



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Lebanon

Lebanon – LBN39689 – Treatment of Palestinians in Beddawi – Conditions in Beddawi – Nahr el-Bared displacement

18 January 2012

**1. Please provide an update on the treatment of Palestinians by both Lebanese and
Palestinian forces in the Lebanese camps, in particular El Beddawi.**

Lebanese forces arbitrarily detained, interrogated and physically abused some Palestinian refugees during the 2007 Nahr el-Bared conflict. In addition, following the 2007 conflict a barrier was reportedly built around Beddawi by the Lebanese army to prevent infiltration by Islamic extremists. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were reportedly subject to arbitrary arrest and detention by state security forces in 2010. More recent reports concerning the treatment of Palestinians in Beddawi by Lebanese forces was not located.

No reports regarding the treatment of Palestinian residents of Beddawi camp by Palestinian militants could be located. The US Department of State report for 2010 notes that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were subject to arbitrary arrest and detention by Palestinian factions. However, no statistics on the number of such cases were available.

Treatment by Lebanese Forces

The US Department of State (USDOS) *2010 Human Rights Report: Lebanon* notes that, in accordance with a 1969 agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), PLO security committees, not the government, provide security for Palestine refugees in the camps.¹ As such, government forces ‘did not typically enter Palestinian refugee camps’.² However, according to USDOS, during and after the 2007 conflict in Nahr el-Bared camp (NBC) Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF) ‘arbitrarily detained and physically abused some Palestinian refugees ... suspected of being militants’.³ USDOS reports that the LAF interrogated many men as they left the NBC and detained those suspected of supporting or having information about Fatah al-Islam (FAI).⁴ Security forces reportedly arrested five men in Tripoli on suspicion of supplying weapons to FAI. According to USDOS, security forces broke one suspect’s jaw while he was in detention and forced another to stand for long periods of time, beating him severely if he tried to rest. Police ultimately dropped charges against two of the suspects; the others remained in custody at the end of the reporting period.⁵

¹ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

² US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

³ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

⁴ FAI is an extremist group that had established itself in the Nahr el-Bared camp. US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

⁵ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

Amnesty International similarly reported that Palestinian civilians were threatened and abused by soldiers at checkpoints following the conflict at NBC.⁶ Human Rights Watch (HRW) also reported instances of Palestinians being arbitrarily detained and interrogated following the NBC conflict.⁷ In addition, the HRW report notes that Lebanese security forces arrested and, in some cases, abused Palestinians at checkpoints in other areas of Lebanon.⁸

In September 2010 Nadim Houry, Director of the HRW Beirut office provided expert advice to the RRT concerning the treatment of Palestinian men at army checkpoints. Mr Houry stated there are two camps that the Lebanese army keeps a watchful eye on, the NBC and Ain al-Helwe near Saida. The advice states that, to date, anyone (not just young men) going and leaving the NBC goes through a military checkpoint. The advice also states that the organisation has not received reports of ill-treatment of persons leaving NBC in the last year but has received some reports of Palestinian men being held for a day or two while their case is being investigated.⁹

Beddawi camp

Following the 2007 conflict in the nearby NBC, a barrier was reportedly built around Beddawi by the Lebanese army 'to prevent smuggling and the infiltration of Islamic extremists into the camp'.¹⁰ A 2010 article in *Electronic Lebanon* refers to European sources which reportedly believed that FAI retained a presence within Beddawi camp. It notes that many of the Lebanese army soldiers who lost their lives during the fighting in 2007 had come from this locality and that Lebanese-Palestinian relations had become strained.¹¹ The article claims that fears that FAI had 'sleeper cells' in Palestinian refugee camps had made the situation 'extremely volatile'.¹²

RRT Country Advice LBN37507 of 15 October 2010 provides more information on the construction of the barrier around Beddawi camp and on the use of checkpoints.

