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UDLÆNDINGESTYRELSEN  
DANISH IMMIGRATION SERVICE

# Stateless Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

## Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process

*Report from Danish Immigration Service's fact finding mission to Beirut, Lebanon*

*25 May to 6 June 2014*

*Copenhagen, October 2014*

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## Overview of Danish fact finding reports published in 2013 and 2014

Update on security and human rights issues in South- and Central Somalia, including Mogadishu, Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service's and the Norwegian Landinfo's fact finding mission to Nairobi, Kenya and Mogadishu, Somalia, 17 to 28 October 2012

2013: 1

Iran - On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures, Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service, the Norwegian LANDINFO and Danish Refugee Council's fact-finding mission to Tehran, Iran, Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom, 9 November to 20 November 2012 and 8 January to 9 January 2013

2013: 2

Somalia - Security and protection in Mogadishu and South-Central Somalia Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service's and the Norwegian Landinfo's fact finding mission to Nairobi, Kenya and Mogadishu, Somalia 6 April to 7 May 2013.

2013:3

Iranian Kurds; On Conditions for Iranian Kurdish Parties in Iran and KRI, Activities in the Kurdish Area of Iran, Conditions in Border Area and Situation of Returnees from KRI to Iran, Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service's and Danish Refugee Council's fact finding mission to Erbil and Sulaimania, KRI, 30 May to 9 June 2013

2013: 4

Uganda - Situation of LGBT persons in Uganda. Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service's and the Danish Refugee Council's fact finding mission to Kampala, Uganda from 16 to 25 June 2013.

2014:1

Update on security and protection issues in Mogadishu and South-Central Somalia, Including information on the judiciary, issuance of documents, money transfers, marriage procedures and medical treatment, Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service's and the Norwegian Landinfo's fact finding mission to Nairobi, Kenya and Mogadishu, Somalia, 1 to 15 November 2013

2014:2

Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran, report from the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom 25 March to 2 April 2014 and 10 April to 11 April 2014

2014:3

# CONTENTS

<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction and methodology .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1. Availability of Protection .....	7
1.1.1. Protection from Lebanese authorities for Palestinians living outside of the refugee camps .....	7
1.1.1.1. Conflicts with militant groups .....	10
1.1.1.1.1. Cooperation between the Lebanese authorities and Hezbollah.....	12
1.1.1.2. Conflicts of a private law character, including cases related to domestic violence and honour .....	13
1.1.2. Protection from Lebanese authorities for Palestinians living inside refugee camps .....	14
1.1.3. Protection inside the refugee camps .....	16
1.1.3.1. Popular Committees.....	18
1.1.3.2. Conflicts with militant groups .....	21
1.1.3.3. Conflicts of private law character, including cases related to domestic violence and honour .....	23
1.2. Individuals inside refugee camps wanted by the authorities.....	25
1.3. Possibility to relocate to other refugee camps .....	26
1.4. Access to basic rights and services .....	28
1.4.1. Access to education.....	30
1.4.2. Access to health care services .....	31
1.4.3. Access to the labour market.....	32
1.4.3.1. Legal framework for accessing the formal labour market .....	34
1.4.3.2. Palestinian women and employment.....	37
1.4.3.3. Effects of influx of Syrian refugees on access to employment.....	37
1.4.4. Access to housing and property rights .....	38
1.5. Registration of PRL in Lebanon.....	40
1.5.1. Deregistration of PRL.....	40
1.5.2. Birth registration .....	41
1.5.3. Issuance of identification cards .....	41
1.5.4. Possibility for PRL residing abroad to re-enter Lebanon .....	41

<b>2. Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon.....</b>	<b>43</b>
2.1. Entry and legal status of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS).....	43
2.1.1. Entry .....	43
2.1.2. Legal status .....	49
2.1.3. Impacts of lack of legal status .....	53
2.1.4. Risk of deportation to Syria .....	55
2.1.5. Possibility of family reunification between PRS and PRL .....	57
2.2. Access to basic rights and services for Palestinian Refugees from Syria.....	58
2.2.1. Access to education .....	60
2.2.2. Access to health care services .....	62
2.2.3. Access to the labour market.....	63
2.2.4. Access to housing .....	64
<b>3. Recruitment by Hezbollah .....</b>	<b>67</b>
3.1. Prevalence of forced recruitment .....	67
3.2. Hezbollah recruitment process .....	70
<b>Organizations, authorities and persons consulted .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Appendix A: Terms of Reference .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Appendix B: Map of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon .....</b>	<b>79</b>

## Abbreviations

<b>AUB</b>	American University of Beirut
<b>CEP</b>	The Committee for Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon
<b>CLDH</b>	Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (Centre Libanais des Droits Humains)
<b>CYC</b>	Children and Youth Centre
<b>DPAR</b>	The Department of Political Affairs and Refugees (DPAR) (“Mudiriyya al-Shshuun al-Siyasiyya wa-Ilajiiin”)
<b>DRC</b>	Danish Refugee Council
<b>GAPAR</b>	General Administration for Palestinian Arab Refugees
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>ICG</b>	International Crisis Group
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ISF</b>	Internal Security Forces
<b>LAF</b>	Lebanese Armed forced
<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Organization
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>NSSF</b>	The National Social Security Fund
<b>PFLP-GC</b>	The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command
<b>PHRO</b>	Palestinian Human Rights Organization
<b>PLO</b>	Palestine Liberation Organization
<b>PRL</b>	Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon
<b>PRS</b>	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
<b>SOAM</b>	Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies, American University of Beirut
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

## Introduction and methodology

This report is the product of a fact-finding mission conducted by the Country of Origin Information Division, Danish Immigration Service (DIS) to Beirut, Lebanon from 25 May to 6 June 2014.

The necessity for a mission to Lebanon arose due to a lack of updated information concerning stateless Palestinians in Lebanon, both Palestinians who have resided in Lebanon since 1948 and 1967 and their descendants, as well as Palestinians who have recently entered Lebanon from Syria due to the Syrian civil war.<sup>1</sup> This report focuses on the situation of Palestinians from Lebanon regarding issues relevant to key asylum claims from Palestinians, including issues concerning protection as well as overall access to basic rights and services such as education, health care, housing and employment. Furthermore, the report provides information on the Palestinians from Syria who have sought refuge in Lebanon, focusing on entry and legal status in Lebanon as well as the extent of basic rights and services that Palestinians from Syria have access to while in Lebanon. Moreover, the report offers information on how the influx of refugees from Syria has impacted the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon, both with regards to the situation in the camps and with regards to sustaining a livelihood.

The Terms of Reference for the mission has been drawn up by DIS and includes comments from the Danish Refugee Appeals Board as well as from other partners. Due to the lack of access to relevant sources in Lebanon as well as the mission's time limit, the issue of military service and recruitment which is included in the Terms of Reference has not been investigated during the mission and is therefore not addressed in the report. The Terms of Reference is included as Appendix A.

In the scope of compiling this report, the delegation consulted 23 sources during the mission to Beirut. The sources consulted in Beirut comprised representatives from international organizations, Western embassies, international as well as local non-governmental organizations, Lebanese authorities and academic sources. A complete list of sources consulted is included at the end of this report.

Each source consulted during the mission was asked permission to be quoted by name, profession and/or the name of his or her organization. For the sake of discretion, seven sources wished to remain anonymous or semi-anonymous. Consequently in these cases, the delegation asked the sources how a descriptive reference might best be made to them.

Before each meeting, the sources consulted were informed about the purpose of the mission and that their statements would be included in a public report. All interviews were conducted orally in English, or in a few instances through a translator, in a semi-structured manner, and were recorded in writing by the delegation. The notes from a given interview were subsequently

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<sup>1</sup> With the aim of distinguishing the two groups of Palestinians, Palestinians from Lebanon and Palestinians from Syria, the groups have been abbreviated as PRL and PRS respectively throughout the report.

forwarded to the interlocutor/s in question for approval, giving the source a chance to amend, comment or correct his or her statements.

This report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all issues covered. The information provided in this report is ~~the~~ information of most direct relevance to typical asylum claims made by stateless Palestinians in Denmark.

The report is a compilation of the statements made by the various interlocutors consulted and care is taken to present their views as accurately and transparently as possible. As a result, the report may contain some seemingly contradictory statements. In the report, DIS has not drawn conclusions on the basis of the information communicated and the report does not contain opinions or policies held by DIS.

The delegation of this mission and editorial team comprised Senior Advisor Majid Behbahani and Regional Advisor Vanessa Worsøe Ostenfeld.

The delegation would like to express its gratitude for the assistance and extensive support provided by the Royal Danish Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon in planning the visit and during the mission.

This report is available on the DIS's website [www.newtodenmark.dk](http://www.newtodenmark.dk) (refer to publications). Any comments regarding this report are very welcome and should be submitted to the DIS at the address/e-mail address on the front page of this report.

## 1. Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon

The International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Arab States (ILO) explained that because of systematic exclusion of Palestinian refugees in all national surveys and statistical data in Lebanon, ILO has relied on statistics carried out by other statistical institutes such as FAFO Institute for Applied International Studies and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in Ramallah, which does a population census of all camps in the region.

According to PCBS, the number of Palestinians in Lebanon is approximately 250,000, a number, which is somewhat lower than the official estimates. According to UNRWA data, around 455,000 Palestinians are registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, however many of those registered do not live in Lebanon anymore.<sup>2</sup>

ILO said that figures on how many Palestinians reside in Lebanon are mixed with politics and therefore it is very difficult to trust the numbers that are stated by different actors. Sources such as UNRWA and the Lebanese government tend to exaggerate the number of Palestinians, each with their own agenda. UNRWA has an interest in amplifying the figure for funding reasons while the government has an interest in overstating the issue of Palestinians in Lebanon.

According to Human Development Centre, 55% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in refugee camps while 45% are residing outside the camps.<sup>3</sup>

Human Development Centre added that as the Lebanese authorities do not deregister Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon (PRL) who leave Lebanon and stay in other countries, the actual number of Palestinians in Lebanon is around 270,000 and is much lower than what the official figures indicate.

### 1.1. Availability of Protection

#### 1.1.1. Protection from Lebanese authorities for Palestinians living outside of the refugee camps

Concerning PRL living outside the camps and their possibility to get protection from the Lebanese authorities [i.e. approach the authorities and obtain protection], Nadim Houry, Deputy Director, Middle East and North Africa, Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that there is a general problem

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<sup>2</sup> According to UNRWA Lebanon website under *Facts & Figures*, the number of registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is 447,328, <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

<sup>3</sup> Around 53 % of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in the 12 recognized camps, see more regarding camps <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/Lebanon>. A map of where the camps are located is included as Annex 2. For more information on the 12 recognized camps, including statistics, programmes and major problems, see UNRWA camp profiles at UNRWA Camp Profiles: <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon/camp-profiles?field=15>



in seeking the protection from the authorities in Lebanon, and people – PRL as well as Lebanese - cannot count on any protection from the Lebanese authorities unless they are financially well-off or have the right connections; the fewer financial means and proper connections you have, the less likely you are to get access to protection from the authorities. This applies to political conflicts as well as to private law issues and civil cases.

Concerning the availability of protection for PRL in Lebanon, Marie Daunay, President, Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (CLDH) said that Palestinians living outside of the Palestinian camps are entitled to the same protection as Lebanese nationals. However, the Lebanese authorities are not able to effectively provide protection as Lebanon is a very weak state. For example, although there have recently been a lot of campaigns regarding domestic violence which have aimed at awareness-raising among authorities on this issue, there are still cases of women not being protected by the authorities in such cases. The source did not consider that the authorities are capable of providing protection, but rather in some instances act more like social workers trying to find solutions among parties involved. The source concluded therefore that the protection provided by the Lebanese authorities is equally poor for both PRL and Lebanese citizens.

However, Marie Dauney (CLDH) emphasized that PRL are generally considered foreigners in Lebanon and they are therefore less protected by the authorities compared to Lebanese nationals. In addition, due to the social discrimination against PRL in general, they are less protected as they do not have any means or connections to defend themselves. If a PRL is arrested, he is not likely to be able to afford a lawyer if he has a very low income like most Palestinians. Moreover, on a social level, PRL experience racial remarks directed at them by the Lebanese society, which is also reflected in the country's media where Palestinians are often linked to insecurity, the civil war in Lebanon as well as radical groups.

Concerning the availability of protection from authorities if a Palestinian lives outside of the camps, Marie Dauney (CLDH) considered that Lebanese legislation and the Lebanese state institutions are fundamentally weak and they are therefore not able to provide protection to Lebanese nationals or to Palestinians. Lebanese nationals are more likely to seek protection from political parties and organizations or families rather than from the authorities. This is also the case for Palestinians. As an example of the importance of financial resources and good connections, the source mentioned that in Lebanon's Rumiyeh prison, many inmates are persons who have been jailed without proper trial. The source explained that these people are often those without connections or means to defend themselves. If someone is in need of protection, he cannot depend on the judicial system without making use of his network and connections. The source considered that Palestinians generally are in a weaker position than Lebanese nationals as they often do not have access to necessary connections in order to get protection. It was added that, with only very few exceptions, politicians rarely pay attention to the problems Palestinians are facing in Lebanon. This is, according to the source, partly due to the fact that Palestinians are not

eligible to vote in the country's elections and the politicians are therefore not dependant on their votes.

Sahar Atrache, Senior Analyst for Lebanon, International Crisis Group (ICG) stated that Palestinians living outside of the camps are in general wealthier and much better integrated into Lebanese society and thereby have better possibilities of taking care of themselves.

Asked about Palestinians living outside refugee camps and their possibility to get protection from the Lebanese authorities, Human Development Centre replied that Palestinians residing outside the camps can formally go to the police and ask for protection if they need it. However, the source stressed that in reality if someone is in a conflict with an influential person or a person who has connections with influential families in Lebanon, the authorities will stick with the influential part.

Regarding Palestinians residing outside of the camps and their possibility to get protection from the Lebanese authorities, Mahmoud M. Abbas, Abu Moujahed, Director, Children and Youth Centre (CYC) stated that those who live outside of camps are often those who had the financial means to leave the camps as it is quite expensive to rent a place to live outside the camps. However, because of a general bias towards Palestinians, the source did not consider that those living outside of the camps were in a better position to obtain protection from the authorities. According the source, overall, Palestinians are the object of bad press and are often singled out in the media as criminals and put in connection with security issues. The source mentioned that for example every time a crime is committed and a group is arrested in relation to that crime, if a Palestinian is part of that group, this person is singled out in the media as the main suspect even if the crime is committed by the whole group. As an example of how Palestinians are treated in the Lebanese justice system, the source explained that according to Lebanese law, children under 18 years are required to have a guardian if put under arrest and investigation. However, this is not the case if a Palestinian under the age of 18 is arrested.

The organization Pursue in Lebanon, which undertakes research, consultancy, training and programme implementation services and have conducted numerous projects focusing on the conditions for Palestinians in Lebanon, said that an individual, regardless of whether he or she is a Lebanese national or a Palestinian has the right to an attorney and if a person is unable to afford a lawyer, a lawyer can be appointed. However, this right does not apply very well in practice and most people, especially Palestinians, are not aware of this right. Palestinians lack knowledge of the law and their rights in a situation where they are confronted with the authorities. The source added that UNRWA coordinates a legal aid program, however this solely focuses on civil cases (such as divorce, marriage) and not on criminal cases, which is what Pursue focuses on.

Regarding Palestinians' access to the judicial system and protection, Pursue stated that a Palestinian does not have any real legal protection inside or outside of the camps. Even if an individual was able to get a lawyer for his or her case, the source considered that the legal system in itself functioned at a very slow pace and that the right connections within the system would in

many cases be needed to move one's case forward. It was considered that with Palestinians in Lebanon, the situation is far worse as their access to lawyers is very poor. Firstly, the majority cannot afford hiring a lawyer. Secondly, due to the security approach of the Lebanese state, security authorities and judicial system is always prone to accuse Palestinians with crimes they have not committed. In addition, the stereotype that Palestinians, particularly those residing in refugee camps, are a cause of instability in Lebanon adds a twist to how the judicial system acts in dealing with cases involving Palestinians. The source further explained that the Lebanese system gives space for interventions from Lebanese political parties to defend or catalyze the cases for their supporters and the absence of a strong Palestinian leadership plays a role in turning the Palestinians in Lebanon to a weak point. Additionally, the ambiguity of the legal status of Palestinians in Lebanon as “refugee” or “foreigner” has contributed to making the mechanisms implemented towards Palestinians in the Lebanese justice system unclear.

Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO) stated that Palestinians suffer from protection gaps in Lebanon as they have a legal status but not a civil status. The Palestinians have their ID card legalizing their stay in Lebanon but do not have the civil rights that ordinary citizens do. According to the source, the Lebanese state in some cases treats Palestinians as foreigners and in others as a refugee. In the situation where the state wishes to deprive Palestinians of a privilege, they are treated as foreigners and when the state wishes to degrade the rights of Palestinians, they are treated as refugees.

#### ***1.1.1.1. Conflicts with militant groups***

With regard to Palestinians living outside of refugee camps and their possibility to access protection from the Lebanese authorities if threatened or harassed by militant groups, a Western embassy (1) informed the delegation that Palestinians residing outside of the refugee camps generally have a more privileged status as they have higher incomes and may also be in mixed marriages with Lebanese nationals. Therefore, they are often in a better position regarding access to protection from the Lebanese authorities compared to Palestinians living in refugee camps. This is due to the fact that these Palestinians in virtue of their better economic situation and their Lebanese spouse may have access to legal assistance and better treatment by the authorities. The source explained that protection provided by the Lebanese authorities to a large extent depends on one's financial resources, one's ethnic affiliation as well as one's connections to influential families and individuals.

According to the Western embassy (1), Lebanon is a lawless country where everybody tries to organize his life on his own and this also applies to the question of protection. Getting protection from the authorities is problematic even for Lebanese nationals on all levels which is partly due to wide-spread corruption. That is the reason why Palestinians, who often have no resources or connections, try to find their own ways to protect themselves and each other as they know that protection from the authorities is not available.

A Western embassy (2) stated as a general impression, that Palestinians do not get protection from the Lebanese authorities if they are threatened or harassed by militant groups. According to the source, in Lebanon there is a kind of institutionalized prejudice against the Palestinians leading to their discrimination in the society. Palestinians have never been welcome in Lebanon and are often associated with Lebanon's civil war resulting in the Palestinian population being perceived as a security threat to the country. As the source explained, this perception, which is constantly reflected in the country's media, is also found among the Lebanese authorities and therefore a Palestinian cannot count on protection from them. Although civil society organizations have been very active with regard to helping Palestinians in need and some of them have taken the role of the state with regard to providing basic services, there is still a lack of institutions that can provide protection to Palestinians whose security is threatened.

Regarding the possibility to obtain the protection of the authorities if a Palestinian residing outside the refugee camps is exposed to threats or harassment by a militant group, a Western embassy (3) explained that if someone gets in trouble with powerful and influential individuals or families or groups such as Hezbollah, the possibility to get protection from the authorities is limited. The embassy emphasized that this lack of protection does not only apply to Palestinians but also to Lebanese citizens.

The source pointed out, however, that in ordinary criminal cases where the perpetrator is not an influential person, a person might be able to obtain protection from the authorities. However, the embassy emphasized that generally, the Lebanese state structures are weak and that it has very limited resources to provide protection. This fundamental weakness is, according to the source, partly due to the state's 15 year long absence from Lebanese society during the civil war. The source further considered that it would take many years to rebuild institutions which can establish law and order in the country. It was added that Lebanese society to a large extent is built up around a complex confessional setup where each community/family/clan takes care of its own.

Concerning whether Palestinians who live outside of the camps would approach the Lebanese authorities in the event that they have a serious problem with a political group, such as Hezbollah or one of the Palestinian factions, Social Communication Center, AJIAL, considered that Palestinians generally have little faith in the Lebanese state and their ability to protect individuals. According to the source, this is one of the main reasons why Palestinians often try to solve their conflicts and problems internally without involving the authorities. There are however Palestinians, particularly those living outside refugee camps, who approach the Lebanese authorities asking them for help to solve a conflict. The source has regularly heard of domestic conflicts or other civil issues being presented to the Lebanese authorities for solutions.

Marie Daune (CLDH) explained that in a society such as the Lebanese, economic resources, social ties and affiliations are very important factors in resolving conflicts and in the authorities' treatment of citizens. If a Lebanese national or a PRL is involved in a conflict with an influential

individual or a powerful group such as Hezbollah, he has no possibility to obtain protection unless he is well-connected to groups or individuals with some powers to negotiate on his behalf or to help him.

On the question of whether a Palestinian who lives outside of the camps can get protection from the Lebanese authorities in the event that he has a conflict with Hezbollah, the source said that no one can protect [an individual] against Hezbollah as it is the most powerful of all groups in Lebanon. Although Hezbollah is cooperating with the Lebanese army's intelligence, it would not need to rely on Lebanese authorities if it was interested in tracing a person it wanted to apprehend as it is a very effective organization with a powerful and well-functioning intelligence [apparatus]. The Lebanese authorities would not be able to protect a person if he or she is wanted by the organization.

