         |

## Conflict Assessment Case Study: Akkar

A number of interviewees on both an official and grassroots level repeated to ALEF the same sentiment regarding Akkar: “*Akkar after the Syrian refugee crisis will not be the Akkar it was before the refugee crisis*”. It is well-known that Akkar has been historically deprived of government services, with the highest levels of poverty in the country.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, concern for living conditions in Akkar was more or less restricted to a limited circle of service providers, development actors and to a certain extent, governmental cash assistance programs. The impetus to solve Akkar’s problems was never that strong, mainly due to the lack of accountability and equitable development and comprehensive development policies by the government but also due to alternative donor agendas, which mainly focused on conflict-affected areas in recent years (e.g. post 2006 war).

The very first arrivals of Syrian refugees in 2011 were concentrated in Wadi Khaled, which is now the oldest site of humanitarian operations by UNHCR and partners. For two years, international agencies have maintained a presence in the region; new local NGOs formed, while old ones managed to raise unprecedented amounts of funding. With the increased media coverage and local research through refugee-related assessments, the socio-economic deprivation of Akkar could no longer be ignored. This wave of increased knowledge among the donor and NGO communities, trickled through the media to the general public, arguably has the power to increase both top-down and bottom-up accountability. The myriad recommendations sent back by consultants to headquarters in Beirut and Europe have managed to shift funding policies towards targeting host communities *as well* as refugees.

There is a risk that in the long-run, shifting donor priorities and the ceasing of emergency attention may leave Akkar back in the dark. However, as will be explained below, enough socio-economic and political trends have surfaced to make a strong case for the

### What breaks resilience?

ALEF has collected numerous accounts of Lebanese-Syrian tensions that manifested into protection problems. Nonetheless, what must not be overlooked are the numerous other cases of generosity and humanitarian treatment, which have allowed the two communities to co-exist for this long. For example, many Syrian refugees informed us that despite their repeated delays in paying rent, their landlords have been very understanding.

One Syrian refugee, A.H., told us that his landlord was so accommodating to his family’s financial situation that he did not ask for the rent for four months. This quickly changed however, when A.H. became embroiled in a personal conflict that spread throughout the village, inviting political/sectarian reactions.

Shortly after, his landlord politely asked A.H.’s family to evacuate the house within four days, not because of the rent, but because he was pressured to do so by a local political group. The Lebanese landlord preferred to steer clear of trouble, prioritising his personal safety and his loyalty to fellow Lebanese over his humanitarian impulse.

<sup>82</sup> Mada Association. *Forgotten Akkar: Socio-Economic Reality of the Akkar Region*. January 2008. Available online at: [http://www.mada.org.lb/resources/Forgotten\\_Akkar.pdf](http://www.mada.org.lb/resources/Forgotten_Akkar.pdf)

continued and enhanced development of Akkar, if not for social justice considerations then at least for conflict prevention purposes.

Considering the figures of economic decline projected by the World Bank (please see section above), Akkar will be hit the hardest, particularly its youth. As brought forth in numerous studies, alienated, unemployed youth with little opportunities to fulfill their ambitions are one of the key sources of social and political instability.<sup>83</sup> As will be explained below, this kind of unrest in Lebanon also takes on a national security dimension in light of the radical Islamic ideologies that find a strong-hold in many areas of the North.

The residents of Akkar have been profoundly changed due to their exposure to the humanitarian operations that have disseminated throughout their villages since 2011. As a local informant told us, “for the first time, residents realized that collective organising to achieve demands was possible, because there is someone out there that responds”. Awakened to their neglected rights, it has been argued that the disillusionment of the residents of Akkar has been given a voice, via the Syrian refugee crisis. More recently, the incident of the drowning of 17 Lebanese immigrants headed from Akkar to Australia received widespread national and international attention,<sup>84</sup> further highlighting the shortcomings of the Lebanese government.<sup>85</sup>

In the past, warnings of the rise of extremism in the North have been ignored. For example, during the Nahr El Bared conflict in 2007, 8 and 14 March politicians dismissed Fath El Islam as a foreign intruder. Most ignored the roots of the group, and the extent to which its cadres were predominantly Lebanese coming from the North. Many of these men resorted to radical options as a result of unemployment and the absence of livelihood opportunities.<sup>86</sup> Recent statements by politicians in the North and media reports have all revealed that training and mobilization of radical Islamist groups in the North is spreading in relation to the Syrian conflict.<sup>87</sup> This shows that conditions have not changed; the military campaigns that eliminated Fath El Islam and more recently, Sheikh Assir and supporters in Saida, achieved a short-term security objective at a high cost, while the socio-economic root causes of the conflict remain unaddressed.