No further information concerning the treatment of Palestinians by Lebanese forces in Beddawi could be located. However, it should be noted that the *USDOS 2010 Human Rights Report: Lebanon* states that Palestinian refugees in general 'were subject to arbitrary arrest and detention by state security forces and rival Palestinian factions'. However, no statistics on the number of such cases were available.¹³

⁶ Amnesty International 2007, *Exiled and suffering: Palestine refugees in Lebanon*, October <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE18/010/2007/en/34373bc5-d367-11dd-a329-2f46302a8cc6/mde180102007en.pdf> - Accessed 17 January 2012;

⁷ Human Rights Watch 2007, *Lebanon: End abuses of Palestinians fleeing refugee camp*, 12 June <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2007/06/12/lebanon-end-abuse-palestinians-fleeing-refugee-camp> - Accessed 17 January 2012

⁸ Human Rights Watch 2007, *Lebanon: End abuses of Palestinians fleeing refugee camp*, 12 June <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2007/06/12/lebanon-end-abuse-palestinians-fleeing-refugee-camp> - Accessed 17 January 2012

⁹ Houry, N. 2010, Email to RRT Country Advice 'RE: Australian Refugee Review Tribunal request for information on Palestinians in Lebanon', 29 September

¹⁰ Moor, A. & Sharp, D. 2010, 'Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp', *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> - Accessed 14 October 2010

¹¹ Moor, A. & Sharp, D. 2010, 'Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp', *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> - Accessed 14 October 2010

¹² Moor, A. & Sharp, D. 2010, 'Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp', *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> - Accessed 14 October 2010

¹³ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

Treatment by Palestinian militants

No reports regarding the treatment of Palestinian residents of Beddawi camp by Palestinian militants could be located.

In respect to the treatment of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon generally, the USDOS *2010 Human Rights Report: Lebanon* states that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were subject to arbitrary arrest and detention by Palestinian factions. According to USDOS, during the year there were reports members of various Palestinian factions and foreign militias detained their rivals during clashes over territorial control of the camps, particularly in the north and south.¹⁴ However, no statistics on the number of such cases were available.¹⁵

RRT Country Advice LBN39137 of 15 September 2011 provides information about Jund al-Sham, a militia reportedly aligned with FAI. The response notes that Beddawi camp authorities and Lebanese forces have reportedly installed mechanisms designed to prevent radical elements from inciting violence and actively recruiting members in most camps.

2. Please provide any information specifically dealing with the current interest of Lebanese security forces or Palestinian factions in Palestinian men in their 20s and 30s.

Question one discusses the arbitrary arrest and detention of Palestinian men following the 2007 Nahr el-Bared conflict. As stated above, USDOS reported that the LAF interrogated many men as they left the Nahr el-Bared camp and detained those suspected of supporting or having information about FAI.¹⁶ More recent reports specifically dealing with the current interest of Lebanese security forces or Palestinian factions in Palestinian men in their 20s and 30s (including in regards to forcible recruitment) could not be located.

3. Please provide information about the current living conditions, social problems and difficulties in El Beddawi camp.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has the sole mandate to provide health, education, social services, and emergency assistance to Palestine refugees in Lebanon.¹⁷ The UNRWA website provides the following information concerning the Beddawi camp:

All shelters have indoor water supplies. The water system, sewerage and storm water drainage systems were recently rehabilitated.

¹⁴ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April; The Palestinian political scene in Lebanon comprises three broad categories: (1) Members of the PLO, including Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and several other less significant factions; (2) the Alliance of Palestinian Forces known as Tahaluf, founded in 1993 in opposition to the Oslo peace accords. It regroups into eight factions which enjoy close relations with Syria: Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command, Fatah al-Intifada, al-Saiqa, the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, the Palestinian Liberation Front and the Palestinian Revolutionary Communist Party; (3) Jihadi-leaning Islamist forces. Includes Usbat al-Ansar, Hizb al-Haraka al-Islamiya al-Muhahida and Ansar Allah. More extreme movements reject any dealing with Lebanese institutions or Fatah and include Jund al-Sham, Usbat al-Nour and other less significant groups. The ICG notes that representatives of both the PLO and Tahaluf sit on Beddawi's Popular Committee. See International Crisis Group 2009, *Nurturing Instability: Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps*, 19 February p.1-3 [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/915F97B08E7BB65FC125756A00569D56/\\$file/84_nurturing_instability_lebanon_s_palestinian_refugee_camps.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/915F97B08E7BB65FC125756A00569D56/$file/84_nurturing_instability_lebanon_s_palestinian_refugee_camps.pdf) - Accessed 17 January 2012

¹⁵ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

¹⁶ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

¹⁷ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

Beddawi bore the brunt of the crisis at Nahr el-Bared, where fighting between the Lebanese armed forces and the radical militant group, Fatah Al-Islam, forced 27,000 refugees to flee. Beddawi's population swelled from 15,000 to 30,000 almost overnight.