#### 1.1.1.1.1. Cooperation between the Lebanese authorities and Hezbollah

Asked about possible cooperation between Hezbollah and the Lebanese authorities, Nadim Houry (HRW) stated that there is cooperation between Hezbollah and the Lebanese security forces. However, the source underlined that to his knowledge this cooperation tends to be about tracing and monitoring potentially high profile persons such as jihadis or suspected spies rather than low-profile individuals or petty criminals.

Concerning possibility of Hezbollah tracing people through cooperation with the Lebanese authorities, a Beirut-based long-time observer of Lebanese parties stressed that it certainly is possible as Hezbollah closely cooperates with the Lebanese military intelligence. In addition, Hezbollah has access to the country's telecommunication system and has access to people's phones. The source explained that Hezbollah has its people all over the place within the government and within the different ministries. It was added that if one goes to the South Beirut where Hezbollah is dominant, one has to pass checkpoints, manned by either the Internal Security Forces (ISF), Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) or The General Security ("*al-Amn al-Aam al-Lobnani*"). However, at these checkpoints there is also a person from Hezbollah wearing the uniform of the Municipal Police checking all the plates of cars passing through to keep track of who is going through.

As an example of Hezbollah's cooperation with the Lebanese intelligence, the source made reference to the recent security efforts to stem the recent car bomb attacks in Lebanon. Due to close cooperation and coordination between Hezbollah and the Lebanese authorities, the attacks were stopped. Hezbollah had a shared interest with the newly-formed government which has as much antipathy for Sunni radicals as Hezbollah. The observer emphasized that Hezbollah's intelligence is very dedicated and resourceful.

Asked whether the Lebanese authorities would protect a Palestinian who is threatened or harassed by a militant group, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) replied that it depends on which group is influential in that particular part of the state where the person goes to and asks for protection.

The source elaborated that if someone for instance gets into trouble in a case related to the airport, the question is who he should go to and ask for help: the police or Hezbollah who controls the airport?

Regarding protection from the Lebanese authorities for Palestinians who get into trouble with militant groups such as Hezbollah, Sari Hanafi, Professor at Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies, American University of Beirut (AUB) informed the delegation that the Lebanese state is not able to provide any protection at all. Sari Hanafi (AUB) explained that there is a close cooperation between Hezbollah and the Lebanese authorities and if someone creates problems for Hezbollah, he can risk facing problems with the authorities. The source stated that in general, Lebanon is a country governed by unwritten law and the administration of written law often takes place in an arbitrary manner.

#### *1.1.1.2. Conflicts of a private law character, including cases related to domestic violence and honour*

When asked about protection provided by the Lebanese authorities in private law cases, Sari Hanafi (AUB) stated that there is a system in Lebanon to handle such cases and for instance a domestic violence case goes through the civil court. The source added that there is no discrimination particularly against Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL) in such cases. However, Sari Hanafi (AUB) emphasized that poor Lebanese and PRL are financially not able to hire lawyers to defend their cases.

Regarding protection provided by the authorities in non-political private cases such as domestic violence, DRC stated that Palestinians living outside of refugee camps who need protection in private law cases can go to the police like anybody else asking for help. However, the source emphasized that one cannot count on any protection in domestic violence cases because the authorities do not take these cases seriously. In the event of domestic violence, the authorities would often consider such cases as family affairs to be sorted out privately, despite new legislation regarding protection in cases of domestic violence.<sup>4</sup> The source added that there have been several cases of Lebanese women being killed by their husbands who were released by the authorities soon after being arrested.

Concerning private non-political conflicts, an independent Lebanese human rights organization considered that a Palestinian living outside of the camps would be able to approach the authorities and the authorities would to some extent be able to protect him or her. The source did not consider that Palestinians would be treated any different than Lebanese nationals in such cases. However, it was added that it cannot be ruled out that a person of authority that a Palestinian comes into contact with has a discriminating attitude towards him as a Palestinian. If

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<sup>4</sup> Lebanese parliament passed a new law regarding domestic law in April 2014, see more Human Rights Watch, Lebanon: Domestic Violence Law Good, but Incomplete, 3 April 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/533e91514.html> [accessed 6 October 2014]

the conflict at hand is of a more political character, the source did not consider that the authorities could do much to provide protection.

When asked if a PRL woman who is at risk of being exposed to honor-related violence would be able to approach the authorities and receive protection, Marie Daunay (CLDH) said that it would depend on a number of factors such as who the officer she approaches is, who she is in conflict with etc. However, in most instances she would not be provided with any protection.

When asked if Palestinian women who are victims of domestic violence would be able to seek protection from the authorities, the independent Lebanese human rights organization said that two weeks earlier (April 2014), a law was passed in Lebanon according to which women who are victims of domestic violence have better access to protection from the authorities. However, family, religion, tradition and customs are all important factors that can prevent women from availing themselves of the protection formally available. The source added that there are some organizations that are providing legal aid to women who are in trouble and Palestinian women have access to these organizations like Lebanese women. However, although it is documented that there is domestic violence among Palestinian women, many do not report it and thus do not seek assistance.

When asked if Palestinian women who risk being exposed to honor-related violence at the hands of their family would be able to approach the Lebanese authorities, AJIAL said that one generally does not hear much about honor-related cases. The source added that there has been a very intense campaign in Lebanon against domestic violence in general, but not focusing on the Palestinian camps. This does not in any way mean that domestic- or honor-related violence is nonexistent, but it is not a common phenomenon one would find in the camps.

Regarding private law cases including cases of domestic violence, AJIAL considered that such issues would be resolved internally and women or others affected in these cases are not likely to approach the authorities. The source explained that the Palestinians in general do not have faith in the Lebanese authorities' ability to protect them, partially due to discriminatory regulations in the Lebanese law when it comes to Palestinians rights as well as due to fundamental prejudice that Palestinians are often met with when confronted with the authorities.

According to Nadim Houry (HRW), there have very recently been efforts to address issues such as domestic violence through enactment of new laws on the matter, however the system in Lebanon is very weak. Looking at cases of domestic violence, there have been very few cases where the police has been able to protect victims of domestic violence in large part due to years of institutional neglect and lack of proper oversight in the police.

### **1.1.2. Protection from Lebanese authorities for Palestinians living inside refugee camps**

Nadim Houry (HRW) pointed out that the Lebanese authorities do not want to and are not able to enter the refugee camps with the aim of protecting individuals since the state considers it the

responsibility of the Palestinian camp authorities to handle conflicts in the camp regardless of the type of conflict.

Concerning possibility to get protection from the Lebanese authorities, if a Palestinian is threatened or harassed in a refugee camp, the Western embassy (1) stated that the authorities have no control over the refugee camps in Lebanon and it is only the military intelligence which is present in the camps through their agents.

When asked whether Palestinians residing in the refugee camps can get protection from the Lebanese authorities in case of being threatened or harassed by a militant group, the Western embassy (3) stated that as the Lebanese authorities are not allowed to enter the refugee camps they are not able to protect the camp residents.

The embassy added that the Lebanese government is concerned about proliferation of radical groups within certain camps, particularly Ein el-Hillweh, and that the military intelligence monitors the camps for Islamist extremist groups who may use the camps as a base for their activities.

With regard to provision of protection in the camps, the International Labour Organization (ILO), Regional Office for Arab States, Beirut, said that the refugee camps function outside the hands of the Lebanese authorities. Some of the camps even house criminals as it is known that the Lebanese authorities do not enter the camps. It was explained that even Lebanese nationals seeking refuge from authorities, disappear into Ein el-Hillweh refugee camp and will be out of arms reach of the authorities.

AJIAL stated that the Lebanese authorities do not enter the Palestinian camps. The situation is different in Palestinian gatherings<sup>5</sup> which are smaller and more open than the camps and are controlled by the Lebanese authorities and the local governing bodies (municipalities, Mukhtar).

Sahar Atrache (ICG) said that the situation for Palestinians living outside of camps is very different from those inside the camps. Those inside the camps cannot rely on the Lebanese authorities as the authorities do not enter the camps, with the exception of Nahr el-Bared where the authorities in 2007 entered the camp in order to combat militant groups inside the camp.

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<sup>5</sup> "Over the past decade, international and local organizations working with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have begun to rely on the terminology of Palestinian gatherings in order to refer to areas outside the twelve official Palestinian refugee camps proper where a large percentage of Palestinian refugees live in relatively vulnerable conditions (FAFO 2003, 2005; DRC 2005; NRC 2009, 2011; UNDP & UN-HABITAT 2010). Although most of these refugees are registered with UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, and/or with the Lebanese Government, their place of settlement is not officially recognized. (...) All in all, an estimated 140 thousand refugees live in Lebanon's 42 Palestinian gatherings, including 30 thousand new refugees from Syria, most of which are Palestinian. (...) The total new population of these areas represents about one third of the total number of Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon; while the number of registered PRS living in the gatherings represents around half of those registered with UNRWA in Lebanon." Source: Profiling Deprivation, An analysis of the rapid needs assessment in Palestinian gatherings host communities in Lebanon; UN Habitat et .al, May 2014, p. 12-13



Human Development Centre stated that the Lebanese authorities do not provide any protection to Palestinians living inside refugee camps as they are not present in the camp. According to the source, the authorities basically do not want to go inside the camps or involve themselves in any way in the life of people living there, although they legally are able to enter the camps. This is despite the fact that a number of extremist groups who are active against the government have been residing inside the camps in recent years.

An independent Lebanese human rights organization stated that as the authorities do not enter the refugee camps, it occurs that Palestinians who are sentenced are offered to work as informants for the system instead of serving their sentence. When an individual who has been arrested returns to the camp where he lives, he will be under a lot of suspicion because of this practice.

Sari Hanafi (AUB) stated that the Lebanese authorities do not enter the refugee camps. However, popular committees are in contact with the Lebanese police and security forces and for instance if a thief seeks refuge in a camp, popular committees may cooperate with the authorities by arresting the thief and delivering him to the police. But if the Palestinian camp authorities are not convinced that the person wanted by the Lebanese authorities is guilty, they may refuse to cooperate. (See more regarding popular committees in *1.1.3.1. Popular Committees*)

According to Sylvain Perdigon, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies (SOAM), American University of Beirut (AUB), currently, the Lebanese authorities, in coordination with the Palestinian popular committees are closely following (through intelligence work, informants etc.) what is going on in the camps on the Islamist scene, e.g. whether Islamist groups are trying to establish cells in the camps.

AJIAL knew of high level of coordination between popular committees and Lebanese authorities (Police, Army, Security, etc.) which has been appreciated by those authorities. As an example, the source mentioned that the latest events (Spring of 2014) in Ein el-Hillweh have been dealt with in coordination between the mentioned authorities and those cases of coordination were announced on the local media.

### **1.1.3. Protection inside the refugee camps**

According to Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC), Palestinians who are living in refugee camps do not feel safe. People living in the camps risk being exposed to violence committed by different political parties and factions, and those who have committed crimes and are wanted by the authorities do not leave the camps, which altogether makes the camp environment quite unsafe.

DRC informed the delegation that due to the influx of refugees from Syria, a number of Palestinian refugee camps such as Ein el-Hillweh are highly congested and one can observe increasing tensions in the camps because of that. The situation is particularly tense in Badawi and Ein el-

Hillweh camps, as they are monitored by the authorities who suspect them of accommodating some extremist groups.

Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) said that the security situation in refugee camps has generally worsened in recent years. The source knew of a woman residing in Burj-Al-Barajneh who now feels unsafe if going out after dark which she beforehand did not have any problem with.

Pursue said that since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the presence of jihadist groups within the camps has increased, including groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Human Development Centre pointed out that the security situation in Ein-El-Hilwa is poor compared to other refugee camps due to presence of extremist groups from Saida and Tripoli leading to clashes within the camps.

Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC) explained that in the course of time, mafia-like groups and drug gangs have moved into the camps making them insecure places. These gangs are often part of regional and international networks, and they have sometimes ties to the political factions in the camps. According to the source, one can sometimes recognize these gangs' members by their appearance as one easily can see that they are not from the local area.

According to Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB), the refugee camps of Beirut and Saida are most unstable due to increasing local sectarian tensions and the pressures of the Syrian crisis and refugee influx. The source added that in Shatila, Ein-Al-Hillweh and to some extent Burj El Barajneh camps, it is much more blurred than in other camps which factions and groups control the area. Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) explained that in camps where Fatah is the dominant power, political conflicts are less common. And even when such conflicts arise, it may be possible for the popular committees to solve it.

Concerning whether the Palestinian de facto authorities in the camps will be able to assist a Palestinian refugee in need of protection, PHRO said that an independent Palestinian refugee, without any links to factions or persons of importance, will never be able to obtain any protection. The source explained that there is no Palestinian authority in the camps and no matter which faction or party may say it is in control of a certain camp, this holds no truth as no one in the camps has any authority and control. Within the camps, there are different groups who are in a fierce competition with each other for power and influence: pro-PLO groups, pro-Syrian groups, Islamic fundamentals and other groups including jihadist groups. All of these groups may have some power in the camp while no one has control over the factions as a whole. Even those persons who do belong to a certain faction cannot always avoid being killed in the clashes between different factions. It was added that there are differences between the camps with regard to the occurrence of clashes between different factions and that some are worse off than others. The source mentioned Ein el-Hillweh as the camp where the security situation is precarious.

Sahar Atrache, Senior Analyst for Lebanon, International Crisis Group (ICG) said that a Palestinian in need of protection could adhere to a political faction for protection which may in some instances be able to provide a kind of security depending on the issue and given that the individual has an affiliation to the faction or connection. A Palestinian without any affiliation or good contacts is left on his own with regards to solving his situation.

Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC) explained that the demographic changes in refugee camps in recent years have weakened the ability of the Palestinians to govern the camp areas and thereby provide governance or protection for Palestinians. As an example, the source mentioned Shatila camp whose population before the Syrian conflict was around 18,000 of which 60% were Palestinian, 20% were Lebanese, 12% Syrian and the remainder was Gypsies, Iraqis and Kurds. Now the population is about 22,000 due to the influx of refugees from Syria. In addition, different Islamist gangs are also trying to find a place for themselves in the camps and forming armed groups, especially since the start of the conflict in Syria. Under these circumstances, the role of any Palestinian governing entity is weakened as they have no authorization over those who are foreigners and Lebanese who reside in the camps.

#### *1.1.3.1. Popular Committees*

Regarding the popular committees, Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC) explained that by the Cairo Agreement of 1969, each camp was made responsible for administration and governance within the camps. Hereby the PLO established popular committees which were tasked to take care of daily life in the camps including administration of finances, security and social services. After the Israeli invasion in Lebanon in 1982, PLO left the Beirut and South camps in Lebanon and thereby many of the popular committees ceased to exist at that time until 1994 in Beirut and 1995 in the south, while some continued in the north and Bekaa. However, after 1988, the Cairo Agreement was annulled by the Lebanese government. This means that in effect, there is no real legal existence of Palestinian governance in Lebanon as the popular committees have ceased in being a recognized governing entity for Palestinians, according to the Lebanese government. Moreover, the Lebanese Government denies the Palestinians the civil rights such as right to work, to own a house or any property and the government is not responsible in providing any social security.

The source added that the popular committees still have a role to play in the camps, however they are now divided since the Hamas and Fatah division (in 2007).<sup>6</sup> In reality, there are several popular committees and they are often weak, with little funds and no legal basis. Although the popular committees are not capable of providing protection or run services for the Palestinians in the camps, Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC) considered that the committees still do play a role. For example, if a well in a camp malfunctions, which is critical in the camps due to lack of official water supply,

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<sup>6</sup> Since Hamas took control of Gaza in June of 2007, the Palestinian territories and thereby Palestinian National Authority, have been split and resulted in the West Bank being run by Fatah and Gaza being run by Hamas. See BBC News Middle East, Palestinian territories profile, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14630174>

the different factions are obliged to come together (in the committee) and try to solve the issue in a united effort and seek the assistance of UNRWA, of other sources or of Lebanese authorities.

The source explained that the committees may also try to settle conflicts within the camps but have no real authority to govern and make decisions. If there is a conflict between camp residents, the factions may come together and try to resolve the issue. However, it is by no means a given that the popular committees can solve the issues that may arise.

According to the source, the internal disagreements and conflicts among different Palestinians factions affect the capacity of the popular committees to govern the camps. The source emphasized that popular committees are not able to provide protection in any of the refugee camps. Due to the lack of protection in the camps, if a person gets involved in a conflict, he has to find out how he, by allying with influential persons or factions in the camp, can solve his problem.

Regarding access to legal protection inside the camps, Pursue said that theoretically, security should be provided by inter-factional security committees who are in charge of security in the camp. However, divisions and conflicts among the different Palestinian factions in charge has led to a situation in which virtually no protection is available to the community. It is Pursue's experience that protection instead is obtained in a large number of cases through families as some of the larger and more powerful families have arms and some conflicts may be solved through violence on the part of the families. Also, if an individual has a strong affiliation to a faction, the particular faction may be able to provide assistance in sorting out a conflict depending on the parties involved.

Regarding governance and provision of security in refugee camps in Lebanon, Pursue said that the inter-factional popular committees, including security committees, focus their efforts on coordination between the factions rather than on providing security to the communities. Besides being factionalized entities, the security committees are in no way protected by law or mandated with the task of providing security. For example, if the Lebanese authorities ask the security committee in a certain camp to deliver a wanted individual to them and the committee cooperates, the committee may itself theoretically be liable of kidnapping if a complaint is filed against it by the arrested person or its family. This is because by the security committee has no official mandate to arrest and deliver a person to the authorities.

PHRO explained that if there are security committees in the camps, these committees which are made up of parties from different factions, are not always powerful enough to be able to provide protection to the camp residents. In addition, members of these committees who are often people from a militia background are in most cases not trained to deal with civilians in need of protection. In some cases, the committees may even be violaters of rights and thereby be a part of the problem rather than a solution. Additionally, there is no real structure for how these committees should be formed or operated and they have no budget as more formalized actors of protection would have.

According to PHRO, basically, governance within the camps is not recognized by the Lebanese government after the Cairo Agreement of 1969 was cancelled in 1987. The Cairo Agreement recognized and organized PLO mechanisms of administration within the camps. By the agreement, the mechanism of popular committees was set up with the aim of promoting rule of law and creating order as well as development in the Palestinian camps. However, the Lebanese authorities are not going into the camps and stepping in as actors of protection. According to the source, the general perception now a days is that the Palestinians do not want the Lebanese authorities to enter the camps, but this is not true and it is rather the Lebanese forces who do not want to enter the camps as they do not consider it as their responsibility to interfere in the conflicts and to prevent violence in the camps.

Concerning popular committees in the camps and their ability and capacity to assist individuals in need of protection, AJIAL said that generally, the committees are less and less considered a conflict-resolving entity by the Palestinians. PRL generally lack a legitimate credible Palestinian representation that the people have faith in. Recent clashes (Spring 2014) in Ein el-Hillweh camp between Fatah and new Islamist groups illustrate how the situation is untenable and that even a powerful faction like Fatah is unable to provide security in the camps. Many of the parties which people supported and put their trust in before have now been scattered into smaller independent groups around the country with no common front who fight each other for their own survival. The source explained that the Palestinian refugee camps also house radical Islamist groups as well as persons who wish to avoid the authorities. To what degree this is the case, is hard to say, according to the source.

AJIAL stated that the effectiveness of the popular committees with regard to providing protection to Palestinians inside refugee camps depends on the type of conflict and the refugee camp where the conflict arises. However, the source added that the committees nowadays are more occupied with conflicts between different factions. As a result, ordinary Palestinians with no links or role within a faction would not approach the popular committee within the camps to seek protection. The source emphasized that ordinary Palestinians would not have much understanding of what the committees are and whether they would be able to assist them in a given situation.

Concerning PRL living inside the camps and their possibility to get protection from the Palestinian authorities in the camps, Marie Daunay (CLDH) said that inside the camps, PRL have their own security system. However, the source considered that the Palestinian authorities inside the camps are often violating the rights of PRL rather than defending them and therefore they are not a real recourse of protection for PRL in camps.

Regarding the ability of popular committees located within the camps to provide protection to Palestinians, the independent Lebanese human rights organization considered that in some cases, the committees can play a role and assist with conflict resolution while in other instances, they will not be able to assist in any way. However, the committees are not judicial instances and some are

more of a security service for the parties. Cases in which the popular committees could play a mediating role, could be in private conflicts. Also if a conflict arises between groups within the camp, the committees can function as a mediator and find a common resolution. The source stressed that the protection that the committees are able to provide is far from sufficient.

Human Development Centre did not believe that popular committees are able to provide protection to Palestinians living in refugee camps. According to the source, the committees are not chosen by the people but by the Palestinian political organizations. They are under the influence of these organizations' leaders and only serve their interests. The source further explained that currently there is an intense competition between pro- and anti-Assad groups and their affiliated groups in the camps. In addition, in recent years new fundamentalist groups have emerged in the camps which try to recruit people by offering them money. The source concluded that in such a context, with rivalling groups in the camps, no one can expect to get protection unless he or she is affiliated a political organization.

