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Lebanon as a Microcosm of a Global Refugee Crisis

September 2015





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Executive Summary

There is no debate about the magnitude of the refugee crisis the world now faces. In its 2014 global-trends report, "World at War," the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights (UNHCR) warned that the last year has seen the highest number of forcibly displaced people since it began keeping records. "We are witnessing a paradigm change, an unchecked slide into an era in which the scale of global forced displacement as well as the response required is now clearly dwarfing anything seen before," said Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Most of the ensuing discussion has focused on the immediate crisis of the moment: how to stop smugglers, which countries should accept how many asylum seekers, how host countries can better cope with the influx, how much money is needed from donor countries.

However, there is an ever-growing problem that in the long run will exact an even higher price: the expanding proportion of refugees and forced migrants for whom displacement has become a chronic state. In fact, the average period of time that a refugee spends out of his or her country now is 10 years.

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In this report, we focus on Lebanon—an overwhelmed host nation with more refugees per capita than any other country in the world, as well as the oldest population of long-term refugees (the Palestinians, living in limbo for 60 years now). By the end of 2014, Lebanon hosted the largest number of refugees in relation to its national population, with 232 per 1,000 inhabitants.

Fueling this crisis in Lebanon and elsewhere is Syria, the world's biggest producer of both internally displaced people (7.6 million) and refugees (3.88 million at the end of 2014). If the number of refugees continues to rise as expected, the Syrian conflict

could result in the largest mass exodus of citizens from any country in the world since the 1994 Rwandan genocide.¹

There is an almost total lack of attention to or dialogue about the 5 million Palestinians living in a state of perpetual limbo in the Occupied Territories or as refugees elsewhere—including about 450,000 registered with UNHCA (the United Nationals Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)) in Lebanon. This longest-in-history warehousing of human beings, more than 60 years, is a moral travesty and it is time to put it to an end.

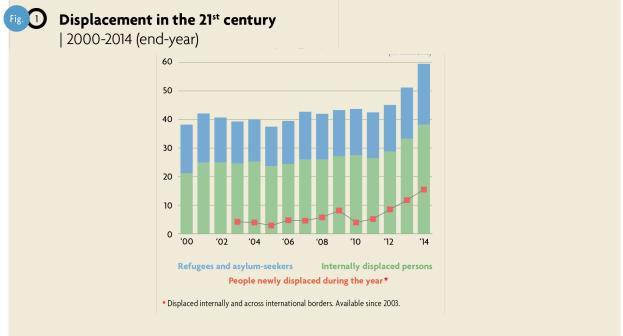
Euro-Med calls on international governance bodies and donors to:

- Eliminate "begging" from the equation.
- Incorporate capacity building and grassroots development into their programs and funding from the very beginning.
- Plan from the "bottom up" instead of "top down"—making it required to include beneficiaries in all phases of development and implementation.
- Better support host countries—and demand that standards are met.
- Spread the burden with dramatically increased opportunities for resettlement.
- The special case of the Palestinians: Restore their human rights.

Introduction

Tragic news about refugees and migrants has been prominent in the media almost daily in 2015—from Syrians and Burundians crowding into neighboring countries to Syrians, Eritreans and Rohingyas from Myanmar risking smuggler boats on the high seas.

This is only the continuation of a long-building trend. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCA) reported this year that the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide is at the highest level ever recorded, exceeding 59 million. Globally, one in every 122 humans is now displaced. If this group were the population of a country, it would be the world's 24th biggest. The increase in 2014 alone represents the biggest leap ever seen in a single year (four times higher than in 2013).²



Most of the debate and response have focused on the immediate crisis of the moment: how to stop smugglers, which countries should accept how many asylum seekers, how host countries can better cope with the influx, how much money is needed from donor countries. However, there is an ever-growing problem that in the long run will exact an even higher price: the expanding proportion of refugees and forced migrants for whom displacement has become a chronic state. UNHCR defines these unfortunate individuals as "protracted" refugees, whereas the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants describes them as "warehoused." Whatever one calls them, it's estimated that two-thirds of the world's refugees have been living in perpetual limbo for at least five years.³ In fact, the average period of time that a refugee spends out of his or her country now is 10 years.⁴

This report confronts this challenge, contributing to the conversation in which we must engage in order to shift international and state-level policy-a change that often is as slow as an ocean liner but can and must happen nonetheless. To examine the many factors and dynamics at work, as well as to explore potential solutions to seemingly intractable patterns, we focus on Lebanonan overwhelmed host nation with more refugees per capita than any other country in the world, as well as the oldest population of long-term refugees (the Palestinians, living in limbo for 60 years now).