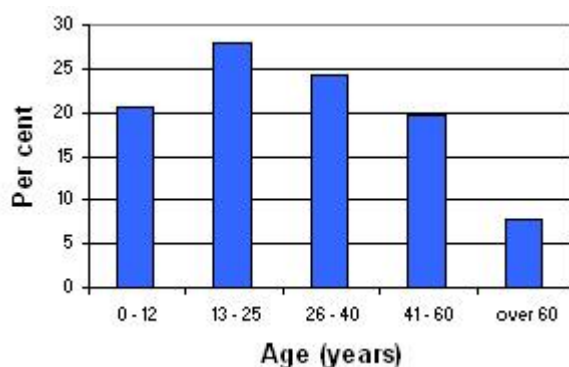
At mid-2009, around 10,000 displaced people were still living in Beddawi and surrounding areas. This put a huge strain on UNRWA's services in Beddawi and placed further burdens on Beddawi's residents themselves.

UNRWA has built prefabricated school buildings for displaced children and expanded Beddawi's primary healthcare services to cope with the increased population.¹⁸

The UNRWA website also provides camp statistics and highlights a number of major problems in Beddawi:

Statistics:

- More than 16,500 registered refugees
- Seven schools, including one secondary school
- One kindergarten
- One health centre
- Demographic profile:



Major problems:

- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Huge population influx from Nahr el-Bared
- Huge demand for UNRWA services from increased population.¹⁹

A May 2008 UNRWA report concerning the reconstruction of NBC noted the following:

The [Beddawi] camp's economy has not grown in the same way as NBC's and the residents in general are poorer. Being so close to the major commercial and business centre of Tripoli has meant that the camp's small market ("souq") and businesses mainly cater for the local refugee population. Situated in an urban setting has meant that daily and seasonal work opportunities in agriculture have been limited. Beddawi refugees have relied on daily paid work in construction, house cleaning, and in the service sector

¹⁸ UNRWA (undated), *Beddawi refugee camp*, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=133> - Accessed 17 January 2012

¹⁹ UNRWA (undated), *Beddawi refugee camp*, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=133> - Accessed 17 January 2012

in Tripoli. At the end of 2007, the registered refugee population of Beddawi camp (not including those displaced from NBC) was 15,947.²⁰

An UNRWA report published in 2007 noted that the influx of refugees following the NBC conflict seriously stretched the already congested living conditions of the Beddawi residents and overburdened the existing infrastructure.²¹ In addition, UNRWA reported that social relations between Beddawi camp residents and the displaced NBC refugees, although initially good, had become increasingly fragile as NBC refugees competed for jobs and accepted lower wages.²²

More reports concerning the current living conditions, social problems and difficulties in Beddawi camp could not be located. More broadly, UNRWA reports that 'all 12 official refugee camps in Lebanon suffer from serious problems' including poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, poor housing conditions and no proper infrastructure.²³ Moreover, of all UNRWA's fields of operation (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza), Lebanon has the highest percentage of Palestine refugees living in abject poverty and registered with the Agency's social safety-net programme.²⁴

A number of other sources detail the restrictions and difficulties common to all Palestinians in Lebanon:

Human Rights Watch *World Report 2011*:

The estimated 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in appalling social and economic conditions. In August Lebanon's parliament amended its labor law to facilitate the ability of Palestinian refugees to obtain work permits by exempting them from reciprocity requirements, eliminating work permit fees, and giving them limited social security benefits. However, the reform did nothing to remove restrictions that bar Palestinians from working in at least 25 professions requiring syndicate membership, including law, medicine, and engineering. It also leaves in place a work permit system that relies on employer cooperation, a system that has previously relegated most Palestinians to black market labor. Palestinian refugees are still subject to a discriminatory law introduced in 2001 preventing them from registering property.