#### ***1.1.3.2. Conflicts with militant groups***

Regarding Palestinians threatened or harassed by militant groups in a refugee camp and their possibility to get protection from the Palestinian organizations present in the camps, the Western embassy (1) mentioned that getting protection in a refugee camp depends on the dominant Palestinian faction(s) in the camp and on which faction one is affiliated with. If a person has no connection to a Palestinian faction in a camp, he or she will not get any protection if a conflict arises. In addition, different factions comprising popular committees in a camp are sometimes in competition or even fighting each other which can make refugee camps an unsafe place to stay in.

When asked whether popular committees in the refugee camps are capable of protecting Palestinians who face threats or are harassed by militant groups, the Western embassy (2) replied that popular committees are often composed of different factions who do not always cooperate with each other. This is, according to the source, the reason why one cannot count on these committees as a reliable source of protection.

Asked whether popular committees in the refugee camps can protect the Palestinians living in the camps, the Western Embassy (3) replied that popular committees are made up of different factions/groups ( Hamas, Fatah, etc.) among whom there is rivalry, competition and conflicts of interest. It was added that with the arrival of PRS in the camps, already existing tensions among different groups have been intensified to such an extent that for example in the case of Ein el-Hillweh camp, even donors and NGOs cannot enter the camp due to clashes and rising tension. Against this background, one cannot assume that popular Committees would be able to provide any protection to the camp residents.

With regards to the possibility for a Palestinian living in a refugee camp to seek protection if caught in a conflict with militant groups, Sahar Atrache (ICG) said that within the camps there are popular committees who are responsible for security in the camps. However, it is the general

impression that the popular committees are not trusted by the camp's population and Palestinians do not sense that these committees are in place to protect them. Rather, at times the popular committees create problems for the camp's inhabitants for example due to infighting within the committees which are often made up of different factions.

When asked whether popular committees in the refugee camps provide protection to Palestinians who are threatened or harassed by militant groups, Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) stated that in the camps where a certain group, for instance Fatah, is in control and is the dominant power, the popular committees play the role of mediator in the conflicts in the camp. However, the source underlined that these committees are not able to provide protection and their role with regard to the conflicts is limited to mediation. As regards the camps where different (competing) groups control the camp such as Ein el-Hillweh, to mediate in a conflict or to give protection is an even more complicated matter as different parties in a conflict can turn to different groups or factions for help which easily can lead to matters getting out of hand.

Nadim Houry (HRW) informed the delegation that if a Palestinian living in a refugee camp gets into trouble with militant groups such as Palestinian armed factions or Hezbollah, he or she cannot be sure to get protection from the Palestinian camp authorities and the popular committees in the camp. The source explained that the security situation and the possibility of getting protection vary from camp to camp depending on which Palestinian groups, or which constellation of political factions, are running the popular committees. In some camps, it is PLO who is in charge while Hamas, jihadi groups or other Palestinian factions are dominating in others. In light of this, whether a person can get protection in a camp depends among other things on which groups he gets into trouble with and whether the security authorities in the camp are able or willing to protect him.

Regarding Hezbollah's power and influence in the refugee camps, Nadim Houry (HRW) explained that Hezbollah may have influence in some camps through their proxies, particularly in the camps close to Hezbollah-dominated areas. However, the source believed that Hezbollah's influence in the camps is often exaggerated.

Regarding the possibility of getting protection from the popular committees in the refugee camps in case a camp resident is threatened or harassed by a militant group, DRC ruled out this possibility. The source explained that popular committees do not have the proper competencies and qualifications to solve conflicts. In addition, popular committees are composed of different political factions competing or even sometimes fighting against each other. In light of this, popular committees are sometimes the sources of conflicts and insecurity in the camps rather than actors of protection and conflict-resolution.

DRC pointed out that as a general rule in Lebanon, if someone comes to you and asks for protection, one would think twice before accepting the responsibility to give protection as it may bring you into conflict with some powerful individuals or groups and thereby endangering

yourself. It was added that Lebanese society is very family-based and that connections and affiliations are very important.

When asked whether the Palestinian organizations can provide protection to PRL threatened by militant groups, Sari Hanafi (AUB) stated that the Palestinian organizations occasionally try to follow such cases but their efforts are often to no avail. If someone for instance has some connections to PLO and then gets into trouble with a militant group, PLO will probably write some letters to authorities or Hezbollah asking for help to solve the problem but it cannot do much else.

Concerning the possibility of being protected by the Palestinian committees in the refugee camps in the event that someone is threatened by militant groups, Sari Hanafi (AUB) explained that popular committees in the camps are connected to different Palestinian factions and whether one can obtain protection from these committees will depend on which group one is connected to and which group one is threatened by. In addition, popular committees in each camp tend to be divided into two groups: one run by PLO and the other by pro-Syrian factions. The source added that there is not always cooperation between these groups. Sari Hanafi (AUB) added that nowadays, there is much tension among different Palestinian factions in the camps due to the conflict in Syria which in itself creates conflicts in the camps.

PHRO said that a person who has left Lebanon due to a conflict with a Palestinian group or faction that took place a long time ago (for example in 1980s), will be able to return to Lebanon without being at risk of persecution by that group. PHRO stated that if the person had been involved in a conflict causing harm to someone who for example was affiliated with the PLO, the organization itself may have forgotten the issue. However, the person can never be assured that the family members of a person who may have been harmed have forgotten the conflict. The source stressed that it is difficult to generalize on this issue and it depends on the specific case.

### ***1.1.3.3. Conflicts of private law character, including cases related to domestic violence and honour***

Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) gave an example of a private conflict which was solved through the mediation by a popular committee. In a refugee camp, a young unmarried woman got pregnant as a result of her relationship to a young man. The young woman had hidden her pregnancy from her father and delivered the baby by herself and abandoned it in the street. Her parents later found her in a pool of blood and called an ambulance. The popular committee intervened by visiting the father when it became clear that the young woman's hemorrhage was a result of giving birth to the baby who had been found earlier in the street. The popular committee's intervention was aimed at forcefully reminding the father that he would be in trouble with Lebanese law if he harmed his daughter. The father accepted the child as his own a couple of months later.

As another example of a case where the popular committee mediated in a private law conflict in a refugee camp, Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) mentioned the case of a PRS moving around with his cart selling vegetables and fruits in a refugee camp. The local vegetable grocer was unhappy with



this taking place and attacked the PRS and his cart with the assistance of his friends and relatives leading to the cart being destroyed. The security forces under the command of the popular Committee in the camp intervened and negotiated an agreement whereby the PRS was allowed to continue selling fruits and vegetables with his cart under the condition that he did not install his cart in front of the local grocer's fruit shop.

Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) added that popular committees have no official status in the Lebanon legal apparatus, however they are de facto recognized as the most legitimate local Palestinian interlocutor by Lebanese official agencies. The source mentioned that he knew of several cases in a refugee camp in Tyre (Sur) of would-be honour crimes in which the PLO stepped in and in coordination with the local Lebanese authorities was able to mediate in the cases.

On the question of whether a young Palestinian woman from a camp who falls in love with someone whom her family does not approve of can seek the protection of the authorities or of the Palestinian committees within camps, Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC) stated that one does not hear any more of girls being killed by their families due to honor-related issue as it was the case a couple of decades ago, however there may be some exceptional cases. The source added that there is probably a difference in mentality on this issue depending on whether the camp is located in a rural or more urban setting.

Pursue stated that in matters of private law, the security committees, which are part of the popular committees, sometimes try to play a role. However, in most such cases assistance falls back on NGO's and civil society organizations which in some cases may be able to support individuals in some way.

When asked whether Palestinians threatened due to a private conflict (including woman with domestic violence issues or people threatened because of an honour-related conflict) would be able to access protection in the camps, PHRO said that Lebanon has recently passed a law on domestic violence and any Palestinian refugee or foreigner is technically under the Lebanese law. However, within the camps, it is the security committees, which is the available mechanism of any justice rather than procedural justice. It was added that PHRO used to advance the access to justice for women and some training was also administered to factions that were responsible for security.

However, unfortunately, it was the experience of PHRO that women were often afraid to access help within the camps and the source did not consider that women would be able to access any assistance or justice within the camps. The source explained that in the event that the perpetrators are relatives (spouses, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers), women are afraid [to seek any protection] due to cultural pressure and social stigma. The source added that PHRO helped a security committee within a camp (small pilot project funded by United Nations for Women-UNWOMEN) accommodate a place that would be able to receive women and the security personnel inside were trained to be gender sensitive. However, the number of women who

approached the security committee was still small. It was added that for funding reasons, the project could not be sustained and the source considered that in order to measure any effect, such a project would need to exist for a longer period of time.

PHRO also considered that in cases where perpetrators are affiliated to a political faction the question of accountability and impunity always comes to mind as different dominant political factions form a security committee.

PHRO stated that in general when people are threatened due to a private conflict, including domestic violence or honor-related issues, they tend to leave the camp as they know that they cannot get any protection in there. This is particularly the case if high-ranking people in the Palestinian factions are involved in the conflict.

## **1.2. Individuals inside refugee camps wanted by the authorities**

Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC) said that it may be easier for the Lebanese authorities to catch a wanted person if he is inside a camp and that Palestinian committees in the camps may cooperate with the authorities in handing over a wanted criminal to the Lebanese authorities.

Pursue stated that theoretically all Palestinians and Lebanese nationals have access to the justice system, however this system is flawed. With regard to Palestinians especially, the source explained that in a camp like Ein el-Hillweh, there are a high number of fugitives, both Palestinians and others, who have taken refuge because they have had some criminal charge put against them. These individuals live their lives within the camps and do not leave it for fear of being arrested by the authorities. They are able to stay out of the authorities' reach as they do not enter the camp. In many of these cases, the individuals have found themselves wanted by the authorities for reasons they are not aware of.

Pursue explained that it has run a legal aid project focusing on 400 cases of individuals wanted by the authorities but who are living as fugitives in the Ein el-Hillweh camp. The source explained that 4-5,000 individuals are wanted by the authorities, often due to informant reports that have been filed against them to the Lebanese authorities/intelligence. A large number of these individuals have been afraid to deliver themselves to the authorities as they fear being arrested and jailed for unknown offenses. It was added that there are also cases of fugitives in other camps however the biggest concentration is in Ein el-Hillweh which is also the most densely populated camp. The source added that of the wanted persons, the number of persons with legal charges put against them is much lower than that of those who are wanted due to informant reports.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pursue said that out of 128 cases, 35 cases were solved in cooperation with the authorities. However due to domestic concerns on the part of the authorities, the project was stopped, as security concerns increased.

The independent Lebanese human rights organization considered that overall, the situation for Palestinians in Lebanon is different than in other countries in the region. First of all, the Lebanese authorities do not enter the refugee camps. According to the source, the authorities make use of informants inside the camps, among the Palestinians themselves, to draw up reports regarding Palestinians. The problem with this is that the reports are influenced by subjectivity and are not based on solid evidence. Nonetheless, the reports can be used by the Lebanese authorities in legal cases against Palestinians who thus risk being wrongfully accused and even sentenced in absentia. Some Palestinians are for instance faced with charges laid by the military court for possession of arms and committing terrorist activities based on the reports from Palestinian agents within the camps. The source stated that there have been cases in the camp of Ein el-Hillweh involving individuals that have been sentenced in absentia for crimes committed outside of the camp in spite of the fact that they have not left the camp for 15 years. The source has heard of cases of individuals receiving sentences varying from several years of imprisonment to life time prison depending on the charges. According to the independent Lebanese human rights organization, the authorities do not enter the camps to arrest such individuals. However once individuals with false charges against them leave the camps, they risk being arrested.

When asked who is at risk of having false charges put against them, the independent Lebanese human rights organization explained that it is not necessarily certain profiles that are most at risk and that the person charged could be a low-profile persons as well as well-known individuals. However most often, those who have been sentenced without themselves knowing the grounds for the charges, are random low-profile individuals. The source added that there have also been cases where women have been sentenced for terrorist activities because their husbands have been accused of possession of arms.

Pursue stated that there are a number of Palestinians who are in jail in Lebanon, including some of those arrested in connection with clashes in Nahr al-Bared camp (2007), but who have not yet been sentenced. However, the maximum sentence they might get (if put on trial) would be shorter than the period they have already spent in jail. In addition, many Palestinians are still imprisoned as they cannot afford paying the releasing fees which can be minimal in certain cases.

### **1.3. Possibility to relocate to other refugee camps**

According to Nadim Houry (HRW), if a Palestinian refugee in a camp has a conflict with Hezbollah or another militant group, he may be able to leave the camp and the authorities cannot prevent him from taking up residence in another camp or somewhere outside the camp where he may feel more safe. However, Nadim Houry emphasized that it is not easy to move to and settle down in other areas as it is hard to find work and manage life economically in other places. In addition, people are often attached to certain communities in the camps in which they are living and it is

not easy for them to leave these and establish new ties in other places. Moreover, it is quite expensive to rent a place outside of the camps and many refugees cannot afford that. In theory, Palestinians refugees from Lebanon (PRL) can live wherever they want, but legal restrictions on right to own houses and the financial realities limit their choices to a large extent. PRL are mostly dependant on services provided to them in the camps by UNRWA. By leaving the camp, they will also lose access to the services as they will be farther from accessing those services.

When asked whether a PRL who is threatened by militant groups in his home camp can move to another camp, Sari Hanafi (AUB) stated that it is possible to move to another camp, but he will most probably not be able to afford it economically as it will be cost him lots of expenses to move and it will be difficult for him to find a job somewhere else.

When asked whether a Palestinian can move to another camp in case one is threatened or harassed by a militant group in their camp of origin, the Western embassy (1) explained that it is possible to move to other camps, particularly if he is registered with UNRWA and has relatives and connections in other camps or outside of the camps who can help him establish a new life, i.e. finding a job, housing etc. The source added that a Palestinian is free to leave the camp he lives in, however he would need the means to settle elsewhere.

When asked whether a Palestinian who is threatened or harassed by a militant group such as Hezbollah can move to and live safely in another part of Lebanon, the Western embassy (1) replied that a low-profile person may be able to move to other parts of the country, but the question is how he or she is going to survive as it will be quite difficult to find a job or a place to live without a local network or local family ties.

DRC considered it extremely difficult to move to another refugee camp if a Palestinian is threatened or harassed in his camp of origin as moving to and surviving in another camp would require establishing a new social network and “becoming a member of a new family” which is very difficult in most cases.

Regarding the right to move within Lebanon for PRL, Marie Daunay (CLDH) stated that there are no restrictions on PRL's right to relocate from one camp to another. Palestinians can also move outside of the camps if they have the financial means to do so as it is quite expensive to rent outside the camps.

Sahar Atrache (ICG) said that Palestinians who live inside the camps are highly dependent on the services that UNRWA provides and do not have the means to move outside of the camps.

On whether Palestinians in Lebanon are able to relocate to other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon or move outside of the camps, AJIAL stated that there is generally nothing preventing Palestinians from moving from one place to the next, although exceptional security measures may entail the imposition of movement restrictions. However, it should be noted that some camps are

surrounded by checkpoints and some PRS may feel uncomfortable passing these. There are reports of some villages in the Mount Lebanon area where curfews have been enforced on 'foreigners' (including PRS) because of the crisis in Syria. With regard to moving generally, many Palestinians do not have the option to move to a new place for financial reasons.

Concerning whether Palestinians are able to move from one camp to another or to a location outside of the camps, PHRO said that at the moment, there are no restrictions in this regard except a few camps where there are some restrictions regarding entry. Reference was made to the case of Nahr El Bared where foreigners are restricted from entering unless they have obtained permission from the Lebanese Intelligence.

#### **1.4. Access to basic rights and services**

An international organization said that the situation of PRL with regard to access to public education, health care and employment has not changed in recent years and Palestinians remain excluded from access to public services in Lebanon.<sup>8</sup>

According to the international organization, there are concerns that the mass influx of Syrian refugees and PRS has in general led to pressure on the existing infrastructure, which is affecting those who are most vulnerable. Additionally, tension is on the increase in the Palestinian camps where over half of the PRS who have come to Lebanon live, and it is evident that the situation in the camps and in the most vulnerable areas is under increasing pressure.

An international medical humanitarian NGO considered that the presence of a huge number of persons within the camps is having a bearing on the quality of services that are available through UNRWA and other humanitarian providers. It was added that the infrastructure in place was already overloaded and is not equipped to handle the increasing demands for services by the populations within the camps.

When asked whether Palestinian refugees' access to basic services such as health care, housing and education as well as access to the labour market has changed since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Nadim Houry (HRW) replied that legally nothing has changed and the refugees still have access to the same services. Generally, life in the camps is very difficult and the refugees have few prospects for a decent life. Nadim Houry emphasized that the influx of Syrian refugees and PRS has increased demands on housing and jobs which has raised house prices and house rent and pushed the wages down to a minimum. This combined with the deteriorating Lebanese economy within the last years, has made living conditions extremely difficult for many Palestinian

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<sup>8</sup> For further information the source referred to Khalil, A., "Socioeconomic Rights of Refugees: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria", Report published by the American University in Cairo, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies Regional Research (2010).

refugees, particularly PRS who are desperately looking for jobs to survive. Finally, UNRWAs services are stretched to try to assist the increasing number of Palestinians in need of the services available.

Regarding Palestinians' access to basic services such as health care and education, the Western embassy (2) stated that due to poverty, a great number of Palestinians have no choice but to live in refugee camps. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, a large number of PRS have also come into the camps, which has put a lot of pressure on the resources in the camps and the camp residents' access to basic services. The source added that she had visited very poor people in other parts of the world but that she had hardly seen such poor living conditions as in Shatila refugee camp. In general, the PRL are confined to life in the camps where they are dependent on UNRWA-run schools and services and therefore are not well-integrated in Lebanese society.

The Western embassy (3) said that the stretching of resources allocated to PRL in order to meet PRS needs in the camps has led to tension in the camps. For example, UNRWA had been assisting PRL from Nahr el-Bared with an extra rent allowance for accommodation as they had to take up accommodation outside of the old camp during its reconstruction. However, UNRWA decided to bring down the assistance in an effort to harmonize the assistance given to both PRS and PRL leading to such anger and frustrations among PRL in Nahr el-Bared that UNRWA was unable to enter the camp for a period. The source added that inhabitants of Nahr el-Bared are also frustrated with the fact that the camp is far from finished and that funds from the international community previously allocated to the effort of reconstruction are now redirected to assisting the Syrian refugees.

AJIAL stated that UNRWA is still providing the same services to Palestinians as before the conflict in Syria, however these now have to be shared among more people. Regarding the general conditions for PRL, the source explained that many PRL have been dependent on local NGOs and other organizations for welfare assistance besides the assistance that UNRWA is able to provide. However, given the influx of refugees from Syria, many donors have explicitly been allocating funds to aiding PRS leading to fewer funds for projects aimed at PRL.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, camps are overcrowded, prices and house rents are rising in the poorest areas and wages are pushed down because of the fierce competition for the jobs available.

Regarding the extent to which the PRL's access to health care, education, housing and the labour market has changed since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Sari Hanafi (AUB) explained that no significant change has taken place in the last ten years with regard to Palestinians' access to these as the legal framework of Palestinians' rights is still unchanged.

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<sup>9</sup> The source (AJIAL) mentioned that examples of projects which previously were providing assistance to PRL included winterization in the Bekaa valley, shelter, cash for food and cash for clothes, remedial classes, safe spaces, alternative education, health care awareness and projects focused on women, and other smaller projects such as support to university students, covering of visa fees, legal advice and legal support.

According to Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB), there is a general resistance against improving living conditions of Palestinians in Lebanon. For instance, if a politician wishes to attack his political opponents, he can always accuse them of trying to make it easier for Palestinians to become Lebanese nationals. Despite all political disagreements and differences, all political parties in Lebanon agree that improving the Palestinians' situation in Lebanon is a low priority and could lead the country on a dangerous road, the source added.

Regarding whether PRL are receiving the same level of services as prior to the crisis in Syria, Pursue explained that because UNRWAs services have had to expand to accommodate PRS as well, the assistance available has to be shared among more recipients. As an example of how UNRWA has to prioritize its assistance, reference was made to the fact that UNRWA has stopped its monetary assistance to inhabitants from Nahr el-Bared camp which were forced to live outside of the camps during its reconstruction.

According to Nadim Houry (HRW), many Lebanese have started complaining about the presence of refugees from Syria. The source has even heard some PRL complaining about PRS who, according to them, have made life difficult for PRL by coming to Lebanon.

#### **1.4.1. Access to education**

The Western embassy (3) explained that Palestinian students from UNRWA schools have no chance of entering universities in Lebanon unless an extra effort is made to upgrade their knowledge and skills, for instance their English and French skills. It was added that Lebanon is a highly privatized society when it comes to schooling and approximately 70% of all Lebanese students attend private schools. Social mobilization is thus very difficult for Palestinians as well as for Lebanese poor since they cannot afford sending their children to private schools. Access to education and to the labour market and thereby social mobilization is also gender-biased in Lebanon as it is more difficult for a female than a male to get an education or a job mainly due to cultural factors.

Regarding PRL access to education, AJIAL explained that many PRL youth have dropped out of school as they do not see any purpose in completing an education which does not grant access to jobs. Despite high dropout rates, there are still students who make it to university, but who suffer from lack of financial support. The source mentioned that it does occur that these discouraged Palestinian youth sometimes turn to drugs or even to radical groups when prospects are bleak or to illegal ways of emigrating to Europe, Africa, USA or to other Arab countries.