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<sup>83</sup> Dhillon, N.; Yousef, T. (ed.) Generation in Waiting: Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East. 2009 Brookings Institution Press.

<sup>84</sup> Al Akhbar English. “Lebanese migrants drown in accident between Indonesia and Australia”. 27 September 2013. Available online at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/several-lebanese-migrants-drown-attempt-sail-australia>

<sup>85</sup> Fisk, Robert. The Independent. “A tragedy off the coast of Indonesia that should shame Lebanon’s neglectful government”. 7 October 2013. Available online at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/a-tragedy-off-the-coast-of-indonesia-that-should-shame-lebanons-neglectful-government-8862394.html>

<sup>86</sup> See for example analysis by media analysis on clashes between army and Sheikh Assir supporters: <http://www.saidacity.net/NewsPaper.php?NewsPaperID=128860&Action=Details>

<sup>87</sup> Annahar. “Al Ahdab: Syrian Intelligence creates in Tripoli groups like Al Nusra and Fath Al Islam”. (Translated from Arabic by author). 30 September 2013. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/Odf1pn>

By compounding the economic difficulties that Akkar faces, the Syrian refugee crisis arguably heightens the risk of conflict. Besides the direct risks incurred by residents due to their proximity to the fighting in Syria, the host communities in Akkar face indirect risks of conflict in the form of 'local grievances'. According to Milner, "grievance threats are rooted in understandings of distributive justice... 'grievance' refers to an individual's or a group's perception of 'unfair distribution'."<sup>88</sup> Grievances related to economic deprivation are thus proven to mobilize group identity. In the case of Akkar, group identities are prone to being mobilized around extreme ideologies, therefore, it is not unlikely that this identity should take on militant forms. In fact, militarization is made more likely due to the abundance of unregulated weapons and the porous borders with Syria. Furthermore, "when a goal or objective is blocked, frustration ensues and is often manifested in aggression." In the absence of communication channels between citizen and government, collective articulation of demands by host communities are more likely to be aggressive and violent. The repeated kidnappings and blocking of roads by local residents in Akkar throughout the year is but one manifestation of frustration in the absence of justice, rule of law, and accountability.

What makes the above conditions particularly dangerous at a time of heightened tension between refugee and host communities is that economic conditions are deteriorating and Syrian refugees can become more and more the scapegoat and the target for release of frustration by Lebanese communities. As can already be noted in social trends, the Syrians become the "others", the ones that are killing, stealing, spreading diseases, and taking jobs and husbands. This is applicable not only in Akkar, but even more so in other areas of the country.

Even though shared political and religious links between hosts and refugees has created a buffer in Akkar over the past two years, evidence from ALEF's field visits shows numerous incidents of Lebanese attacking Syrian individuals or looting their shops. This can be interpreted by looking at the worsening economic conditions. As time passed, religion or ideology were no longer the only determinants of group affiliation. Economic priorities overshadowed political sympathies, and as a result, group identity shifted. This was made worse by previous donor and humanitarian policies, which excluded the Lebanese community from assistance. The end result from the perspective of the host community was: "they" [Syrian refugees] are the ones that are getting assistance, while "we" [deprived residents of this village] are the ones being excluded.

As Milner brought forth: *"...the narrower one's conception of one's community, the narrower will be the scope of situations in which one's actions will be governed by considerations of justice"*.