Palestinians from the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp-destroyed in the 2007 battle between Lebanon's army and the armed Fatah al-Islam group-continue to live in dire conditions. Reconstruction efforts have been delayed, and UN Relief and Work Agency reported the first set of rebuilt houses will not be delivered before March 2011. The Lebanese army restricts movement to the camp by maintaining checkpoints around it.²⁵

The USDOS *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*:

²⁰ UNRWA 2008, *Nahr el-Bared Palestine refugee camp: UNRWA relief, recovery and reconstruction framework 2008-2011*, May, p.18 <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/201001193045.pdf> - Accessed 17 January 2012

²¹ UNRWA 2007, *Lebanon flash appeal : Progress report, 1st June – 10th August 2007*, p.1 <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/20100118145950.pdf> - Accessed 17 January 2012

²² UNRWA 2008, *Nahr el-Bared Palestine refugee camp: UNRWA relief, recovery and reconstruction framework 2008-2011*, May, p.18 <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/201001193045.pdf> - Accessed 17 January 2012

²³ UNRWA (undated), *Lebanon camp profiles*, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=73> - Accessed 17 January 2012

²⁴ UNRWA (undated), *Lebanon camp profiles*, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=73> - Accessed 17 January 2012

²⁵ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Lebanon*, 24 January <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/lebanon> - Accessed 17 January 2012

The amount of land allocated to official refugee camps in the country has only marginally changed since 1948, despite a four-fold increase in the registered refugee population. Consequently, most Palestinian refugees lived in overpopulated camps subject to repeated heavy damage during multiple conflicts. Poverty, drug addiction, prostitution, and crime reportedly prevailed in the camps, although reliable statistics were not available.

Palestinian refugees, including children, had limited social and civil rights and no access to public health, education, or other social services. The majority relied entirely on UNRWA for education, health, relief, and social services. Children of Palestinian refugees faced discrimination in birth registration, and many reportedly had to leave school at an early age to earn income.

Widespread, systematic discrimination against Palestinian refugees and minority groups continued'.²⁶

International Crisis Group (2009 report):

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have no legal status... the refugees' living conditions are regulated by a patchwork of laws and a de facto situation that severely restrict their rights. A parliament member asserted: "Our official policy is to maintain Palestinians in a vulnerable, precarious situation to diminish prospects for their naturalisation or permanent settlement. Our economic and security measures are guided by this."²⁷

Invoking the refugees' merely temporary presence, the state is virtually absent from the camps and has done little to meet basic needs. UNRWA and a range of local and international humanitarian organisations have sought to fill the void, but the refugees' living standard is deemed catastrophic by both the UN agency and the government. UNRWA attends to primary and secondary education, yet schools are plagued by an archaic educational system, lack of human and financial resources, as well as decaying infrastructure and equipment and overcrowded classrooms. High dropout rates, inadequate schooling and insufficient skills ... hamper the refugees' ability to find adequate employment, pushing many to take menial jobs. Unlike Lebanese citizens, Palestinians do not enjoy free medical care or social security benefits, regardless of whether they are employed. UNRWA and various NGOs have assumed healthcare responsibility, but here too substandard infrastructure and equipment badly impair quality.

Lack of hope and the absence of a viable economic horizon, together with social marginalisation and exclusion, fuel frustration and anger toward the state. Predictably, these also promote militancy and radicalism in the camps, increasing the potential for instability and violence.²⁸

The ICG report states that Lebanon's Palestinian refugee population constitutes a 'time bomb' because it was '[m]arginalised, deprived of basic political and economic rights, trapped in the

²⁶ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April

²⁷ International Crisis Group 2009, *Nurturing Instability: Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps*, 19 February p.16
[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/915F97B08E7BB65FC125756A00569D56/\\$file/84_nurturing_instability_lebanon_s_palestinian_refugee_camps.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/915F97B08E7BB65FC125756A00569D56/$file/84_nurturing_instability_lebanon_s_palestinian_refugee_camps.pdf) - Accessed 17 January 2012

²⁸ International Crisis Group 2009, *Nurturing Instability: Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps*, 19 February p.18
[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/915F97B08E7BB65FC125756A00569D56/\\$file/84_nurturing_instability_lebanon_s_palestinian_refugee_camps.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/915F97B08E7BB65FC125756A00569D56/$file/84_nurturing_instability_lebanon_s_palestinian_refugee_camps.pdf) - Accessed 17 January 2012

camps, bereft of realistic prospects, heavily armed and standing atop multiple fault lines – inter-Lebanese, inter-Palestinian and inter-Arab...’.²⁹

4. Please provide any information on the numbers of persons displaced from Nahr El Bared in 2007 and how many remain in other camps such as El Beddawi.