Human Development Centre stated that access to higher education is limited for Palestinian youth for two reasons. First of all, gaining access to the universities and completing a degree is difficult for Palestinian youth due to their poor educational background. Secondly, Palestinian youth are not motivated to go to the university to study due to the fact that they will not be able to find a job in the syndicated professions and it will not be possible for them to obtain a work permit. With the meagre prospects of social mobility, many no longer see any point of striving for an education.

### 1.4.2. Access to health care services

The international medical humanitarian NGO said that there is access to primary health care services in the 12 refugee camps in Lebanon as these services are provided by UNRWA and other humanitarian providers. However, due to the influx of new population groups into the camps in recent months, the strain on the services has grown to a considerable extent. As an example, the source said that there were approximately 65,000 inhabitants in Ein el-Hillweh camp before the civil war in Syria, but as a lot of PRS and Syrians have since then moved there, the estimated population is currently around 100,000.

The international medical humanitarian NGO stated that most of the health care system in Lebanon is profit-oriented and it is quite expensive to receive treatment. Therefore access to medical treatment for refugees and poorer Lebanese is quite restricted. This problem is only growing, as some population groups are increasingly impoverished.

Regarding the general situation of the health clinics in the camps, the international medical humanitarian NGO said that UNRWA constantly suffers from underfunding and that the clinics in the camps are overcrowded causing long waits in order to be seen by medical personnel. Despite the fact that PRS and PRL have access to services, the source questioned whether all standards could be met in the current situation where the clinics are under a lot of pressure.

Regarding the types of medical care that is available for PRL and PRS through the services, the international medical humanitarian NGO explained that it entails very basic primary health care like the treatment a general practitioner can provide. Refugees' access to secondary, i.e. hospital treatment, and tertiary care, i.e. long-term hospitalization, is very limited and the source did not consider that there was a clear system of referral for persons in need of more long-term medical treatment.

The international medical humanitarian NGO said that mental health remains a huge need uncovered in the camps. According to the source, access to mental health care is generally limited in Lebanon and there are a limited number of practicing psychiatrists in the whole country. It was added that UNRWA has some psychological support in its program but it does not provide any psychiatric treatment. The international medical humanitarian NGO said that through its clinics, psychological and psychiatric treatment is provided.

Regarding access to health care services, Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) explained that UNRWA provides PRL and PRS with access to some primary health services and covers part of expenses in cases of hospitalization. However, finding a way to cover the remainder of expenses (i.e., the part not paid by UNRWA) is still a major challenge for most camp residents. The source emphasized that currently there is much pressure on UNRWA and its resources due to the influx of PRS.

AJIAL stated that UNRWA is the primary health care provider to PRL as well as to Palestinians coming from Syria (PRS). Other humanitarian organizations such as the Palestinian Red Crescent



have also set up services to Palestinians in the form of clinics as well as one-two hospitals per areas (only in Beirut) to cover the health care needs. Furthermore, the PLO has established a health care support office which covers between 30 and up to 100% for cases of major and minor surgeries in some ambulatory cases, all depending on the gravity of the case. Health and medical care remains the most crucial assistance that Palestinians are in need of in the camps, both in terms of emergency assistance as well as in relation to health care for women and children. The source said that although health care services are provided by UNRWA, these are characterized by a very strained budget which has become even more so due to the influx of PRS who are also in need of services.

Sari Hanafi (AUB) said that PRL and PRS have access to very basic health care services and that due to the current situation in the camps, there have been complaints that PRS and PRL have to cue for long hours to acquire the services available.

Human Development Centre considered Palestinians' access to health care services poor and explained that health care services provided by UNRWA is limited to preventive medical care. In the event that a Palestinian is in need for hospitalization, UNRWA can only cover a part of the expenses involved. In this light, the source considered it catastrophic if a Palestinian patient needs surgery because most Palestinians cannot afford operation expenses.

The source explained that other than UNRWA, Palestine Red Crescent Society provides health care services through its hospitals and clinics where minor surgery can be performed. However, if a Palestinian from a refugee camp is in need of a more complicated procedure than what can be handled at the small clinics, he must be referred to the private hospitals which are very expensive.

The source added that sometimes PLO or Palestinians residing abroad send money to Lebanon so that clinics can be provided with medical instruments necessary for proper treatment.

According to ILO, only 5% of Palestinians in Lebanon have a private health insurance.

#### **1.4.3. Access to the labour market**

The international organization stated that PRL's access to the labour market in Lebanon is poor. They are barred from owning property or practicing in more than 20 professions. As of 31 Dec 2010, 56% of PRL were jobless and only 37% of the working age population was employed.<sup>10</sup> The majority of Palestinians are left to find piecemeal manual work in an informal market. The influx of Syrians has had an effect on rising prices particularly in the housing market and reduced employment opportunities. Wages are being driven down and the competition for available jobs is growing.

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<sup>10</sup>For more information, the source referred to Chaaban, J., Ghattas, H., Habib, R., Hana fi, S., Sahyoun, N., Salti, N., Seyfert, K., Naamani, N. (2010), "Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon", Report published by the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Concerning the right to employment for Palestinians in Lebanon, ILO stated that for over 60 years, the Palestinians living in Lebanon have not been able to access the formal labour market. Palestinians also lack property rights as well as citizenship rights. The source explained that ILO focuses on the right to work. In 2006, the Committee for Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon (CEP) was created as an international entity to support the issues related to the right to work of Palestinians. CEP is composed of key stakeholders, including UNRWA, ILO as well as national institutions and Palestinian organizations.

In 2012, ILO together with CEP commissioned a labour force survey among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon in an effort to provide reliable data on the Palestinian workforce and their conditions in Lebanon. The findings of the survey were quite similar to the findings that were made in 1999 when the last labour force survey was carried out and the results were not in any sense surprising. The employment conditions that Palestinians are faced with remain much the same with regard to high unemployment rate, low wages and poor working conditions.<sup>11</sup>

ILO explained that the survey also demystified the dominant perception among Lebanese that the Palestinians are robbing jobs from Lebanese nationals. The survey shows that in reality, Palestinians are very much confined to working in very limited sectors; that the Palestinians often take the jobs that the Lebanese are not interested in taking and that the total number of Palestinians in the labour market is not high.

ILO further said that most Palestinians have no access to legal work and they are limited to jobs in the informal sector where they work without contracts under the Lebanese Law.

ILO said that over the course of 20 years, nothing has changed with regard to the Palestinians' access to employment and their possibility for social and economic development and the circumstances remain the same. According to the source, UNRWA statistics found that around 66% of Palestinian refugees are caught in a vicious circle where their poverty leads to low skills, low education and thereby low-paying jobs.

ILO stated that it is not unemployment which is the main issue for Palestinians in the labour market in Lebanon, but rather their poor working conditions. Concerning the rate of employment, one can speak of a low unemployment among Palestinians in Lebanon. ILO explained that the higher the poverty rates, the lower the unemployment which is the case for Palestinians as many of them are often desperate for income. However, the source stressed that Palestinians are employed under very poor conditions which means menial labour, occasional employment and working long hours for low wages where there is no insurance in any form. The wages that Palestinians work for are estimated at approximately 2-300 USD a month while the minimum

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<sup>11</sup>For more information on the Labour Force Survey, see Palestinian Employment in Lebanon – Facts and Challenges: Labour Force Survey among Palestinian Refugees living in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon available at [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_236502.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_236502.pdf)

wage in Lebanon is 450 USD. Looking at the figures of Palestinians, 50% of Palestinians who are working are earning an income below the poverty rate.

ILO stated that the number of economically active Palestinians (i.e. those employed in both the formal as well as the informal sector) is around 110,000 workers according to the most recent survey. Looking at total working force in Lebanon, this represents only 5% of the total economically active population in Lebanon which according to the source means that legalizing their right to work would not actually be any real threat to employment opportunities for Lebanese nationals.

ILO said that Palestinians in Lebanon are mainly employed in the informal sector in the area of construction and commerce, i.e. little shops and mechanical repair shops. Palestinians who are employed in the formal sector are mainly in social services sector.

Regarding access to the labour market, the Western embassy (3) confirmed that it is difficult for PRL to find a job and that the law in itself is discriminatory against PRL. However, the source emphasized that access to the labour market has always been a general problem in Lebanon, even for Lebanese citizens. This is mainly because Lebanon's economy is mostly based on the service sector and there is no industry to absorb the country's growing workforce. The source concluded that finding job is thus a common challenge for poor Lebanese workforce as well as PRL.

The independent Lebanese human rights organization stated that there can be no doubt that generally, Palestinians who live outside of the refugee camps are more resourceful. However fundamentally, Palestinians still lack some basic rights for example with regard to access to employment in government and in certain syndicated professions. Palestinians are mostly employed in construction and in jobs of manual labour often informally.

Concerning the access to employment, Dalia Aranki ICLA Programme Manager, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) said that there is a huge supply of workers and very small employment opportunities in the informal job market where PRL traditionally are employed, often in the construction sector. Obtaining a work permit to formally work in Lebanon is very difficult for PRL and they are unable to work in 72 professions.

#### ***1.4.3.1. Legal framework for accessing the formal labour market***

When asked whether the amendments to Labour Law in 2010 have provided any improvements with regards to Palestinians' access to the labour market, ILO said that so far this has had no impact whatsoever. It was explained that the amendment is supposed to enable more Palestinians to access work permits and be hired in the formal sector. The law provides for employers hiring Palestinians with a work permit to pay full contributions to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) monthly thus providing security benefits for Palestinians. However, Palestinians will only benefit partially from the full contribution made by employers. Despite the fact that Palestinians must pay the same monthly contribution to NSSF as Lebanese nationals, they are excluded from

the health care coverage of NSSF. Palestinians employed in this fashion are only eligible to receive end-of-service indemnity (e.g. a sum paid to an employee when he or she retires) and the access to NSSF is thus discriminative. That is why employers are not likely to be willing to hire Palestinians if they are in a position where they pay full contributions to NSSF but at the same time are unable to provide their employees of Palestinian origin with the full benefits.

The source explained that the reason why Palestinians are excluded from social services such as health care is that the Labour law stipulates that such benefits are only given to foreign citizens whose countries afford the same rights to Lebanese (the so-called principle of reciprocity of treatment). This principle of reciprocity of treatment is however not applicable in the case of Palestinians as they have no official state.

ILO explained that the number of Palestinians who have a work permit is very low. This is also an indication that most employers in general do not bother employ Palestinians who have a work permit. With regard to PRL and their access to syndicated professions, ILO explained that there is no real access and that those who do get a university degree and wish to practice in a syndicated profession, such as a lawyer or a doctor, will end up being underemployed or having to perform illegally which is dangerous or they will be forced to practice under a Lebanese national.

Concerning the situation of Palestinians with regard to access to basic services such as education, employment and health care, PHRO said that on a basic level Palestinian refugees are discriminated against in access to the labor market. PRL lack socio-economic rights and the amendment to the labor law in 2010 that was supposed to facilitate work permits to Palestinian refugees and allow them to access service benefits has not changed this situation for Palestinian refugees. The source mentioned that the issue with the access to NSSF is problematic as Palestinians are not able to access benefits of health insurance even if an employer pays contributions to NSSF. The Lebanese labor law did not allow Palestinians to organize themselves in labour organizations and Palestinian refugees thereby remain unable to join syndicates and are thus barred from syndicated professions such as the profession of physician or lawyer.

Concerning access to the labour market, Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) mentioned that it has always been difficult for PRL to enter the labour market in Lebanon. Before the Syrian crisis, there was an emerging consensus amongst Lebanese politicians and parties that things had to evolve in this regard leading to some legal amendments - mostly symbolic. As a result of the amendments, PRL were allowed to apply for work permit and some professions from which they had been excluded. However, the efforts to improve PRL's access to the labour market were totally forgotten with the Syrian crisis and there are very few PRL working in the formal sector. According to the source, there is a long, difficult and costly (i.e., hundreds to thousands of dollars) procedure for PRL to obtain work permit and a large number of PRL do not want to apply for work permit as they cannot be sure that they will get it in the end. The source explained that Ministry of Labour's

criteria for granting work permit are unknown, it is not clear who can obtain it and the number of work permits delivered in recent years is extremely low (i.e., low tens).

With regard to employment opportunities for PRL, Sari Hanafi (AUB) said that the Lebanese government created an amendment to the Labour law in August of 2010 which was meant to ease PRLs' access to the labour market and obtaining of work permits. However, the law has not created better employment opportunities and PRL do not have access to many professions. The source added that only few of those who apply, are granted work permits. PRL are still mostly employed in the informal market, earning a third of the wages that Lebanese nationals make. For example, after ten years of employment, a PRL who is an instructor at a Palestinian school will earn only 500 USD while a Lebanese national would earn 1300 USD for the same job. The PRS are generally more vulnerable and desperate for employment than PRL due to their recent displacement and thus are working for much lower wages.

Concerning access to the labour market, Human Development Centre stated that in 2010 an amendment was made to the labour law according to which Palestinians were given access to ordinary jobs, except positions in government administrations, provided that they obtained a work permit. However, educated Palestinians do not have access to employment within professions like medicine, engineering or law as these professions have their syndicates where membership requires being a Lebanese national for more than 10 years, thereby exempting Palestinians from membership.

According to the amendment, through employment in the formal economy with a work permit, Palestinians are obliged to pay full fees to the social security fund (NSSF) which theoretically should give access to health coverage as well as schooling and end of indemnity service. However, if a Palestinian pays to the fund which he is obliged to when employed formally through a permit, he has no access to health coverage through the social security fund, as he is cut off from any services already provided by through UNRWA services. This is one of the reasons that Palestinians are not encouraged to obtain a work permit which is reflected in the falling numbers of issued work permit in recent years. While 300 work permits were issued to Palestinians ten years ago, the number fell to 66 in the previous year (2013). According to Human Development Centre, some of the permits have been granted for jobs with minimal income such as vendors, car mechanics or carpenters however, a permit is never given for professions such as clerks in companies, accountants in banks or even tax driver.

The source added that any amendment of law must be followed by a ministerial decree specifying how the law is to be implemented by the authorities. However, the Labour Ministry has not, four years after the amendment, issued such decree, thereby leaving it up to the minister and his associates to decide whether a work permit is to be granted.

PHRO pointed out the discriminatory treatment when it comes to the right of freedom of association of NGOs and other entities. In this case, Palestinian refugees are not considered

foreigners and the Lebanese legislators do not allow them to access the right of freedom of association because they are refugees. On the other hand, the Lebanese new amended labour law (2010) treats Palestinian refugees as a special category of foreigners and bind them to having work permits and pay full fees to social services like other foreigners, although they have no access to public health insurance.

#### *1.4.3.2. Palestinian women and employment*

According to ILO, the unemployment rate of Palestinian women is extremely high. ILO considered that Palestinian women are restricted in several ways with regard to their access to employment. First of all, participation of women in the labour market is generally low in Lebanon and women are underpaid in comparison with men. Salaries, which are already lower when it comes to employment of Palestinians compared to Lebanese nationals, are even lower when it comes to women. Secondly, Palestinian women are restricted by unsafe conditions in the camps which result in many women confining themselves to their home area. Finally, the society in the camps can also be quite conservative, making the option of employment even less likely for Palestinian women.

#### *1.4.3.3. Effects of influx of Syrian refugees on access to employment*

Dalia Aranki (NRC) considered that PRL have been affected by the influx of refugees whom they now compete with over the limited jobs available. This has led to a drop in the wages in the informal job market and there are indications that they have gone down by 1/2 or 1/3 in recent years. Due to the low wages, many PRS families have to send their children to work. The source added that it is difficult for the NGOs and the humanitarian organizations to assist PRL and PRS with regard to better access to employment by providing them with vocational training as the Lebanese authorities consider it as a threat to the Lebanese workforce who may lose jobs to qualified Palestinians.

Dalia Aranki (NRC) emphasized that all the challenges PRL are facing today with regard to access to the labour market in Lebanon have also existed before and that the influx of PRS and Syrian refugees have only made those challenges more acute.

Concerning the Syrian crisis and its effects on the situation of Palestinians accessing jobs, ILO explained that the Lebanese labour market is a de-regularized and open market where the demand for cheap labour is a determinant factor and competition for low-paying jobs is therefore fierce. The source assumed that with the present situation of the economic crisis in Lebanon and many Syrian refugees in need of employment to provide for themselves, the situation is volatile for low-paid, low-skilled, informal workers. The source had heard that PRS and Syrians are better skilled in terms of construction and artisanal work and that due to their dire circumstances, they are willing to work for lower wages which makes employers choose them over PRL or Lebanese workers. The source added that in the Lebanese labour market, education plays an important role

with regards to access to employment. However, it was stressed that it only applies to higher education at a university level.

Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) stated that a great number of PRL and PRS work as occasional workers and there is a fierce competition among PRS and PRL with regards to accessing jobs in the informal sector. The source added that currently it is not unusual to see occasional PRS workers offering themselves for much lower wages just 50 meters from where occasional PRL workers stand waiting for the same jobs.

Sari Hanafi said that under the current circumstances with the high number of both PRS and Syrians, the competition for the low-paying jobs in the informal market is fierce and wages are being pressed down, thereby worsening the situation of PRL in this respect. If a PRL earned 500 USD per month before, he may be paid 400 USD for the same job now due to the increased competition.

#### **1.4.4. Access to housing and property rights**

When asked about Palestinians' access to housing, Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC) said that circumstances of the camps and their conditions is pushing everyone to move out of the camp as soon as possible, for example with the help from families living in Europe. The quality of the water available is terrible and extremely salty leading for example to corrosion of utensils. Electricity is available for less than 12 hours a day causing all appliances to cease from operating. The environment in the camps is characterized by large amounts of garbage as pick-up of garbage takes place far less frequently than in other areas outside the camps. The camps are small in size but extremely densely populated with approximately six times the population of same area outside of camps. Due to overcrowding within the camps, houses have been built everywhere leaving no space between houses green areas. In addition, little light, bad ventilation and damp all affect the health of the population. About 18% of the children in very densely populated camps have problems with their sight, hearing or chest. Also, the risk of disease is high in such a crowded environment. Finally, the current situation with the increase of both Syrians and PRS in the camps because of the Syrian crisis is putting additional strain on the existing infrastructure.

DRC said that UNRWA is constantly facing budget restraints and is in the present situation not able to answer to the needs of PRL and PRS. Generally, the Palestinian camps in Lebanon are also very reliant on NGOs assistance, however presently, the Syrian crisis is dominating the agenda, causing NGOs to redirect funding formerly earmarked for PRL to refugees from Syria, including PRS.

AJIAL considered that PRL's access to housing is affected due to the crisis in Syria and its effects in Lebanon. For example, the Nahr el-Bared camp, which was destroyed in 2007, has been in the process of being rebuilt and many are therefore living in temporary shelters since 2007. These affected have been receiving financial assistance to rent their housing, however because of spending cuts, UNRWA openly decided to retract the assistance as funds were needed to assist the influx of PRS.

With regard to PRL's right to own property, Dalia Aranki (NRC) said that there has been no change since 2001 when an amendment was made to the law restricting PRL's right to own any real rights in property in Lebanon. Dalia Aranki (NRC) said that a lot of research has been done into the law but there have been very few cases where the law has been put to the test and therefore there is little jurisprudence on this. There is a need to look closer at cases of inheritance and the possibilities for PRL to take over, and to build on, the properties they inherit. However, there is some reluctance among Palestinians to bring their cases to the court as they are afraid that by doing so they will bring themselves in a worse situation and the Lebanese government will cause them problems. Therefore, it is very hard to know what would happen in certain cases regarding inheritance of property because nobody is prepared to test it. NRC is trying to find ways to test the law, starting with the legal opinion that Palestinian refugees may register inherited property.

Concerning ownership of property, ILO said that the right to own property has not always been restricted. When Palestinians first fled to Lebanon, they were allowed to own property. However, in 2001 a law was passed barring Palestinians from owning property in Lebanon. As a result, this law has been making it impossible for Palestinians to inherit property owned by their parents, for example, and registering it in their own names. At the same time, the amendment allowed foreigners to buy property. The source explained that one of the reasons behind this move from the Lebanese government was purely financial as there was an interest in allowing other countries the opportunity to invest in the country. The principle applied is the one of reciprocity of treatment, which in the case of Palestinians leaves them without accessing the basic right of ownership as they have no national state.

ILO further explained that if a Palestinian living outside of the camps were to buy a flat, he would have to do this under the name of someone else and this has in many cases caused lots of problems. The issue of ownership also has implications on employment opportunities as it makes it impossible for Palestinians to buy any real estate for business, e.g. for opening a shop.

According to PHRO, in 2001, basic socio-economic right to own property was taken away from Palestinians and Palestinians are now the only entity which is not able to own property in Lebanon. In this instance, the Lebanese government made use of the rule of reciprocity between countries whereby the lack of a Palestinian state leaves the Palestinians without the right to buy property in Lebanon.

Sari Hanafi (AUB) stated that neither PRS nor PRL can, according to Lebanese law, own property in Lebanon and those who can afford to buy a flat outside the camps do it in their Lebanese families' or friends' names.