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<sup>88</sup> Milner, James. Refugee Studies Centre. "Sharing the Security Burden: Towards the Convergence of Refugee Protection and State Security". RSC Working Paper No. 4. May 2000. P. 18 Available online at: [http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/working-papers-folder\\_contents/RSCworkingpaper4.pdf](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/working-papers-folder_contents/RSCworkingpaper4.pdf)

## IV. Paving the way for policy solutions

### Options for Protection and Crisis Management

UNCHR's dual mandate of protection and assistance is outlined in Chapter 2 of the 1950 Statute of UNHCR, which also states that these responsibilities are to be shared by the international community. The three durable solutions pursued by UNHCR in refugee contexts are: local integration, resettlement, and repatriation. In Lebanon, lawmakers and political parties, the composition of the society and the economic situation complicate the option of local integration. This is evident in the usage of the term 'displaced' as opposed to 'refugee', which aims to reinforce the temporary nature of the situation. A statement by an official at the MOSA reflects this atmosphere, "We are not creating an alternative home. Lebanon will not be the 'comfortable option'".<sup>89</sup>

The ExCom Conclusion on Protracted Refugee Situations issued in 2009 specifies a protracted refugee situation as one that lasts for more than five years and is concerned with 25,000 or more refugees. In Lebanon, some Syrians have been displaced for 3 years now, particularly in the region of Wadi Khaled in Akkar, while numbers are expected to reach well over one million. Studies have shown that half of the civil wars around the world last between two and fifteen years while 70% of refugees remain displaced for more than five years after civil wars. In the case of Syria, a deteriorated economy and the destruction of over one million housing units means that the refugee crisis will likely continue even after a cessation of violence.<sup>90</sup>

As for resettlement, UNHCR has only been able to secure for a limited number of refugees, with protection problems, resettlement to a third country. During our visits to Syrian refugees in various parts of the country, we were asked repeatedly about resettlement options. Many refugees informed us that they are seeking to move to Turkey because it provides a better option for safety and livelihood, while others implored that we advocate with foreign embassies the option of resettling them. The international community and neighbouring states continue to block the option of resettlement, and a change in policy in the near future is unlikely.

In the past UNHCR has argued that "the key to responding effectively to protracted refugee situations is partnerships with all stakeholders to enable planning build ownership and increase available resources".<sup>91</sup> The international debate on refugee

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<sup>89</sup> Mr. Makram Malaeb, MOSA representative. Minutes of Panel Discussion organised by Carnegie Middle East Center: "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Impact and Recommendations". 25 June 2013, Beirut.

<sup>90</sup> Minutes of round-table organised by LCPS and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: "Challenges of Managing the Syrian Refugee Influx". 30 May 2013.

<sup>91</sup> UNHCR (2002), quoted in: Refugee Studies Centre. "Responding to protracted refugee situations: Lessons learnt from a decade of discussion". Forced Migration Policy Briefing 6. January 2011. P. 5 Available online at: <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/events/launch-policy-briefing-6/RSCP6-RespondingToProtractedRefugeeSituations.pdf>

management has gradually shifted from focusing solely on immediate care and assistance, to an increased interest in the promotion of local solutions by UNHCR.<sup>92</sup> In the case of Lebanon, local solutions seem increasingly difficult in light of the governance vacuum, the lack of funds, and the growing frustration of host communities. Some policy experts have insisted that without the reduction of numbers of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, solutions cannot be found.<sup>93</sup>

The Syrian refugee crisis has certainly put international debates to the test. One key element that can no longer be ignored is the interest of the host country, and the impact that protracted refugee situations have on security and stability. Arguably, the kind of international support that Lebanon has been receiving has leaned more towards fundraising, advocacy, and operational support as opposed to practical burden sharing on protection and security.

The security burden has been defined as “the threats perceived by a host state related to the granting of asylum and the resources required to effectively address those threats”.<sup>94</sup> These threats are divided into direct and indirect threats: direct spill-over of the conflict vs. the threat of exacerbating already existing inter-communal tensions in the hosting country.<sup>95</sup> As was seen in Section 5 of this report, both kinds of threats are currently applicable in Lebanon. Therefore, security concerns can no longer be omitted from assistance planning. The Preamble to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees states: “the grant of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on certain countries, and...a satisfactory solution...cannot therefore be achieved without international cooperation”.<sup>96</sup>