In mid-2007 Palestinians residents of NBC were displaced as a result of the conflict between the LAF and the extremist group FAI, which had established itself in the camp.³⁰ Estimates vary concerning the number of persons displaced however most place this figure between 27,000 and 35,000.³¹ According to UNRWA, an estimated 95 per cent of all buildings and infrastructure in Nahr el-Bared were either destroyed or damaged beyond repair.³²

Many of the refugees went to the nearby Beddawi camp, increasing the population of that camp from 16,000 to more than 30,000 persons.³³ As of September 2011, 369 apartments had been handed over to NBC displaced families as part of the camp reconstruction project.³⁴ However, according to the UNRWA website and the Agency’s reports published in 2011, approximately 5900 families (more than 26,000 persons) remained displaced.³⁵ Many of the displaced are residing in temporary accommodations in Beddawi camp, the areas adjacent to NBC and other locations in the vicinity.³⁶ Annex 1 of the 2011 UNRWA report *Relief and recovery support for displaced Palestine refugees from Nahr el-Bared camp – Final Report: January to December 2010* provides a table showing the distribution of displaced NBC residents as of December 2010.³⁷ More current distribution figures could not be located.

RRT Country Advice LBN33576 of 29 August 2008 provides an account of the 2007 NBC conflict and information concerning Fatah-al-Islam including history, membership and objectives.

²⁹ International Crisis Group 2009, *Nurturing Instability: Lebanon’s Palestinian refugee camps*, 19 February (Executive summary) [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/915F97B08E7BB65FC125756A00569D56/\\$file/84_nurturing_instability_lebanon_s_palestinian_refugee_camps.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/915F97B08E7BB65FC125756A00569D56/$file/84_nurturing_instability_lebanon_s_palestinian_refugee_camps.pdf) - Accessed 17 January 2012

³⁰ US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Lebanon*, 11 March, Section 2.d

³¹ US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Lebanon*, 11 March, Section 2.d; Moor, A. & Sharp, D. 2010, ‘Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp’, *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> – Accessed 14 October 2010; UNRWA (undated), Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=144> - Accessed 16 January 2012

³² UNRWA (undated), *Nahr el-Bared refugee camp*, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=144> - Accessed 16 January 2012

³³ Moor, A. & Sharp, D. 2010, ‘Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp’, *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> – Accessed 14 October 2010; UNRWA 2007, *Lebanon flash appeal : Progress report, 1st June – 10th August 2007*, p.1 <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/20100118145950.pdf> - Accessed 17 January 2012

³⁴ UNRWA 2011, *Rebuilding Lives: Nahr el-Bared camp*, <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011100225423.pdf> - Accessed 16 January 2012

³⁵ UNRWA (undated), *Nahr el-Bared refugee camp*, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=144> - Accessed 16 January 2012; UNRWA 2011, *Relief and recovery support for displaced Palestine refugees from Nahr el-Bared camp – Final Report: January to December 2010*, June <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011072163951.pdf> - Accessed 16 January 2012; UNRWA 2011, *Restoring dignity: Responses to the critical needs of vulnerable Palestine refugees in Lebanon 2012 – 2016*, 28 September <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011100462423.pdf> - Accessed 16 January 2012

³⁶ UNRWA 2011, *Restoring dignity: Responses to the critical needs of vulnerable Palestine refugees in Lebanon 2012 – 2016*, 28 September <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011100462423.pdf> - Accessed 16 January 2012

³⁷ UNRWA 2011, *Relief and recovery support for displaced Palestine refugees from Nahr el-Bared camp – Final Report: January to December 2010*, June <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011072163951.pdf> - Accessed 16 January 2012

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UNRWA 2011, *Restoring dignity: Responses to the critical needs of vulnerable Palestine refugees in Lebanon 2012 – 2016*, 28 September <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011100462423.pdf> - Accessed 16 January 2012.

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US Department of State 2011, *2010 Human Right Report: Lebanon*, 8 April.