Human Development Centre explained that since the amendment of law in 2001, Palestinians do not have the right to buy or to inherit real estate property and if a Palestinian lives in a property owned by a family member (for example mother or father) and the owner dies, he or she may risk



being thrown out. However, the source said that the Lebanese authorities are very weak and they do not enforce evictions.

The independent Lebanese human rights organization said that due to an amendment in 2001 in Lebanese legislation with regard to property, Palestinians are no longer able to own property and in inherit rights to property.

## 1.5. Registration of PRL in Lebanon

The Department of Political Affairs and Refugees (*Mudiriyya ash-shuun as-siyasiyya wal-lajjin*) (DPAR)<sup>12</sup> explained that its records are based on registrations dating back the arrival of Palestinians in 1948 and 1967. The records contain data regarding where a Palestinian is originally registered and newborns are also registered with the family's original place of registration.

The source added that according to Lebanese law, a child will always follow the nationality of his or her father. Therefore, the child of a Palestinian man from Lebanon who is married to a Palestinian woman from Syria will be registered as a Palestinian from Lebanon while the child with a Palestinian father from Syria and a Palestinian mother from Lebanon will be considered a foreigner in Lebanon.

### 1.5.1. Deregistration of PRL

DPAR said that there are two instances when registration of a PRL with DPAR can be cancelled. The first is in the event of death. In this case, the cancellation of registration takes place upon a request from the relatives of the deceased person and based on a duly prepared death certificate if the death has occurred in Lebanon. If the person has died outside of Lebanon, the death must be certified by the Lebanese Embassy and the Foreign Ministry.

The second instance where registration of a PRL with DPAR can be cancelled is in the event of a request from the General Security to DPAR asking to write-off a Palestinian refugee due to death or to obtaining a foreign nationality if he or she has submitted an application for that to the General Security who then forwards the application to DPAR.

In both cases, the name of the deregistered person remains in DPAR's records but it will be crossed out in the records with a pencil or pen, and the reason for deletion will be mentioned in the notes field.

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<sup>12</sup> DAPR is under the Lebanese Ministry of Interior and is among other things responsible for registration of birth, death, marriage, divorce and changes of addresses of PRL and issuance of personal ID cards. (Ben-Sichou, J.C., Imad, M., Relleen Evan, s K., Robyns, A. (2008). *The status and situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon – A review of current documentation*. Beirut: European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO))

The source said that Palestinians registered in Lebanon who reside abroad remain registered in DPAR's records and deregistration is only carried out in the cases mentioned above (death or acquiring of citizenship).

### **1.5.2. Birth registration**

According to DPAR, registration of a child takes place through the child's family contacting the registry office and the family supports its application by providing a validated duly prepared birth certificate if the child is born in Lebanon. In case the child is born outside of Lebanon, the family must provide a birth certificate from the country of birth which has been certified (and legalized) by the Lebanese embassy in the country in question and by the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The child's family can send documents through the Lebanese representation abroad to the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs who will forward them to DPAR for necessary action. And if there is no Lebanese representation in the country of birth, the documents can be certified at the Lebanese embassies in neighbouring countries. For example, Palestinians living in Gaza are referred to embassies in neighbouring countries like Egypt and Jordan. As there is no [functioning] Lebanese embassy in Syria now, DPAR has exceptionally been accepting certification from the Syrian embassy in Lebanon. Upon providing documents to DPAR in legalized form, the children are registered in DPARs records.

### **1.5.3. Issuance of identification cards**

Concerning identification cards of Palestinians from Lebanon, DPAR stated that every Palestinian registered in DPAR is issued a personal identification card which states that he or she is a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon. The card has no expiration date and will therefore not be replaced unless certain events [changing one's civil status] (i.e. marriage, divorce, death, etc.) take place or in case the photo is to be replaced according to age.

If a Palestinian loses his ID card, he is to report it to the court ("*Niaba al-Aama al-Estenafiya*") of the area where he has lost his card. The court will initiate an investigation carried out by the relevant authorities (General Security or the Internal Security Forces) regarding the loss of the identification card. The court will then give the applicant a copy of the investigation report that proves the loss of his ID-card. This copy together with an application is to be submitted to DPAR by the applicant in order to get a new ID-card.

It was added that DPAR does not issue identification cards through proxies and that an individual must present himself personally in order to obtain a new identification card. The source said that DPAR could in some cases hand over copies of family records upon request through proxies. Concerning fraudulent documents, the source said that generally, DPAR did not experience problems in this regard.

### **1.5.4. Possibility for PRL residing abroad to re-enter Lebanon**

An international organization said that PRL registered with DPAR in Lebanon, but who have moved to Syria and lived there for many years, would be able to re-enter Lebanon from Syria with

minimum difficulty provided that they have retained their DPAR registration and are in possession of their ID cards.

Concerning whether PRL who have lived in Syria for many years are able to enter Lebanon, Dalia Aranki (NRC) considered that it would depend on their documents (ID's as well as travel documents) proving their affiliation to Lebanon. If their documents are in order, there should not be any problems in entering Lebanon again, however if not they may face similar difficulties as PRS. There may be cases of families that are mixed marriages between PRS and PRL and therefore have documents issued by different authorities which can complicate matters.

When asked whether PRL who have resided in Syria for longer periods are allowed entry into Lebanon, the General Security said that as long as this person is registered with DPAR in Lebanon, there will be no problem returning to the country.

According to DPAR, a Palestinian from Lebanon who is registered with DPAR and who has taken up residence in Syria for many years would be able to return to Lebanon where he is registered if his documents and his political and criminal records are in order. Such an individual would be able to return whenever he or she wishes. The fact that he has lived in Syria for many years will not remove him from DPAR's records regardless of whether he has renewed his travel documents in the meantime. Such a person has only to show his document for registration with DPAR at the border in order to enter Lebanon. But if his political or criminal record is not in order, it will appear in the database at the border and he will not be able to enter. It was stressed that changes in DPAR's records are not done automatically but through requests from the persons registered.

The international organization said that while PRL men who marry PRS women (in Syria) cannot be registered with Syria's General Administration for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR), PRL women marrying PRS men can. As it officially is not possible to hold DPAR and GAPAR registration simultaneously, a PRL woman registering with GAPAR following her marriage to a PRS man in Syria would have to forfeit her DPAR registration (in Lebanon). She would then be treated as a PRS by the Lebanese authorities and would face significant obstacles entering Lebanon due to the current restriction in place. In such a case, her family members in Lebanon (with permanent residency) may try to apply for a pre-approved visa, however it remains unclear in light of the new restrictions whether such pre-approved visa would be granted.

DPAR explained that it is not possible for a Palestinian to be registered as a refugee simultaneously both in Syria and in Lebanon. In case a Palestinian refugee has been registered and obtained refugee status in Syria, she or he will consequently be struck from DPAR's registry in Lebanon, when a request has been issued by the General Security regarding this. The source did not consider that the Syrian authorities in general allow Palestinians from Lebanon to register as Palestinian refugees in Syria. There could be exceptions in the event of a case of political asylum in Syria.

## 2. Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon

### 2.1. Entry and legal status of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS)

#### 2.1.1. Entry

According to the international organization in Lebanon, the new restrictions implemented in May of 2014 limit entry to Lebanon to PRS possessing an entry document pre-approved by the General Security, or a residency permit, or an exit and entry travel document for multiple entries travels. In order to obtain a pre-approved visa, they need to have a guarantor from Lebanon or a PRL who sponsors the request for visa. PRS in possession of valid visas and valid plane tickets to a third country are permitted to enter a maximum of 9 hours prior to the time of their flight.<sup>13</sup> At this stage (June 2014), it is not possible to predict how this new regulation will be administered, who will be allowed entry on this basis and for how long. There are concerns that the process of applying for pre-approved entry visa could also take some time thereby prolonging the wait before being able to enter legally.

The international organization said that even if a PRS has a visa appointment at an embassy, he or she will not automatically be allowed entry. With regards to persons in need of medical care, there are reports that some persons were allowed entry if they had appointments at the hospital. It is not clear, however, whether this is still the case.

The source added that there is no official information available regarding how many PRS are entering Lebanon illegally. There are anecdotal reports of PRS who have crossed into Lebanon illegally, including through bypassing or bribing their way through the regular border crossings.

The source referred to publicly available information according to which there are approximately 53,000 PRS recorded in Lebanon.<sup>14</sup> Compared to Syrian nationals whose number in Lebanon is over one million, PRS have faced difficulties with regard to entering Lebanon since the beginning of the conflict in Syria. In the beginning of the Syrian conflict, in order to enter Lebanon, PRS were required an exit permit from Syria; on the Lebanese border, PRS then received a transit visa which allowed them 15 days of legal stay in Lebanon; this was then able to be transferred to a short-term residency of three months in Lebanon which initially cost 33 USD. In approximately January 2013, this fee was waived and the permit to stay was made renewable for up to a year. In the case of Syrian nationals, there is no requirement of an exit permit before being allowed entry to Lebanon, and upon showing up at the Lebanese border, Syrian nationals are automatically given a six

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<sup>13</sup>For more information, the source referred to: "UNRWA Response and Services to Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon", Monthly Briefing, 31 May 2014, Issue 35.

<sup>14</sup>53,070 PRS registered with UNRWA, Syria Regional Crisis Response Update 75, 25 May 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/syria-regional-crisis-response-update-75>

months visa which is renewable free of charge for a further six month period. Syrians have to pay 200 USD per person in order to renew their stay for another year.<sup>15</sup>

The international organization said that in August 2013, restrictions were imposed on PRS entering Lebanon according to which only certain categories of PRS were allowed entry. Those that were allowed entry included 1) Palestinians who had an embassy appointment or a medical appointment which both needed to be documented, 2) Palestinians married to Lebanese or a PRL, 3) Palestinians who were students at a Lebanese university 4) Palestinians who had a visa and ticket for a third country and 5) those who had direct family members already in Lebanon whom they were joining.

With regard to the current situation for PRS entering Lebanon, UNHCR said that few dozen have managed to cross the border in the last few months and that the entry for PRS has been restricted. Last year the number of PRS having entered Lebanon was estimated at approximately 97,000. However according to the UNRWAs recording of the Palestinians, the number of PRS is approximately 52,000.

The General Security informed the delegation that at the beginning of the crisis in Syria in 2011, The General Security adopted more lenient rules with regard to PRS and their possibility to enter and stay in Lebanon by granting them a one week visa upon arrival which was then renewed to three months and it could subsequently be renewed every three months up to a maximum of one year. For entry into Lebanon, PRS were only required to present identification documents at the border proving that they were Palestinians from Syria as well as permission (exit permit) from the Syrian Immigration Department that they could return to Syria. PRS could renew their residence permit for free up to one year. A fee of 33 USD was necessary for extensions after one year.

When asked if there are written regulations or circulars in which the rules for regulating the entry and stay of PRS in Lebanon are specified, the General Security explained that the regulations are set out by the Director-General of the General Security and that circulars on recent changes in administration of rules are first of all for internal use and not available to the public.

Concerning who is allowed entry according to the current regulations, The General Security said that it is now decided on a case by case basis by The General Security who is allowed entry. If a PRS arrives at the border to Lebanon, he will not automatically get permission to enter the country and the officer at the border will first ask The General Security whether the person in question can be granted permission to enter. As a rule, it is now only PRS who have already obtained pre-

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<sup>15</sup> UNHCR informed the delegation that with regards to travel between Syria and Lebanon, the two countries have had a bilateral agreement according to which Syrians can enter Lebanon and get a visa at the official entry point. To get a visa, a Syrian has to have a Syrian ID document and he will then get a six months visa which allows them to stay legally in Lebanon for six months. On the road border points, Syrian refugees only need to show their ID cards to enter while at airports, it is necessary to present Syrian passport.

approved permission from the General Security who will be allowed to enter. In addition, if a PRS can prove that he or she is only staying in Lebanon in transit and on the way to another country, i.e. provide documentation in the form of valid tickets and visa for a third country, he will be granted a permission to stay in Lebanon for nine hours. Also in the event that a person has an appointment with an embassy, he will be permitted to stay in Lebanon for up to 72 hours.

Regarding how a PRS obtains a pre-approved visa allowing entry at the border, The General Security explained that a family member or another close relation (even a friend) to the PRS who wants to enter can apply for a pre-approved visa on his behalf in Lebanon. This person acts as a guarantor for the applicant and is required to bring a copy of the person's identification document to The General Security and inform The General Security of the reason for the visit as well as provide guarantees that he or she is responsible for the PRS in question. PRS themselves can also apply for a pre-approved visa via Lebanese embassies abroad.

The Western embassy (1) stated that since August of 2013, it has become increasingly difficult for PRS to enter Lebanon. As the embassy became aware of the increasing difficulties for individuals with appointments at the embassy, it started, in September of 2013, providing the individuals with e-mails or faxes/letters from the embassy confirming the appointment which they could show at the border. This however, did not suffice for The General Security at the border and the embassy soon after started experiencing that The General Security called the embassy to check if the letter/email/fax was genuine. The source added that the Western embassy (1) sometimes receives emails or telephone calls from PRS who ask for the embassy's help as they are not permitted to enter Lebanon by the Lebanese authorities at the border.

The embassy mentioned a case in January or February of 2014 involving two young PRS who had been living in Lebanon without any legal visa or residency for more than a year. They had an appointment at the embassy and had traveled back to Syria to acquire the documents that they thought they would need but they were restricted from reentering Lebanon. An invitation letter from the embassy did not ease their entry at border and The General Security would only allow them to cross if the embassy could guarantee that the two individuals would leave Lebanon again. The embassy of course could not guarantee this, but after several calls between the embassy and the General Security and thanks to some personal connections they were finally allowed in and could attend the interview.

Concerning PRS and their possibility to enter Lebanon, the Western embassy (2) stated that PRS' access to Lebanon has recently been tightened markedly and a large number of PRS are refused entrance at the border by the Lebanese authorities, particularly since May of 2014 when new restrictions have been implemented. The source added that throughout the Syrian crisis, Lebanon has all in all kept its borders open to refugees. However, as the country is increasingly overburdened by the refugees, it is starting to restrict entry first of all for the PRS.

According to the source, a year ago, the amount of PRS was projected to rise to approximately 100,000 persons by the end of 2013. However, when UNRWA put a new regulation into force whereby assistance was restricted to those PRS who could document that they had been staying in Lebanon for 14 days, the number of PRS dropped dramatically. Currently, the number of PRS stands at approximately 53,000 PRS.

When asked whether it is possible for PRS to enter Lebanon through unofficial borders, the Western embassy (2) replied that although the border between Lebanon and Syria is porous, most of the people crossing the unofficial border are those living in the mountainous border areas who know the area very well. Crossing the unofficial border is thus not necessarily an option for instance, for PRS from the Yarmouk refugee camp near Damascus, the source added.

Regarding illegal entry (according to Lebanese law and not necessarily international law), Dalia Aranki (NRC) considered that few PRS have entered Lebanon irregularly. However, in light of the growing restrictions on entry for PRS, the source anticipated that more would try to enter illegally.

The Western embassy (3) also confirmed that the Lebanese government has restricted PRS' possibility to enter Lebanon starting with restrictions in August 2013 and then new restrictions in May 2014 that de facto barred PRS from seeking safety in Lebanon. While Syrian refugees are still only required to have a Syrian ID card to enter Lebanon, PRS have always been required to get an exit stamp (exit permit) from the Syrian authorities, obtained at the Palestine Branch for Immigration and Passports in Damascus in order to enter Lebanon. In August of 2013, the Lebanese authorities started enforcing informal restrictions on PRS where having valid documents from Syria along with an exit stamp (exit permit) was no longer sufficient in order to obtain entry visa at the border. PRS were from then on required to have a valid reason for staying in Lebanon.

According to the Western embassy (3), there are no written specific instructions defining the new restrictions and their enforcement, however it seems that as of August 2013, PRS were required to justify their stay for example with flight tickets documenting traveling through Lebanon as a transit country, documentation of an appointment at an embassy in Beirut, documentation of marriage to Lebanese national or documentation of rental contracts from Lebanon. The source added that after August 2013, the treatment of PRS at the border with regard to their entrance into Lebanon became very arbitrary. There were days where no PRS were allowed entry and other days where up to 300 were allowed to enter. Whether or not a PRS was allowed entry was basically decided upon at the border.

Now, after the new restrictions in May 2014 have been enforced, the border is de facto closed for PRS seeking safety in Lebanon, the Western Embassy (3) added. There are a few exceptions: 1) PRS who are transiting through Lebanon are allowed to enter nine hours before their flight from Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut if they can show flight tickets, and there is a control at the airport itself to ensure that they are on board the flight; 2) PRS can sometimes obtain entry to Lebanon if they have an appointment with an Embassy, but this is not always the case (Embassies

are encouraged to share lists of PRS with appointments with The General Security beforehand and the border security is verifying with their headquarters in Beirut whether the PRS at the border actually are on the list, but sometimes this procedure is not done in a timely manner and if the approval does not arrive on time for the appointment, they are refused entry); 3) PRS who are married to Lebanese nationals are normally allowed entry. There are several cases of families being separated due to the restrictions (for example a PRS mother married to a Syrian man is not allowed entry while her husband and children are and vice versa, i.e. a Syrian mother is allowed entry, but not her PRS husband and their children).

Dalia Aranki (NRC) stated that under the current circumstances in Lebanon, hardly any PRS can cross the border into the country. Since summer of 2013, PRS have been required to document the reason for their stay in order to enter. Recently (May 2014), the government enforced further restrictions on the entry of PRS to Lebanon, stating that it has gone back to pre-crisis regulations. In order to enter Lebanon, PRS have to fulfill certain criteria and the authorities are very meticulous in checking that everything is in order. If a PRS enters Lebanon through the airport, he or she is only allowed to enter nine hours before he or she has a flight onwards to another country.

When asked about the Lebanese government's current policy with regard to entry and legal status of PRS entering into Lebanon from Syria, PHRO stated that the procedure for entry of PRS to Lebanon has never been transparent from the outset. According to the source, Lebanon is refusing to state that PRS are refugees. Even in the case of Syrians, the Lebanese government is reluctant to use the word "refugees" and they apply instead the term "displaced".

PHRO explained that there has been a difference in how the different groups of refugees coming out of Syria are treated upon entry into Lebanon where PRS from the outset have been discriminated against. The discrimination starts at the border control where Syrian refugees automatically are given permission to stay in Lebanon for three months while PRS have not been able to enjoy the same possibility even before the enforcement of the recent restrictions. Prior to recent tightening of regulations, when a PRS wished to enter, he or she could enter and stay for one week, valid for up to 15 days, which could subsequently be extended for one to three months at a time. The Lebanese authorities additionally required of PRS that they obtain an exit permit from the Syrian authorities, obtained at the Palestine Branch for Immigration and Passports in Damascus, before being allowed entry.

Asked about PRS' possibility to enter Lebanon, DRC stated that the border is practically closed to PRS as they are required to document their identity and prove that they will not stay in the country for a long time. The source added that those who are allowed to enter get a 14 day visa and they are expected to leave the country after the visa has expired.

Concerning entry into Lebanon for PRS, AJIAL mentioned that there is an especially strict control for PRS entering Lebanon through the airport. Regardless of which country PRS enter Lebanon



from, they are allowed to enter for 24 hours before having to leave again if they do not have any prior permission to stay. These restrictions are now fully applied on all border crossings making it difficult for any PRS to enter Lebanon. To exemplify, UNRWA used to have a legal adviser by the border, but since no Palestinians are allowed entry anymore this service is no longer provided by UNRWA.

AJIAL added that the restrictions on PRS to enter Lebanon persist and have been reinforced allowing basically no one to enter. As an example, Amnesty International has published a report on the matter explaining how PRS families are ripped apart across the borders of Lebanon and Syria.<sup>16</sup> The source added that it had been informed that UNRWA did not expect the numbers of PRS to increase in Lebanon due to these restrictions, which is also why the UNRWA supposedly intends to phase out their emergency program in the nearest future, leaving the main responsibility on the shoulders of local NGO's.

Nadim Houry (HRW) stated that the Lebanese authorities started making it more difficult for PRS to enter Lebanon in the autumn of 2013 leading to finally making it nearly impossible in May of 2014.

Pursue stated that last September (2013), Lebanese authorities denied access to Lebanon for PRS. A couple of months ago, the situation got more complicated as Lebanese General Security does not allow extensions of residency permit for PRS.

Sari Hanafi (AUB) said that he personally knows a number of PRS who have entered or have tried to enter Lebanon. Sari Hanafi stated that since the beginning of May 2014, only PRS who have tickets to a third country and documents which show that they are going to use Lebanon as a country of transit are able to enter Lebanon. These PRS get a 15 day visa which they will not be able to renew. If they do not leave Lebanon within 15 days and they can document that they will leave Lebanon within 48 hours, then the authorities will extend their visa for a very short period of time, for example four days.

On the subject of entry to Lebanon for PRS, Marie Daunay (CLDH) stated that the Lebanese authorities have been allowing Syrians and Palestinians to enter since 2012 and since August of 2012, the Lebanese authorities formally stopped all deportations of refugees from Syria. However, PRS have always been discriminated against when it comes to entry into Lebanon as they have been obligated to provide an exit permit from the Syrian authorities before being allowed entry to Lebanon which is not a requirement for Syrian nationals.