Dealing with the security burden has been debated by the international community as far back as the late 1990s, such as in the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EXCOM Standing Committee and the proposal known as the “ladder of options”.<sup>97</sup> The main features of the “ladder of options” are:

- 1- Soft options: contingency planning and preventive measures + capacity building of law enforcement services
- 2- Medium options: monitoring and policing; UNHCR and peace keeping missions with the option of multi-national civilian observers
- 3- Hard options: use of force under Chapter 7 when migration movements pose a threat to international peace and security – military deployment

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<sup>92</sup> UNHCR (2002), quoted in: Refugee Studies Centre. “Responding to protracted refugee situations: Lessons learnt from a decade of discussion”. Forced Migration Policy Briefing 6. January 2011. P. 12 Available online at: <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/events/launch-policy-briefing-6/RSCPB6-RespondingToProtractedRefugeeSituations.pdf>

<sup>93</sup> Interviews: Dr. Shafik Masri; Dr. Hiba Khodr, Department of Political Studies and Public Administration, AUB (27 September 2013)

<sup>94</sup> Milner, James. Refugee Studies Centre. “Sharing the Security Burden: Towards the Convergence of Refugee Protection and State Security”. RSC Working Paper No. 4. May 2000. P. 2 Available online at: [http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/working-papers-folder\\_contents/RSCworkingpaper4.pdf](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/working-papers-folder_contents/RSCworkingpaper4.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p.12

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p.16

UNHCR, the Lebanese government, and the international community have yet to find an appropriate compromise between refugee assistance, national development assistance, and protection. Not addressing host country concerns will ultimately have a negative impact on refugee protection, and will exacerbate developing countries' reluctance to offer asylum. This has been witnessed in the past, such as in the case of Tanzania in the 1990s. Tanzania received hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees, but the presence of armed elements among them resulted in a destabilization of security and an eventual expulsion of all refugees in 1996. Similarly, Macedonia restricted asylum to Kosovar Albanian refugees for fear of insecurity in the late 1990s.<sup>98</sup>

The use of fears and grievances by some politicians and citizens as a justification for exclusion and retaliation against Syrian refugees is an alarming indicator. Ultimately, a balanced approach needs to be developed in order to take into account security threats, but at the same time prevent security concerns from becoming a source of human rights abuse.

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<sup>98</sup> Human Rights Watch (2000). World Report 2000: The Events of 1999". Available online at: <http://goo.gl/kGi9EI>



## General Recommendations

### Donors and the International Community:

1. Expedite efforts to secure a trust fund for Syrian refugees and host communities in order to avoid the negative consequences of unemployment, poverty, and tension between both the refugee and host communities.
2. Support local, community-based assistance initiatives in order to empower beneficiaries and strengthen the capacity of both refugee and host communities in relief as well as general development.
3. Ensure that funding is inclusive of the developmental and poverty-reduction needs of the Lebanese host communities in order to ease assistance-related tensions among the refugee and host communities.
4. Start exploring the long-term refugee returns' strategies, by enabling conditions conducive to return, when security situation allows in Syrian areas of origin. Thus, tackle, among others, development factors that render the return in safety and dignity as per international standards.

### Lebanese Government:

5. Address allegations regarding refusal at the borders for Palestinian refugees from Syria in order to avoid *non-refoulement* and arbitrary refusal.
6. Train General Security personnel at the borders on refugee case assessment or establish protection hosting centers at borders by relevant UN agencies or partners/INGOs.
7. Address frequent security incidents between host and refugee communities with a comprehensive security plan that takes into account the right of refugees to protection and the security of hosting community members.
8. Ensure that security measures are accompanied with developmental initiatives such as job creation in order to tackle the root causes of discontent among refugee and host communities.

### UNHCR and partners:

9. Ensure that the targeting exercise is based on fair criteria in order to avoid excluding vulnerable families.
10. Improve information dissemination mechanisms to refugees in order to quell confusion over services and assistance.
11. Establish an efficient and transparent complaint mechanism to be easily accessible by refugees and provide appropriate remedy.
12. Prioritize new protection concerns arising from the economic and social impact of the prolonged presence of refugees among host communities.
13. Enhance preventive protection measures as opposed to merely case-by-case responses.