Historical context and definitions: refugees vs. IDPs vs. migrants

Refugees

It was not until the aftermath of the First World War and the massive dislocations within Europe that attempts were made to define refugees in precise, legal terms and to establish international standards for their treatment. The 1951 Geneva Convention defined refugees as individuals who flee their country of nationality or residence (if stateless) and are unable or afraid to return due to a " well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion." UNHCR was established the same year to assist and protect them.

However, some refugees are deprived of UNHCR protection-notably, most Palestinians. Although they are the oldest and single largest group of refugees in the world, Palestinians are the only population to be deprived of their nationality, unable to return to their former state and allocated to their own UN agency (the UN



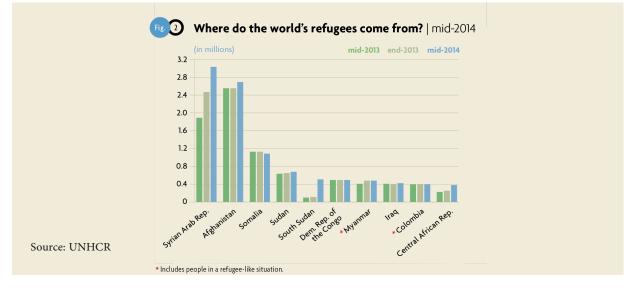
More than 300,000 Palestinian refugees currently live in Lebanon, more than half in densely packed camps.

Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA). [Note: UNRWA is not mandated to serve all Palestinians, but only those who were displaced from their homes and livelihoods in 1948 or are their direct descendants, and who live in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria or Lebanon. The relatively few Palestinians living elsewhere without citizenship (as many as 50,000 in Egypt and 12,000 in Iraq) are covered by UNHCR by default.]

While UNHCR is charged with assisting and protecting its constituents, UNRWA's mandate is only to assist ("relief and works"). A UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine originally was formed to provide displaced Palestinians protection and lobby for a just solution to their plight. However, it was ineffective and virtually defunct by the 1950s.

As of the end of 2014, there were an estimated 5.1 million registered Palestinians under UNRWA's jurisdiction, in contrast to 13 million refugees under the umbrella of the UNHCR, the highest since 1996.5 Overall, there is a rapidly growing segment of refugees that UNHCR calls "protracted" (a population of more than 25,000 exiled from their country of origin for more than five years) and that the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) describes as "warehoused" (10,000 or more displaced for five-plus years and thus deprived of their full rights). Palestinians are the oldest and largest of this segment—with 2.1 million living in limbo for 60

years—followed by Tibetans in Nepal (50 years), Eritreans in Sudan and Ethiopia (40 years), and Filipinos in Malaysia (35). In 2007, USCRI estimated that overall, there were 8.8 million warehoused refugees.⁶ That number is growing.



IDPs

In contrast, while they too are in search of safe shelter, internally displaced persons (IDPs) re-settle within their own countries. Thus, there is disagreement over whether they should be accorded the same rights and care as refugees. At the end of 2014, there were a record-breaking 38 million IDPs, with a massive 11 million newly uprooted last year alone—equal to 30,000 people a day.⁷

Forced migrants

Two major categories of displaced individuals are excluded from the status of refugee or, at times, even IDPs: persons who are trafficked by smugglers, and others who are forced to flee their homes due to natural or environmental disasters, famine or development projects (such as dams, roads and deforestation). The term "forced migrants" includes these individuals as well as refugees and IDPs.

Economic migrants

Simply put, these are persons who move from place to place to find work or otherwise seek a better life. The World Bank estimates that overall, 3 percent of the world's population (250 million) are economic migrants.

Dilip Ratha, head of the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development for the World Bank, estimates that nine of 10 people who leave one country for another are looking for a job—"not the perfect job, but anything that will allow them to support themselves and their families. People must move, and we should be glad they do. Last year, migrants sent home US\$436 billion in remittances to support family members left behind. That contrasts to just \$135 billion in donor aid. It's the poor people who are providing a lifeline to their families back home, not the international community."

Kathleen Newland, co-founder of the Migration Policy Institute, adds that, "It is becoming more and more difficult to draw a bright line between refugees and non-refugees of all types. Many non-refugees migrate under some sort of compulsion, including extreme poverty, which is as much a humanitarian issue as the violence of war."

While this report focuses on refugees, due to the large concentrations of these individuals who move or seek to move at one time, the issues and concerns apply more broadly to all those who are separated from their homes or who believe they have no choice but to flee.

On the media radar: 'boat people'

The attention of media and policymakers is fickle, shifting according to the extent to which subjects force themselves onto their radar—an effort that is more like a sprint than a marathon, since the spotlight never seems to stay focused for long. In recent months, the desperation of refugees and economic migrants alike has grabbed center stage as hundreds of them died on the open seas in their quest to achieve the dream of a better life in Europe.