Sahar Atrache (ICG) said that in general, it seems that the Lebanese government has set forth a policy to stop additional influx of PRS to Lebanon.

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<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International, *Lebanon: Denied Refuge: Palestinians from Syria Seeking Safety in Lebanon*, 1 July 2014, MDE 18/002/2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/families-ripped-apart-palestinian-refugees-syria-denied-entry-lebanon-2014-07-01>

### 2.1.2. Legal status

Regarding the legal status of Syrians as well as PRS fleeing Syria for Lebanon, UNHCR said that officially the Lebanese government has called them “displaced” and refrained from using the term “refugees”. Lebanon is not state party to the 1951 Convention and there is no asylum system in Lebanon. Legally speaking, this means that Syrian refugees fall under the Immigration laws and they are therefore allowed to remain in Lebanon like other foreigners as long as they have a legal residency document.<sup>17</sup>

According to the international organization, in May 2014, the Lebanese Government implemented further restrictions on both PRS seeking to enter Lebanon and those already inside the country seeking to maintain regular legal status by extending their visas. Between 3-22 May of 2014, there was an effective freeze on PRS visa renewals, with the exception of three-month renewals for PRS who had already paid USD 200 to renew their legal status for a second year. This freeze was lifted slightly following the 21 May General Directorate of The General Security circular which gave PRS with irregular status one month to regularize their status with The General Security (until 22 June).

According to the source, since the end of June (2014), it has been clarified that PRS who have entered through regular channels and who have maintained a valid visa can continue to obtain three month temporary residency permits free of charge for up to one year from the date of entry.<sup>18</sup> However, opportunities for PRS to prolong their legal status in the country remain limited. No further extensions are currently being provided for those who have been in the country for more than one year and who have not, prior to the restrictions, paid 200 USD for a second year of legal stay.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the vast majority of PRS in Lebanon will have expired visas and will be denied the opportunity to obtain valid legal status, and thus, will be reluctant to seek the assistance of the Lebanese authorities.

The General Security said that in the beginning of May 2014, The General Security set down new regulations with regard to renewal of visas for PRS. The reason behind this was, according to the source, abuses of the renewal procedures among PRS. According to the new regulations, the

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<sup>17</sup> UNHCR informed the delegation that the visa given to Syrians who enter Lebanon legally is valid for six months and it can be renewed for another six months for free. At the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Syrians were obliged to exit and enter again in order to get visas renewed. However, currently (May 2014), Syrians can legally and continuously stay in Lebanon for a period of a year. After one year stay in Syria when the visa expires, the individual is left with two choices, either to return to Syria and reenter Lebanon and thereby get a new visa free or apply for a new visa necessitating a fee of 200 USD per person above the age of 15 years. The 200 USD entitles for twelve months legal stay which is formally renewed every six months.

UNHCR explained that UNHCR and other donors are currently doing a lot of advocacy to get the fee waived as this is an immense financial burden on Syrians who have fled to Lebanon. However, so far this effort has not been successful and the population of Syrian refugees without legal status in Lebanon is increasing. It is estimated that by the end of 2014, approximately 288,000 Syrians will be without legal status in Lebanon.

<sup>18</sup> This was communicated to DIS in August 2014 after the completion of the mission.

<sup>19</sup> For more information, the source referred to: “UNRWA Response and Services to Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon”, Monthly Briefing, 30 June 2014, Issue 36.

automatic renewal of visas to stay in Lebanon for PRS is no longer possible and it is The General Security which decides on a case by case basis whether a visa can be renewed.

Asked how the Lebanese authorities can localize the PRS who are residing illegally in Lebanon, the source stated that PRS's residential addresses in Lebanon are usually entered into the database of The General Security and the authorities are thereby informed of where they are staying.

Concerning those who have crossed the border irregularly, the General Security stated that such an individual will be granted two weeks to leave the country and will be banned from entering Lebanon.

Concerning what factors are considered when assessing the applications of PRS who wish to renew their stay, the General Security said that several factors play a role. For example, there may be humanitarian considerations such as vital medical treatment in Lebanon or family relations. The source stressed that there are no definite set of criteria and that cases are assessed on a case by case basis and that all decisions are taken by the Director-General.

Dalia Aranki, NRC said that refugees from Syria are not considered refugees by the Lebanese authorities who call these refugees "displaced". Registration with UNHCR and UNRWA has thus no effect on the legal status of a refugee from Syria in Lebanon. The source added that PRS have always had a different set of regulations than Syrians entering Lebanon with regard to entry and stay. Previously, upon entry, PRS were given a visa for seven days which was extended for three months and was renewable for up to a year. In the present situation, PRS are not able to renew their visa after a year.

The Western embassy (3) said that in addition to the de facto border closure for PRS, they are no longer allowed to renew their residence permit in Lebanon. For Syrian nationals, it costs 200 USD per person to renew the residence to stay in Lebanon legally if they have stayed in the country for more than one year, however few Syrian refugees can afford this. PRS are not allowed to renew their stay anymore. UNRWA is seeking to reverse the decision [on restriction renewal for PRS] and return to the previous policy and it has received some oral assurances to this effect, but the source stated that it was not in the position to confirm this. This severely restricts the freedom of movement of PRS, particularly as many live in Palestinian refugee camps whose entry and exit are controlled by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).

With regard to the legal status of PRS who have fled Syria for Lebanon, UNHCR said that it seems that all PRS who have entered Lebanon on the now revoked visa-on-arrival scheme, may become illegal. However, it was stressed that the situation is very fluid and it is difficult to interpret what is meant in the circulars from the General Security with regard to how rules for entry and stay for PRS will be practiced. It seems PRS whose visas have expired, will not be able to renew them.

The Western embassy (2) said that PRS are also facing problems with renewal of visas ensuring legal stay in Lebanon and that this is becoming an urgent issue for many as their visas expire.

PHRO said that Lebanon has currently a no-stay policy when it comes to PRS as they are not allowed to extend their stay anymore and they are requested to leave the country as soon as possible. PHRO stated that the organization knows of specific cases of PRS whose legal status in Lebanon has expired and who have tried to renew their stay, but their application has been denied and they have instead been told that they have 48 hours to leave Lebanon.

When asked which categories of Palestinians that are allowed entry into Lebanon, PHRO stated that from the preliminary data that the organization has collected so far, PRS are not being allowed entry at the border. Since May 3rd 2014, further restrictions have been announced from the Lebanese authorities, demanding that PRS entering from Syria obtain a pre-approved visa before being allowed entry in Lebanon. In order to apply for this visa, a PRS has to have a direct family member inside Lebanon that will act as a guarantor. The person in Lebanon has to apply for a preapproved visa on behalf of the PRS in Syria. PHRO said that it is too soon to say how this procedure will work and who will be allowed entry on this account and the organization stressed that it is in no way transparent how this mechanism functions.

Concerning the growing restrictions with regard to PRS entry and stay in Lebanon since May 3rd 2014, Marie Daunay (CLDH) said that The General Security is no longer renewing the visas of PRS who are in Lebanon. On May 22, 2014 the Director-General of The General Security announced a three months grace period in which PRS who were in Lebanon illegally could renew their visas and thus regularize their stay. However, there have not been any examples of PRS actually being able to renew their visas and it seems that The General Security is no longer renewing visas for PRS. With regards to PRS entering Lebanon, it was decided by The General Security in the course of May 2014 that PRS would not be able to enter Lebanon, neither through the airport nor through the land border crossings, without prior permission to stay and it seems that the entry of PRS is now blocked. The source had heard of cases of PRS not being able to enter Lebanon in the past few weeks. She added that there have very recently been some cases of PRS with families already in Lebanon who tried to cross the border to join them in Lebanon but who were turned back.

Marie Dauney (CLDH) further said that the Lebanese authorities do not want PRS to end up staying in Lebanon permanently as has been the case with the Palestinians who sought refuge in Lebanon decades ago. Currently, also the presence of so many Syrians in Lebanon is being framed by some as a “Syrian occupation” and a security issue.

The source considered that in the current situation in Lebanon, the policy of the Lebanese government aims at driving refugees from Syria out of Lebanon and back to Syria which is also illustrated in the propositions of building camps inside of Syria for those fleeing insecurity.

Nadim Houry (HRW) informed the delegation that Palestinian refugees were previously able to renew their visas in Lebanon for one year. Since the beginning of May 2014, it has been very difficult for PRS to renew their visas and there have been examples of PRS applying for renewal of six months who have been granted 15 days to leave Lebanon.

According to Nadim Houry (HRW), denial of entry at the border, risk of being deported to no man's land between Syria and Lebanon<sup>20</sup> and lack of possible extensions of visas and thus legal status are among the biggest problems which PRS are facing in Lebanon at the moment.

Nadim Houry (HRW) added that he knew a large number of PRS who desperately had spent the last of their money in order to reach Europe through smuggling networks as they could not find jobs in Lebanon and they felt that they were not welcome in the country.

As regards PRS whose residence permit is expired and who are thereby living illegally in Lebanon, there is no way to legalize their residence, according to Sari Hanafi (AUB).

The international organization said that PRS who have entered Lebanon illegally can regularize their presence in Lebanon through a 'mercy plea' and payment of LBP 950,000 (approximately 630 USD). They will be subject to a police investigation and while their status will be regularized, under the current circumstances they will likely be issued with a departure order.

When asked whether a person who has come to Lebanon illegally is able to regularize his stay in Lebanon, Dalia Aranki (NRC) said that such an option is available in theory. This is done through an application of mercy ('mercy petition') to the General Security, which costs (approximately) 600 USD. If this is granted, the annual cost for renewal of stay is 200 USD. Such a permission to regularize is granted at the discretion of The General Security. The source added that a person who is in Lebanon illegally would have to feel comfortable enough to go to the General Security to make such an application. Syrians may try to apply for regularization if they have the money required. As regards PRS, since the recent statements from The General Security about their stay in Lebanon, they would very rarely approach the General Security.<sup>21</sup>

According to the international organization, it is not easy for Palestinians who arrive in Lebanon from a different country to register with DPAR. "Non-ID Palestinians", of whom there are presently

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<sup>20</sup> No man's land is territory between the Syrian border (at Jdeidet Yabous) and the Lebanese border (at Al Masnaa border crossing).

<sup>21</sup> Concerning Syrian refugees, UNHCR explained that all Syrians are not coming through the regular border points. Although it is difficult to follow, it is considered that 12.6% of Syrians in Lebanon [approximately 120,000] have crossed the border through illegal crossings. The source added that according to a research conducted by Norwegian Refugee Council this percentage is higher. The research also shows that the number of irregular border crossings in the northwest of Bekaa and Wadi Khaled is the highest.

Concerning whether those who have entered Lebanon irregularly are able to regularize their stay with the Lebanese authorities, the source said that this is possible, however it is very expensive. If a person pays 633 USD, he will be back to the normal channels in which he can stay in Lebanon for up to a year, extending after the first six months. After this year has passed, he will be required to pay 200 USD as is the case with others who wish to renew after a year.

over 4,000 in Lebanon, for example, came to Lebanon in the 1970s after the Black September conflict in Jordan, but could not register with DPAR and thus lack any legal status in Lebanon.<sup>22</sup>

Concerning PRL who have lived in Syria for many years and who wish to return to Lebanon, Pursue said that they are able to return and take up residence.

Concerning PRL who have stayed in Syria for many years and now want to come back to Syria, Sari Hanafi (AUB) stated that unless one has regularly renewed his residency in Lebanon, he or she will not be able to reenter Lebanon as the Lebanese authorities deregister Palestinians who have not renewed their stay in Lebanon.

The international organization said that Palestinians leaving Syria retain their registration with UNRWA in Syria. If a Palestinian leaves Syria, there is currently no indication that he or she will be unable to return to Syria because of loss of legal status.

The Western embassy (2) was under the impression that a Palestinian registered as a Palestinian refugee in Syria cannot undo his registration in Syria and become registered as a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon.

### **2.1.3. Impacts of lack of legal status**

UNHCR considered that the impacts of having an illegal status in Lebanon are severe for those refugees involved. For example, in terms of movement, the lack of legal status is a major impediment. In many areas of Lebanon where Syrians and PRS, there are numerous checkpoints, making it very difficult for them to move around and access any type of employment. In the poor areas such as Wadi Khaled and Aarsal where a large number of refugees are staying, many are afraid to move around because of their lack of legal residency in the country and risks of arrest when passing through checkpoints. Individuals who do not have any legal status in Lebanon risk being detained for hours or days before being released. There have been unconfirmed incidents of refugees from Syria being beaten upon detention, however this is an area which is impossible to monitor. Generally, the Syrian refugees and PRS live in difficult circumstances and the lack of legal status adds to the difficulties they face.

According to the international organization in Lebanon, more and more, PRS do not have regular legal status in Lebanon because of expired visas and they are therefore generally reluctant to approach the authorities in any matters. When asked what PRS will do once their legal status expires, the source considered that they will confine themselves to the camps or gatherings. Those who encounter the authorities without valid permission to stay in the country will have their papers stamped with indications that they have 48 hours to leave the country. Therefore, PRS are likely to try to avoid the authorities in any way. If a PRS has his papers stamped, he can continue

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<sup>22</sup>For further information, the source referred to Danish Refugee Council, *Survey Report on the Situation of Non-ID Palestinian Refugees - Lebanon*, September 2007. UNRWA provides primary health care and education services to this group, but they are not registered with UNRWA in Lebanon.

staying in Lebanon illegally but it will be much more difficult for him to access a job as his freedom of movement gets restricted due to the fear for being caught by the authorities again. Up until now, there have been no examples of PRS being deported from the country.

Dalia Aranki (NRC) considered that many PRS are confined to staying within the camps for fear of being detained by the Lebanese authorities due to their illegal residence in the country. In most of the cases where PRS have been arrested by the authorities, the person has been arrested at a checkpoint on his way into or out of a camp. It is not as difficult for the illegal PRS to leave the camps as it is when they want to enter. It is not clear whether PRS with expired visas will be allowed to renew their visas and NRC is not advising PRS without legal stay to approach the General Security as they could risk being told to leave the country. The source pointed out that the General Security is accessed through a number of regionally based offices which each have their own way of administering the regulations concerning renewals of visas for PRS. What will happen to a PRS approaching a The General Security Office to apply for a renewal of his visa will therefore always be subject to some uncertainty.

According to Marie Daunay (CLDH), movement can be restricted for persons without legal status in Lebanon such as the situation for PRS whose visa has expired. The source explained that persons without permission to stay in Lebanon can risk being arrested by The General Security which is responsible for all immigration issues. The General Security has its own detention facility where individuals are arbitrarily detained for illegally staying in Lebanon. According to regulations, a person can be held in the facility for a period of four days at the most. However, in practice, detainees are kept for longer periods.

Marie Dauneay (CLDH) explained that The General Security's detention facility for illegal immigrants is located in an underground parking facility under a bridge in Beirut and consists of 13 cells which basically are cages with no lights. The guards are all male although the detainees also comprise women. There is no access for lawyers to the facility. One NGO has access to the detainees according to an agreement with the authorities which preconditions that it does not reveal what goes on inside. The center can accommodate 250 detainees but given the current situation in Lebanon, the number of detainees is more than 800 individuals. It was further explained that the decision to detain and release foreigners is administrative. Therefore, these cases are not decided before a judiciary and it is The General Security's Director-General who can solely decide who can stay and who must leave.

Regarding the procedure which persons arrested due to lack of legal status go through, Marie Dauneay (CLDH) explained that if arrested by Internal Security Forces (ISF), the person may be held at a local police station before being passed over to The General Security which will then transfer the individual to Beirut to be investigated. It takes a minimum of two weeks before the investigation is fully conducted and a decision is made on the case. The detainee is then issued a paper which says that he has to leave the country. It was however added that the detainee is likely

to stay for longer periods in a police detention facility before being moved to the General Security's detention facility due to lack of space in the General Security facility.

The Western embassy (3) said that another issue stemming from the impossibility of PRS to regularise their stay in Lebanon is that they cannot register births as you need to legally reside in the country to do this. This is similar for Syrian refugees, but they at least have the possibility to renew their residence permits if they can afford it or travel back to Syria and then return to Lebanon which is not the case for PRS.<sup>23</sup>

The international medical humanitarian NGO said that PRS living inside the camps and having no valid visa will risk being arrested if they leave the camp in order to go to a hospital in a situation in which the Lebanese authorities have restricted entry and legal stay for this population. And those who do take the risk are financially burdened by the cost of treatments in Lebanon.

Concerning the conditions for Palestinian refugees from Syria who have moved to the camps in Lebanon, Mahmoud M. Abbas (CYC) said that their situation is difficult and that the conflict in Syria and its effects is driving desperate people to make very difficult choices and behave in certain ways. For example, the source mentioned that he had heard of issues regarding early marriage among PRS girls, where families have married their young girls off to others for money.

#### **2.1.4. Risk of deportation to Syria**

UNHCR said that in the beginning of the crisis in Syria, there were some cases of deportation of Syrians from Lebanon but as of August 2012, Lebanon announced an official stop of deportations of Syrians who lack legal residency in Lebanon and the source had not heard of any cases of deportations to Syria since then. The situation, however, is unstable and policies may change on these matters given the current political situation and the pressures Lebanon is facing with a refugee population of 1.5 million.

The international organization confirmed that persons passing through checkpoints in Lebanon without a valid visa, including PRS, are liable to be detained by the authorities. Some camps have checkpoints all around them, such as Ein el-Hillweh and Nahr el-Bared. There are a number of cases of PRS who have been detained at checkpoints manned by either ISF or LAF due to expired visas. Assuming background checks do not reveal any criminal record, PRS are usually passed through the system to the General Security and then released without charge – a process which generally takes up to a week. On release, PRS are usually told they must return to Syria, however to date such departure orders have not been enforced.

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<sup>23</sup> The Western embassy (3) said that the residency of Syrians in Lebanon starts anew and that they can stay legally in Lebanon for one year. After completing the mission, it has come to the attention of DIS that the Lebanese authorities have announced policy changes limiting Syrian refugees' possibility to leave and reenter Lebanon. However, the delegation is not in possession of information regarding how entry and exit for Syrians is regulated by the authorities since the announcement of policy changes.



Concerning prevalence of deportation of PRS to Syria, the international organization said that there are reports of an incident in May this year (2014) where a group of Palestinians were stopped at the airport in Beirut for allegedly holding forged visas for Libya.<sup>24</sup> 41 of them, believed to be PRS, were put on a bus to the Masnaa crossing and left in no man's land between Syria and Lebanon – the persons in question were not officially handed over to the Syrian authorities. However, there is no information available regarding cases of individuals being deported to Syria, i.e. being handed over to the Syrian authorities.

When asked what happens to PRS who are unable to renew their status in Lebanon, The General Security said that such individuals have no legal status in Lebanon and must return to Syria. According to the source, if a person whose legal stay has expired is encountered by the authorities, for example at a security checkpoint, he will be arrested. The General Security will then grant the individual a period of time, for example two weeks, to get his affairs together and to leave the country. If the two weeks have passed and the person is still in the country and he is caught at a checkpoint, he will be brought to the General Security and he will once again be given a new deadline to leave the country, for example 48 hours. From a legal perspective, he is in the country against the rules of residency and he can be deported back to Syria and he will not be allowed to return to Lebanon. However, there have been no deportations by the authorities of persons from Syria, Palestinians or Syrians, who have been caught without legal residency in Lebanon.

Asked about deportation of PRS to Syria, the Western embassy (3) replied that in spring-summer of 2011, two brothers were reportedly deported to Syria but since then no deportation has taken place. However, the source mentioned that on May 3rd of this year (2014), a group of 41 PRS were arrested at Beirut airport holding forged visas and they were transported to no-man's land between Lebanon and Syria. Three of those PRS who were arrested at the Beirut Airport were stranded in the no-man's land because they refused to return to Syria voluntarily.

The Western embassy (3) said that if PRS residing illegally in Lebanon are caught in a checkpoint by the security forces, they are detained for some hours and then released. They may receive a deportation order, but it is currently not being enforced, i.e. they are not actually being deported from Lebanon.

DRC said that it had never heard of any PRS being deported back to Syria except the 41 PRS who were recently sent back (May 2014) into the no man's land between Syria and Lebanon.

Marie Dauney (CLDH) said that although Syrians and PRS whose visa has expired and who have no way of regularizing their stay are required to leave the country, this is not enforced by the authorities.

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<sup>24</sup> UNRWA, PRS in Lebanon, <http://www.unrwa.org/prs-lebanon>

According to Marie Daunay (CLDH), although the authorities are not deporting PRS without a valid visa, those who are confronted with the authorities because of illegal stay will be told that they have to leave the country. It is however not applied and PRS thus are staying in Lebanon illegally.

Regarding prevalence of deportation of PRS back to Syria, Marie Daunay (CLDH) stated that CLDH had heard of people being sent back to Syria, but that there has been no documentation of that taking place as of yet and it is unclear whether people have actually been deported.

The Western embassy (2) had never heard of any PRS being deported from Lebanon to Syria.

#### **2.1.5. Possibility of family reunification between PRS and PRL**

The international organization said that the restrictions [on entry of PRS] introduced in August 2013 had an effect on family reunification as PRS seeking to join PRS family members already living in Lebanon were since then often prevented from doing so if the residency permit of the PRS in Lebanon had expired. There have been anecdotal reports of cases of PRS who sought to join family members in Lebanon but who were told that if the family wanted to be together, the PRS family members in Lebanon should return to Syria.

Regarding cases of family reunification, the General Security stated that a Palestinian man from Syria married to a Lebanese national can be granted a one year permission to stay upon application. The couple must apply and provide documentation of the marriage to the General Security which assesses the application and if all is in order such an individual will be granted a permission to stay valid for 6 months up to a year. A Syrian Palestinian woman married to a Lebanese national can be granted a courtesy residence permit valid for up to three years.

The General Security emphasized that marriage is not an automatic guarantee for entry and obtaining residence permit in Lebanon and that the granting of residence permit to PRS in family reunification cases is also decided on a case by case basis.

When asked if a Palestinian man from Lebanon married to a Palestinian woman from Syria, who (both) reside in Syria and who now wish to move to Lebanon, would be able to do so, DPAR said that matters concerning entry to Lebanon are dealt with by the General Security. However, the source said that the PRS woman would need to have a valid travel document to enter Lebanon and would have to apply for residency in order to stay. DPAR did not consider that such a permit to reside in Lebanon was difficult to obtain for a woman married to a Palestinian man from Lebanon but the source stressed that these matters are handled by General Security. According to the knowledge of the source, the permit is given for a period of up to six months and is renewable. The source added that Palestinian men from Syria married to Palestinian women from Lebanon face the same regulations and must apply for permission to stay in Lebanon. Children of

Palestinian men from Lebanon married to Palestinian women from Syria would be able to enter and reside in Lebanon as they are considered Palestinians from Lebanon.<sup>25</sup>

Regarding entry to Lebanon from Syria, Pursue said that children of a PRS father and a PRL mother will not be allowed to enter into Lebanon.

## 2.2. Access to basic rights and services for Palestinian Refugees from Syria

Concerning access to the basic services such as education and health care of PRS residing in refugee camps in Lebanon, the Western embassy (3) explained that UNRWA is present in the refugee camps and provides PRS with basic services and in this regard PRS are, according to the source, in a better position compared to Syrian refugees. Although the resources are strained due to the influx of PRS, the source believed that UNRWA has done a good job in ensuring PRS access to housing, education and health care services.

The source conceded that the infrastructures cannot avoid being strained with an additional 50,000 persons being accommodated in already overcrowded areas and that the situation has called for longer queues for both PRL and PRS to access assistance and services.

The source mentioned that when PRS came to Lebanon due to the Syrian crisis, they were initially supposed to be accommodated in UNRWAs schools, but UNRWA insisted on accommodating the PRS outside these buildings as the agency realized that using the schools for accommodation for PRS would eventually hinder the education of PRL children and become a source of conflict between PRL and PRS.

DRC was of the opinion that PRS live in considerably worse conditions in Lebanon compared to Syria. The source explained that in Syria apart from the right to vote, PRS enjoyed the same rights as Syrian nationals and they had access to the same services as the rest of the population and they could be employed both in the private and the public sector. However, in Lebanon PRS are among the most vulnerable groups and their conditions are even worse than those of Syrian refugees due to increasing restrictions on entry and residence in Lebanon since August of 2013 as well as due to restrictions in obtaining work permits. Besides, due to the fact that many Syrians traditionally have traveled to Lebanon for seasonal work, the Syrian refugees appear to have better connections and more established networks to job opportunities in branches such as construction and agriculture compared to PRS. According to DRC, the lack of success in finding a job and the resulting

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<sup>25</sup> The acquisition of nationality by children follows the father and the mother cannot grant her nationality to her children. See Mansour, M. W. & Abou Aad S. G., *Women's Citizenship Rights in Lebanon*, Working Paper Series # 8, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, AUB, May 2012, [http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public\\_policy/rapp/Documents/working\\_paper\\_series/20120504ifi\\_rapp\\_hrp\\_wps08\\_womens\\_citizenship\\_rights\\_in\\_lebanon\\_english.pdf](http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public_policy/rapp/Documents/working_paper_series/20120504ifi_rapp_hrp_wps08_womens_citizenship_rights_in_lebanon_english.pdf)

impoverishment previously forced many PRS to travel back and forth between Syria and Lebanon. However, since January of 2014 and the siege of Yarmouk, and even more so with the recent restrictions on entry, this option is no longer viable for PRS.

Concerning access to education, health care, housing and the labour market, DRC stated that PRL initially had an accommodating attitude towards PRS. However, PRL's patience and hospitality is being exhausted as the resources in refugee camps are increasingly under heavy strain. According to the source, increasing prices on rent in Lebanon which is a result of the influx of Syrian refugees has caused a large number of PRS to stay in PRL's refugee camps. However, as the camps do not have the necessary capacity and infrastructure to accommodate such a great number of people and the refugees have to share the same fragile infrastructure, the situation is growing very tense in the camps. At the same time, the limited access to low-paid jobs in the informal sector, which has been caused by the fierce competition from PRS and Syrian refugees, has created great frustrations and anger among many PRL.

The international organization said that many PRS coming to Lebanon from Syria refer to experiencing a cultural shock. They come from an area (e.g. Syria) where they were provided with widest wide array of rights which they all of a sudden have lost by coming to Lebanon. That PRS express these frustrations by stating that their conditions and circumstances were much better in Syria, is also driving some of the tensions in the refugee camps.

Regarding access to basic services, Pursue considered that the increase in the number of people within the camps where PRS have been finding accommodation has put pressure on the infrastructure with regard to for example access to electricity and water. Although PRS are benefiting from relief services provided by UNRWA, they are still in a dire situation as they are faced with very high rental fees for accommodation as well as poor access to employment. The source pointed out that compared to PRL, PRS families are worse off due to much lower incomes and higher rates of unemployment which makes it difficult for them to cope with high rental fees. The source added that PRS are not able to obtain work permits.

Regarding PRS' access to basic services in Lebanon, Marie Daune (CLDH) said that PRS coming to Lebanon have lived in difficult circumstances in Syria and suffer from the trauma of fleeing their homes. To add to that, it is very difficult for PRS to live in Lebanon, first of all due to the extremely high rental prices and very high costs of living. Overall, there has been an increase in prices in Lebanon while the refugees in Lebanon are getting employed informally at very low wages. The source had heard of cases of Syrians and PRS working as construction workers in exchange for food.

With regard to PRS and their access to basic services, PHRO said that they are treated much in the same way as PRL. UNRWA is also providing services to PRS, however their funds are stretched. It was added that there are also NGOs including some Muslim NGOs that try to provide some services to PRS.

Concerning the de facto difference between PRS and PRL in terms of access to the health care and education, Sari Hanafi (AUB) stated that there is no difference between the two groups in this regard.

### **2.2.1. Access to education**

Concerning access to education, the international organization confirmed that children of PRS have access to UNRWA schools; UNRWA has set up special classes for PRS as these children have followed a different curriculum than what is taught in Lebanon. In upcoming scholastic years, UNRWA will likely include the PRS students in regular classes of PRL.

With regard to PRS access to education in Lebanon, AJIAL said that up until the beginning of 2012, children of PRS did not have access to the school system in Lebanon. However, UNRWA has succeeded in addressing this issue and is now providing PRS children with access to schools.

AJIAL added that some PRS have attempted to start up remedial classes for PRS children in order for the students to catch up on missed schooling as well as to assist them with instruction in French and English which is much more used in the Lebanese school curriculum than in the school system in Syria. One of the major obstacles with regard to schooling for children of PRS is the challenge of space and capacity as the schools are physically not large in size compared to the number of students and there is lack of teachers. In addition, there are many PRS children who either are not enrolled in the schools or fall behind due to lack of capacity and also because they are unable to keep up with the schooling provided. The source underlined that UNRWA does not have enough resources to address the needs of the PRS children. According to AJIAL, the bottom line is that UNRWA's budget was already under enormous strain prior to the influx of PRS. Therefore given the current situation in which UNRWA is attempting to meet the needs of both the Palestinians from Syria and Lebanon, pressure is growing on the services and the infrastructure in place. The source explained that a lot of schools are operating double shifts in order to accommodate the additional Palestinian children coming from Syria.

According to the source, the problem of overcrowded classrooms has always been an issue in the UNRWAs schools in Lebanon and is one of the reasons why UNRWA schools in Lebanon for more than a decade have had the highest amount of school drop-outs compared to the neighboring countries.

AJIAL explained that the poor schooling conditions have led concerned parents to PRS children to express out loud that schools in Lebanon are much worse than those in Syria. The source explained that generally, PRS consider that the living conditions in Lebanon for Palestinians are poorer than those in Syria and this articulation of better conditions in Syria is currently adding to tensions in the camps among PRS and PRL.

Concerning access to education for PRS living in Lebanon, Dalia Aranki (NRC) said that one challenge for PRS is that the curriculum in UNRWA's schools in Lebanon is different from that of

UNRWA schools in Syria which mirror the Syrian system. Another problem for PRS students is that they are currently (May/June 2014) unable to take their final official exams in Lebanon required after completion of the ninth grade. Moreover, the UNRWA schools in Lebanon are also crowded and teaching is organized in morning and afternoon shifts due to the number of students attending classes. Due to the current circumstances of congested schools, some PRL have started complaining about the presence of PRS in the UNRWA schools and there have been cases of PRS children being bullied by other children and in some cases even by teachers. This situation, which has led many PRS children to stay away from school, is according to the source an indication of the growing frustrations and intolerance within the camps among many PRL who less and less accept the presence of PRS in the camps.

Concerning access of children of PRS to schools in Lebanon, DRC stated that PRS children are not well-integrated in UNRWA schools in Lebanon which is partly due to the difference between the school curricula in Syria and Lebanon. For instance PRS' (as well as Syrian refugees') children are not familiar with English and French which children are taught in the early years of their primary education in Lebanon. PRS students facing final exams are in a predicament as they are unable to take their exams in Lebanon and they risk being denied entry to Lebanon if they return to Syria due to the recent enforcement of restrictions on PRS entry into Lebanon.

AJIAL mentioned that a big current issue among students from Syria, both Syrians and PRS, is that they have not been able to go up for final exams of intermediary school (after ninth grade) in Lebanon this past month (May 2014) thus halting their possibilities to enter the secondary school and further their education. Syrian students in Lebanon are unable to return to Syria to take the final exams and no entity in Lebanon has taken responsibility and made a decision on whether these students could take an exam in Lebanon instead. The source added that UNRWA has been involved in some sort of agreement arranging busses to take students to Syria for exams, however many parents were concerned due to security reasons. These students are left on their own and this situation adds to the demoralization of the youth and their thoughts on the future.

With regard to access to education, PHRO highlighted the issue that Syrian refugees, including PRS, are currently unable to take their final official exams that are necessary to be able to continue onto secondary education. This is due to the difference between the Syrian and Lebanese curricula. Without this final exam, Syrian and PRS students will not be able to access secondary education in Syria or Lebanon. For PRS, it is a disaster as there is no option for them to go back to Syria to take the exams because they will not be allowed to return into Lebanon. As regards Syrian students, they are also unable to go back because many are fleeing violent areas of Syria which in some cases are far away from the border to Lebanon. This issue was taken up by organizations at an early stage but the Lebanese government has neglected and failed to act on it so far.

As regards access to education, DRC mentioned that Lebanese and international NGOs and organizations are, according to the law, not allowed to provide PRS with vocational training which

according to the Lebanese authorities will limit the Lebanese workforce to the labour market. This restriction applies to all refugees coming from Syria and not exclusively to PRS. PRL have access to vocational training, yet they have difficulties accessing the labour market. This is the reason why many NGOs have to provide vocational training under other labels, according to the source.

### **2.2.2. Access to health care services**

The international organization said that with regard to access to health care, PRS are able to access the same UNRWA services as PRL. Primary health care is provided by UNRWA directly through its 27 health clinics and secondary care is provided by UNRWA through contracted hospitals. The Agency also contributes to 50% of the costs for tertiary hospitalization for emergency and life-threatening conditions while a further 40% of the costs are covered by an NGO. Nevertheless, due to the very high treatment costs for medical treatment, PRS may still be unable to pay for the remaining fee.

According to the international organization PRS have been accustomed to receiving treatments of a good standard in Syria when it comes to health care which was available at low prices as it was heavily subsidized. Previously on occasion, PRS who needed treatment travelled back to Syria to access needed health care. Now with the new restrictions on entry to Lebanon, those who chose to return to Syria to avail themselves of cheaper healthcare may no longer be able to reenter Lebanon.

The international medical humanitarian NGO said that it has opened medical facilities offering primary health care within the Palestinian camps to assist improve access to primary health care. Most of the patients that the clinics see are Syrian refugees who are treated irrespective of registration with UNHCR (Syrians) or UNRWA (PRS). Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, the humanitarian NGO has seen lots of PRS seeking medical treatment and care at the clinics because of pressure on the existing clinics within the camps.

Concerning PRS' access to health care, Dalia Aranki (NRC) stated that PRS have access to the same clinics providing primary health care as PRL. However, the source considered that PRS and PRL are in a very difficult situation with regard to access to health care. There is almost no access to secondary health care for PRS or PRL as there is hardly any financial support for those types of treatment through UNRWA. Other providers such as local organizations funded by donors other than UNRWA may be able to assist with secondary health care. However as a rule, access to secondary and tertiary health care is not available. Treatments for diseases such as diabetes, cancer or heart disease is not easily available to PRS or PRL. The same is the case with treatment like dialysis, and if offered by some, it would be very limited. Medications are often not available at the clinics and patients often cannot afford to buy medications at local pharmacies.

Dalia Aranki (NRC) said that prior to the enforcement of stricter entry procedures by the Lebanese authorities, many PRS in need of treatment risked travelling back to Syria for their treatments as the Syrian health care system is far cheaper than the Lebanese. The source added that the

majority of Syrians also have difficulties getting assistance for these treatments and that the Lebanese health care system is very expensive.

### **2.2.3. Access to the labour market**

ILO said that PRS are disadvantaged in Lebanon and they cannot even apply for a work permit as PRL can. In Syria, the Palestinians had a better legal status, they had the right to work and they also obtained better skills which is the reason why they are better skilled and educated than PRL. However, the labour market in Lebanon is very small and options are very limited in the informal market which is the only place with employment opportunities for PRS. The source added that it had heard anecdotal stories of complaints from PRL about PRS taking jobs from them. The situation for PRS is extremely difficult due to the fact that they are very poor and in a bad situation given their confinement in camps and their uncertain legal status and particularly because their employment opportunities are quite limited. The source added that many PRS live on charity from fellow PRL.

ILO explained that in Lebanon, there is no social responsibility among employers. To this effect, there have also been reports of formally established Lebanese owned enterprises, i.e. factories and supermarket chains, hiring in Syrians and PRS informally as their main work force because they are willing to work for lower wages.

The Western embassy (2) explained that PRS' access to the labour market is quite restricted in Lebanon. According to the source, contrary to Syrian refugees, it is not possible for PRS to obtain work permit and work legally in Lebanon and they resort to employment in the informal job sector. It was added that due to the current situation in Lebanon, competition for the low-paying jobs in the informal job market is extremely fierce as Syrian refugees, PRL and the low-income unskilled Lebanese workforce are all competing for the few jobs available.

AJIAL said that PRS are accessing employment in the informal sector in branches like construction and they are working under terms and conditions similar to those of PRL. Given the current situation and the fierce competition for the jobs available among the Palestinians and the Syrian refugees who are desperate for employment, wages are very low. The informal job market is small and PRL are increasingly feeling threatened by Syrians and PRS in the fight for jobs available. This, among other things, has been leading to a rise in frustrations within the camps where PRL live, now alongside PRS as well as Syrian refugees.

The source added that there are also a great number of well-educated PRS who cannot use their education for accessing a job in Lebanon which is also the case for PRL. (See also *PRL access to the labour market 1.4.3*)

Dalia Aranki (NRC) said that PRS face the same conditions as PRL with regard to accessing employment. Under the current circumstances with the influx of Syrians and PRS, the informal job



market has grown increasingly competitive and wages are very low. Syrian refugees and PRS are willing to work for very low wages as they are in a desperate situation to earn money.

Dalia Aranki (NRC) explained that PRS who are confined to the camps are unable to access the few jobs available outside of the camps and there are very little job opportunities inside the camps. Regarding how PRS manage to get by, the source considered that many are reliant on remittances from relatives abroad. Some PRS have also travelled onwards to Egypt because the cost of living is lower, however this has stopped due to the fact that Egypt started sending Palestinians back to Syria (often via Lebanon).

Dalia Aranki (NRC) further explained that when PRS lose their legal status it affects the pattern of income generation within the families. As a grown male is more likely to be stopped by the authorities and arrested for illegal stay, women are now more often sent out to find work. There has also been an increase in children being sent out of the camps to work due to the fact that children are less likely to get arrested than their fathers.

With regard to employment among PRL and PRS, Pursue explained that there has always been a problem with underemployment among Palestinians in Lebanon. The organization considered that the issue of unemployment among PRS is becoming more acute due to the fact that PRS now are unable to renew their visa in Lebanon and are thus reluctant to leave the camps for fear of being detained by the Lebanese authorities. The source said that as of May 2014, no PRS are allowed entry to Lebanon and those PRS already residing in Lebanon are unable to renew their visas. Prior to the new restrictions, PRS were permitted to stay in Lebanon for three months which was renewable. (See also 2.1.3. *Impacts of lack of legal status*)

#### **2.2.4. Access to housing**

Dalia Aranki (NRC) stated that the Palestinian refugee camps and gatherings (where PRL have lived since 1948) are where most PRS as well as many Syrian refugees are settling after arriving in Lebanon. In early 2013, the number of PRS in Lebanon was estimated to be approximately 90,000. The current estimate is around 50,000. The camps were, prior to the influx of refugees, already very full. With the need for more housing, people were allowed to build upwards if they were able to get a permit to do so. However, in some cases the Lebanese authorities have not been allowing materials for building through to the camps. Camps are presently increasing in size, and basic services available through UNRWA, which were already strained, are now under increasing pressure.

Dalia Aranki (NRC) stated that the Palestinian refugee camps that are most affected by the influx of Syrians and PRS are those in the North and the South as well as Beirut. Some PRS are residing outside of camps, but most of them feel more comfortable living in the camps. According to the source, family ties and social network are two important reasons why PRS prefer to stay in the camps. Another significant factor is their legal status as many PRS fear being arrested by the Lebanese authorities if their permission to stay in Lebanon is not valid. Although the Lebanese

authorities have not physically deported many PRS (apart from high profile cases such as those in May 2014), a PRS without legal status who encounters the authorities, is often told to leave the country, often by receiving a departure order. As a result, PRS do not leave but go underground in Lebanon, often confined to the camps where they live.

Dalia Aranki (NRC) explained that NRC attempts to address the housing issues through an initiative in which PRL homes in the refugee camps are renovated and expanded by NRC and the PRL host family in turn allows a PRS family to stay there for free. Generally, PRL have been very hospitable and welcoming in taking PRS in, however, nobody predicted that the PRS would actually stay in Lebanon for such a prolonged period. Therefore, due to the current circumstance in which resources are few and overcrowding is an issue, the patience of PRL is wearing out, leading to tensions in the camps between PRS and PRL.

Dalia Aranki (NRC) explained that in some areas there have been pressures from the local communities to evict Syrian refugees (mainly those living in informal settlements which have been established since the Syrian crisis) because these communities do not want the Syrian refugees living there. There have been some similar incidents directed towards the PRS in the gatherings, however not to the same degree [as Syrians]. The gatherings, which lie outside of the camps, are under Lebanese law and the dwellers in the gatherings by law are often considered persons illegally occupying land as most PRL do not own the land on which they have built their homes. In these cases, there have been pressures from the local Lebanese residents on municipalities to evict dwellers in the gatherings.

Concerning PRS' access to housing, AJIAL said that this is absolutely the biggest problem PRS are facing in Lebanon. Some PRS live in informal gatherings while others live in one of the twelve official Palestinian camps. Overcrowding is a major problem in the camps and gatherings as a large number of PRS and Syrians have moved inside the camps. This is partly due to high rents outside the camps but also because a large number of PRS are unable to renew their visas either because of financial issues or because of restrictions on renewal. It was further explained that many PRS do not wish to approach The General Security as they fear what will happen once their illegal status is made known to the authorities. Therefore, many are confined to the camps and do not dare travel outside of them, thus further restricting their possibilities of accessing any employment outside of the camps.

Maria Daune (CLDH) said that conditions are a disaster both for Syrians and PRS who are working for 200-300 USD a month while the cost of renting a one-room flat is at least 500 USD a month. In the overcrowded Palestinian camps, some PRL are even renting roofs of buildings to PRS who are in desperate need of housing.

Sahar Atrache (ICG) stated that refugees from Syria are generally settling in poorer parts of Lebanon and many are also moving to the Palestinian camps. These camps, of which many are in a dilapidated state, are overpopulated and employment opportunities are very few. Under these

circumstances, tensions rise within the communities in the camps. The source stressed though that even before any PRS or Syrian refugees arrived in Lebanon, the situation for PRL was difficult and the influx of Syrians and PRS has only exacerbated the situation even more.

### 3. Recruitment by Hezbollah

#### 3.1. Prevalence of forced recruitment

The Beirut-based long-time observer of Lebanese parties stated that Hezbollah by no means recruits its members by force. If Hezbollah is interested in recruiting someone, it would start by asking whether he is interested in joining the party. If it turns out that he is interested then a long and strict recruitment process begins, starting with education and vetting of the person. The source added that the recruited are often self-controlled modest young men who do not drink alcohol, smoke or drive fast cars and who have grown up and live in the Hezbollah-controlled neighborhoods.<sup>26</sup> Against this background, recruitment takes place in a community where people know each other very well and Hezbollah people thus have a profound knowledge about the background of those whom they recruit.

Concerning prevalence of forced recruitment by Hezbollah of young Palestinians to participate in the Syrian war on the Assad regime's side, the Western embassy (1) stated that it is quite improbable that Hezbollah would use force to recruit people. According to the source, there are a large number of volunteers among whom Hezbollah can recruit its forces and the organization thus does not need to recruit anyone by force.

The Western embassy (2) had never heard of Hezbollah forcibly recruiting Palestinians or others to participate in the Syrian civil war.

The Western embassy (3) had never heard of Hezbollah forcibly recruiting people for their military activities in Syria. The source explained that Hezbollah have no problem recruiting people on a voluntary basis.

DRC said that it had never heard of Hezbollah recruiting people by force to fight for Hezbollah against the Syrian opposition groups in Syria.

Regarding prevalence of forced recruitment of Palestinian refugees by Hezbollah to fight for them in Syria, Nadim Houry (HRW) stated that although there are Sunni groups in the refugee camps who are ideologically close to Hezbollah, Nadim Houry (HRW) had never heard of any Palestinian being forcibly recruited by Hezbollah for the purpose of participating in the war in Syria. According to the source, Hezbollah generally does not need to recruit by force as they have enough foot soldiers willing to fight in Syria. It was added that Hezbollah is known to send fighters who are highly motivated.

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<sup>26</sup> That is Shiite-dominated areas, including parts of Beirut, southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. (Masters, J. & Laub, Z: Hezbollah(a.k.a. Hizbollah, Hizbu'llah, Council on Foreign Affairs, updated January 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155>)

Concerning whether forced recruitment by Hezbollah takes place among PRS or PRL for the purpose of fighting in Syria, Dalia Aranki (NRC) said that she had never heard reports of such practices taking place. There has been anecdotal information that some radical groups had recruited fighters among PRS to fight in Syria who in return were paid for joining the group, however, there are no reports of this taking place through force.

Asked whether Hezbollah is forcibly recruiting Palestinians to fight for the party in Syria, Sari Hanafi (AUB) stated that he has never heard of such forced recruitment by Hezbollah. Sari Hanafi believes that Shiite Hezbollah is too sectarian to recruit foot soldiers among Sunnis and they will not even use force to recruit people among Shiites as they need people who believe in their ideology and they have enough of such individuals.

Asked about possible forced recruitment of young Palestinians by Hezbollah to participate in the Syrian civil war, Sylvain Perdigon (SOAM, AUB) stated that he had never heard of any such forced recruitment by Hezbollah and that he finds it hard to believe.

Regarding prevalence of forced recruitment on the part of Hezbollah of Palestinians to participate in the war in Syria, Sahar Atrache (ICG) said that she had not heard of this happening and additionally, did not find such practices at the hands of Hezbollah plausible. Hezbollah is able to recruit their members from within the Shiite community and other pro-Syrian and pro-Hezbollah groups and it would therefore be highly unlikely that Hezbollah would recruit Palestinians by force to join the fighting in Syria. Besides, a person who is not a voluntary recruit would make for a poor and untrustworthy combatant.

Regarding prevalence of Hezbollah recruiting people by force to fight for the party in Syria, Human Development Centre stated that Hezbollah does not need to recruit anyone by force as there are many who would voluntarily join the party's forces and fight for them. According to the source, not only Hezbollah but also all other political organizations try to provide their members and supporters with incentives to stay with them. The source added that when Palestinian asylum seekers in Europe claim that Hezbollah has tried to recruit them forcibly, it should be seen as an attempt to take advantage of Hezbollah's bad and fearsome reputation in the Western countries in order to obtain asylum.

On the question of whether Hezbollah forcefully recruits Palestinians (PRS or PRL) to fight in the war in Syria, AJIAL said that it had not heard reports of forced recruitment of Palestinians taking place. The source added that Hezbollah recruits regularly from its supporters and there were no indications that Hezbollah's recruitment activities had intensified since its involvement in the war in Syria. The source pointed out that some Palestinians are naturally sympathetic to Hezbollah due to its resistance to Israel. It was pointed out however that Palestinians in general are against the war in Syria and do not want to get involved in it. The source underlined that there are Palestinians who support the Syrian regime and who would be willing to fight with it and with

Hezbollah in Syria, just as there are Palestinians who do not wish to get involved or who fight with the opposition as a part of religious war. Thus Palestinians do not agree on the matter internally.<sup>27</sup>

AJIAL further added that there are other Islamist organizations within the camps, such as Jabhat Al Nusra in Ein el-Hillweh camp, that attempt to lure youth with money to join their forces. As other jihadist organizations, they exist and work best among frustrated, less fortunate youth.

Regarding whether Hezbollah recruits Palestinians forcefully to fight in the Syrian civil war, the independent Lebanese human rights organization said that it had never heard of Hezbollah using force in an effort to recruit. It was added that working with Hezbollah can be appealing as the organization pays money for those who participate in the war in Syria. However, the source had never heard of forced recruitment as a method that Hezbollah makes use of.

PHRO had not heard reports of Hezbollah recruiting Palestinians by force for the purpose of participating in the Syrian civil war. However, the source considered that an organization like Hezbollah is in the position to use and abuse the vulnerable situation that young people are in. The source explained that if Hezbollah is aware of Palestinian refugees who have a file with the Lebanese authorities which they cannot solve themselves; Hezbollah may use their power and influence to solve their case in return for something else. It cannot be ruled out that Hezbollah, which is a powerful organization, can lure young people into participating in activities, such as fighting in Syria, in return for other assistance that they can provide. It was further explained that there are a number of pro-Syrian Palestinian factions, for example PFLP-GC. However, the source reasoned that if a Palestinian was going to fight with a pro-Assad militia, he would probably try to choose one which is able to pay the higher payment which would be Hezbollah. It was stressed that those who join up militias may not necessarily be ideologically in line with the organizations behind them, but are rather in a disadvantaged situation where they are easily used. This is happening in an environment where those who are empowered are using those in need, which is especially the case with the Palestinian youth. The source had heard of cases of Palestinians having fought with Hezbollah in Syria. However, the source emphasized that Hezbollah would not recruit anyone by force in the sense that the party would threaten or harass him if he refused to join them. PHRO further explained that the deep sense of injustice that Palestinians feel is played upon by some of the extremist groups, which are increasing in number in the camps, by recounting a narrative that violence will amend the injustices that they have experienced.

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<sup>27</sup> The Beirut-based long-time observer of Lebanese parties explained that although Hezbollah itself is a Shiite party, it has allies among Sunni groups in Lebanon. Regarding Palestinians and their relationship to Hezbollah, the source stated that some Palestinians generally cooperate with Hezbollah. Hezbollah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP-GC) are long-time allies. The source added that PFLP-GC which is a small group does not solely comprise of Palestinians.

### 3.2. Hezbollah recruitment process

According to the Beirut-based observer of Lebanese parties, the recruitment starts with an intensive religious education in Shiite Islamic ideology which plays an important role throughout the recruitment process. One of the main purposes of the education is also to ensure that legitimacy of and belief in the leadership of an absolute supreme Shiite leader (“ValieFaghih”) is ingrained in the candidate. Martyrdom and jihad are also key elements in this education. The source emphasized that the candidate would not start his military and physical training before he has passed the religious and ideological education. It was added that the educational aspect of Hezbollah members in general is very important and that religious instruction and education continues after the initial phases of education for recruits.

The Beirut-based observer of Lebanese parties further said that initial physical and military training takes place in the Bekaa valley and takes at least 30 days. More advanced training takes place in Iran. The recruit is trained in military skills such as shooting, digging of fox holes, planting road side bombs, manning observation posts and handling GPS equipment. During this period, the person is required to perform tasks where his discipline, patience and obedience is put to the test like for instance long time monitoring of the border to Israel and the Israeli troops’ activities.

The observer added that while a person is going through his religious education and military training, Hezbollah’s military intelligence makes a thorough investigation into his background.

The whole recruitment process will, according to the observer of Lebanese parties, take at least two-three years after which the recruited takes on different duties in different sections depending on the educational assets of the person and his profile; for instance, a physicist could be assigned to artillery or another person may take on administrative tasks etc. The sources emphasized that if it turns out at any time during the recruitment process that the candidate does not fully accept Hezbollah’s ideology and particularly the concept of “ValieFaghih”, he will be dismissed immediately.

Regarding recruitment of members to Hezbollah, the source explained in that 1994-1996, Hezbollah was a relatively small focused organization with a membership ranging from 3,000-8,000 members. After the war with Israel in 2006, recruitment to Hezbollah expanded massively. Today, the number of members is more likely approximately 20,000 of which 5,000 are special forces, although the exact size of the organization is not certain.

Asked about the profile of the Hezbollah troops who have been sent to Syria to help the Syrian regime, the observer of Lebanese parties replied that in the beginning the troops sent to Syria mostly comprised Hezbollah veterans over 30 years old but as of early 2013, when Hezbollah asserted a greater commitment to the war in Syria, younger and newer recruits were going to fight in Syria. Combatants normally had to be over 18, however, there are examples of 17 years olds fighting in Syria.

The observer of Lebanese parties explained that Hezbollah fighters are salaried and that the party provides them and their families with welfare services such as education and discounted or free medical treatment. If a combatant is killed in Syria, his family will be looked after by the party and it takes care of their needs. This is, according to the source, the reason why Hezbollah is seen by many people in Lebanon as “a state in the state”.



## Organizations, authorities and persons consulted

- **An international medical humanitarian NGO in Lebanon**
- **An international organization**
- **A Beirut-based long-time observer of Lebanese parties**
- **An independent Lebanese human rights organization**

The organization is an independent Lebanese NGO which is not affiliated with any states or other organization. It comprises human rights lawyers who address violations of human rights and conduct awareness-raising activities regarding civil rights among the population, including the rights of Palestinians. The organization also cooperates with Palestinian organizations in connection with training in civil and human rights. The source explained that it regularly deals with issues pertaining to Palestinians' status in Lebanese society and follows specific cases of Palestinians who are caught up in the Lebanese judicial system.

- **A Western embassy (1)**
- **A Western embassy (2)**
- **A Western embassy (3)**
- **Children and Youth Centre(CYC); Mahmoud M. Abbas, Abu Moujahed, Director**

CYC is a non-governmental organization (established in 1997) located in the Palestinian refugee camps of Shatila and Nahr el-Bared and aims of implementing the Child Right Convention, to provide space for children and youth in these camps to learn and play in safety. (<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/130203>)

- **Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Beirut**
- **The Department of Political Affairs and Refugees (Mudiriyya ash-shuun as-siyasiyya wal-lajjin) (DPAR)**
- **The General Security ("*al-Amn al-Aam al-Lobnani*"), Brigadier General Jamal K. Fadlallah, Chief Office of Citizenships, Passports & Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior**
- **Human Development Centre**

Human Development Centre (HDC) was launched by Lebanese and Palestinian lawyers in 1999 with the aim of having a better Palestinian community run by justice and human equality. HDC is one of Norwegian People Aid's partners within the frames of the Human Rights and Advocacy program.

- **Human Rights Watch (HRW); Nadim Houry, Deputy Director, Middle East and North Africa**
- **International Crisis Group (ICG); Sahar Atrache, Senior Analyst for Lebanon**
- **The International Labour Organization (ILO), Regional Office for Arab States, Beirut**
- **Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (CLDH); Marie Daunay, President**

CLDH is a Lebanese organization focusing on breaches of human rights in Lebanon active especially in the struggle against arbitrary detention and torture. The organization aims to provide legal assistance to victims of human rights violations by providing pro-bono lawyers. CLDH also runs a multidisciplinary center for rehabilitation of victims of torture, Center Nassim, which functions as a medical social center providing professional support for victims of torture.

- **Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC); Dalia Aranki (ICLA Programme Manager)**

NRC has worked with displaced populations since 2006 in Lebanon and was initially focused on shelter programs in the South in 2006 for displaced Lebanese families, which grew to include assistance for Palestinian refugees. Since then, NRC has worked with shelter rehabilitation in the refugee camps and the gatherings and has expanded its projects to include education in cooperation with UNRWA schools in the South, North and in Beirut. In 2012, NRC started an information counseling and legal assistance program (ICLA) which focuses on assistance to refugees to have access to housing, land and property rights as well as access to civil documentation and legal identity. Currently, NRC is involved with the refugees from Syria, both Syrians and PRS providing refugees with information on how to access UNHCR (Syrian refugees) and UNRWA (PRS).

- **The Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO)**

PHRO is an independent, non-governmental, non-partisan and non-profit Human Rights NGO, established in 1997 and based in Mar Elias Refugee Camp, in Beirut. PHRO conducts its work through the following major programs: Researching, Monitoring and Documenting Human Rights Violations; Human Rights Education and Awareness Raising; Advocacy and Dialogue through planning, preparing and conducting training workshops, seminars and conferences as well as various activities, and works in collaboration with international organizations and other NGOs

- **Pursue, Lebanon**

Pursue in Lebanon undertakes research, consultancy, training and programme implementation services and have conducted numerous projects focusing on the conditions for Palestinians in Lebanon, including the circumstance in the camps with regard to governance and security as well as legal projects focusing on enhancing access to rights for Palestinians who have criminal charges put against them. Pursue has also implemented several programmes on Lebanese related topics including a security project with Lebanese security authorities. In addition, Pursue has also an established office in Yemen operating on governance, security and countering violent extremism.

- **Sari Hanafi, Professor at Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies; American University of Beirut (AUB)**

- **Social Communication Center, AJIAL**

AJIAL is a youth organization, registered NGO in Lebanon in 2001, which works for and with Palestinian youth in Lebanon, both inside and outside of the camps. In recent years, AJIAL has focused on working directly with Palestinian youth in the camps through activities with young Palestinians focusing on identity and expression. AJIAL also aims at supporting the involvement and mobilization of Palestinian youth with regards to their rights. Finally, AJIAL currently assists in coordinating humanitarian activities for PRS, often acting as a link between international organizations and small local initiatives.

- **Sylvain Perdigon, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies (SOAM), American University of Beirut (AUB)**

- **UNHCR**

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## Appendix A: Terms of Reference

### Terms of Reference

#### 1. Stateless Palestinians in Lebanon

- 1.1. Possibility to seek protection from the authorities (the police, the judiciary), including:
  - 1.1.1. Prevalence of cooperation between the Lebanese authorities and militant groups such as Hezbollah with regard to these group's tracing of individuals who are in conflict with them
  - 1.1.2. Possibility to seek protection from the authorities with regard to conflicts of a private law character as well as conflicts related to honour, particularly availability of protection to women in such cases
- 1.2. Possibility to seek protection from Palestinian organizations, including:
  - 1.2.1. Possibility to seek protection with regard to conflicts with militant groups or other Palestinian organisations
  - 1.2.2. Possibility to seek protection with regard to conflicts of a private law character as well as conflicts related to honour
- 1.3. Possibility of re-entering and residing in Lebanon after living abroad for many years, including required documents.
- 1.4. Current situation of stateless Palestinians in Lebanon with regard to access to housing (including possibility to reside outside of the refugee camps), education, health care and the labour market
- 1.5. Possibility of internal relocation to other refugee camps in Lebanon
- 1.6. Prevalence of forced recruitment by Hezbollah or other militant organizations for the purpose of participating in the Syrian civil war, including:
  - 1.6.1. Profile of those recruited
  - 1.6.2. Possibility to seek protection from the Lebanese authorities

#### 2. Stateless Palestinian Refugees from Syria

- 2.1. Possibility of moving to and residing in Lebanon for stateless Palestinians from Syria, including:
  - 2.1.1. Residence status in Lebanon
  - 2.1.2. Obtaining residence permit through family reunification
  - 2.1.3. Deportation to Syria
- 2.2. Access to housing, education, health care and the labour market in Lebanon compared to Palestinians from Lebanon
- 2.3. Possible changes to residence permit by leaving Syria
- 2.4. Military service, including recruitment of minors, forced recruitment, call-up of reserves, recruitment procedures

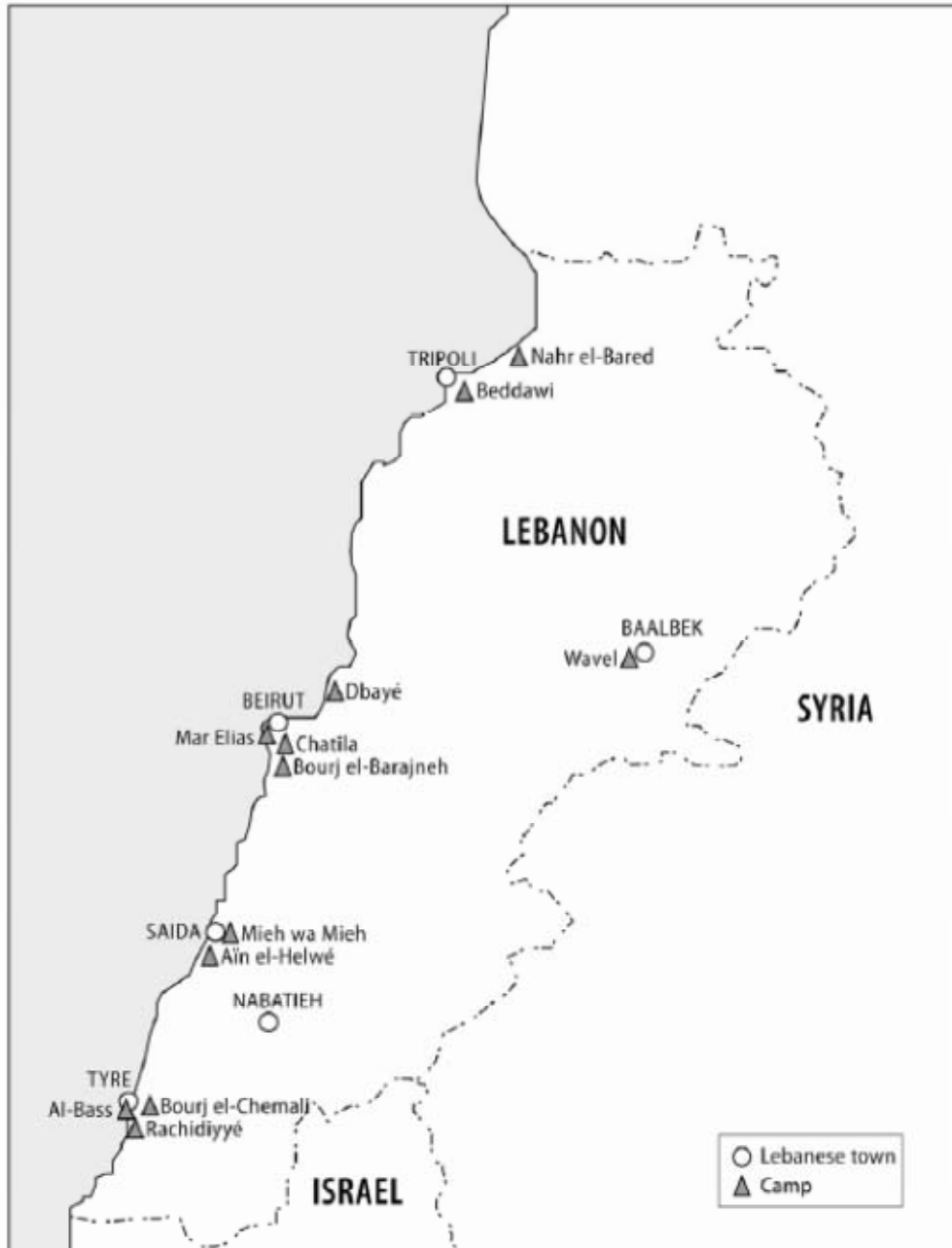
2.5. Prevalence of forced recruitment by Hezbollah or other militant organizations for the purpose of participating in the Syrian civil war, including:

2.5.1. Profile of the recruited

2.5.2. Possibility to seek protection from the Lebanese authorities

## Appendix B: Map of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon<sup>28</sup>

### MAP OF PALESTINIAN CAMPS IN LEBANON



<sup>28</sup> Map from International Crisis Group report (Appendix A): Nurturing Instability: Lebanon's Palestinian Refugee Camps, Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 84, 19 February 2009, available at: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Israel%20Palestine/84%20nurturing%20instability%20lebanons%20palestinian%20refugee%20camps.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Israel%20Palestine/84%20nurturing%20instability%20lebanons%20palestinian%20refugee%20camps.pdf)