One of many examples is Ahmad Asfour, 23, a Palestinian from Gaza who died on board a smuggler's boat in the fall of 2014. According to Samir Asfour, his son and two nephews travelled to Egypt after receiving permission to enter for medical treatment.



Ahmad Asfour

Ahmad's cousins were the first to hear about the boat to Italy and Ahmad could not resist; he longed to escape to somewhere where he could live without fear and receive medical treatment for his diabetes. The cost for a spot on the boat: \$2,200. Ahmad had brought \$1,500 for his treatments, and borrowed the rest from relatives in Egypt.

"He told me he wanted to go to Italy by this boat, and I said, 'No! It's too dangerous," Samir said. "I talked to him many times to try to convince him, but he told me he was dying now. He had no hope. He had to try."

Of the 400-450 passengers who paid US\$2,000-\$4,000 for safe passage from Egypt to Italy on that fateful Sept. 15, 2014, only 11 survived—eight Palestinians from Gaza, one Egyptian and two Syrians (a 19-year-old female and a child). The rest drowned after smugglers (their own or another group with which they disputed) rammed and sank their boat. Euro-Med conducted the first investigation of the attempted voyage, and has monitored the continuing stream of "boat people" ever since.

Frontex, the EU border-control agency, reports that attempted or successful illegal border-crossings reached 280,000 in 2014, a new record. The majority of the irregular

migrants were men. However, 11 percent were women and another 15 percent were children. The largest single nationality represented were Syrians fleeing civil war (~67,000).⁸ The majority of the attempts (more than 170,000) occurred via the central Mediterranean Sea, with Libya the most common origin port and Italy the most accessible initial destination. (Libya used to be a migrant destination itself, especially for those from sub-Saharan Africa. However—in the wake of the country's own civil war, which made it a haven for crime syndicates and reduced the chances of detection—people looking for safety or work now continue right through and into the sea.) According to the International Organization for Migration, more than 3,200 people lost their lives during the sea crossing in 2014.⁹

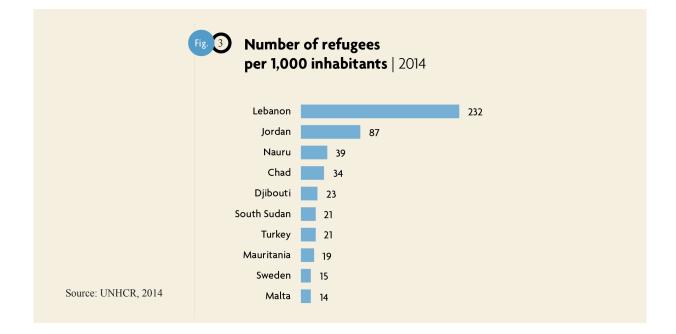
These tragedies took place in the context of ongoing conflicts in countries such as Syria and Eritrea, as well as the refusal by several European governments to help fund the Italian-run rescue team, Operation Mare Nostrum. It was replaced in November 2014 by the EU's Operation Triton, which is limited in geographic scope and does not conduct active searches for boats in trouble.

To date, 2015 is surpassing 2014. In February, more than 300 migrants and refugees drowned when their overcrowded dinghies sank in the Mediterranean. And then came April. In one month alone, at least five boats carrying almost 2,000 refugees and migrants sank, with an estimated 1,200 people dead. The known toll of dead or missing through early May of this year is 1,829—about 20 times higher than during the same period last year, Newland of the Migration Policy Institute told a World Affairs Council meeting in Washington, DC.

That news spurred the European Union to form a naval mission to target gangs smuggling migrants from Libya. However, a record 137,000 people made it across the Mediterranean to Europe in the first half of 2015 (an increase of 83 percent compared to the same period of 2014)¹⁰, and a proposed quota system for dispersing them across member countries is under fierce debate.

Lebanon: Ground Zero for the Refugee Debate

The location of the Lebanese Republic—bordered by Syria to the north and east and Israel to the south, placing it at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Basin and the Arabian hinterland—has shaped its rich and contentious history. In addition to hosting a stew of different religions, it is a natural magnet for refugees fleeing conflict in neighboring countries. In fact, at the end of 2014, Lebanon hosted the largest number of refugees in relation to its national population, with 232 per 1,000 inhabitants.¹¹



First, an estimated 129,000 Palestinians escaped across the border when Israel was created by UN edict in 1948—a number that has swelled since then to about 300,000 in-country (primarily through reproductive growth) and another 166,000 registered there but living abroad. (Estimates vary, since not all Palestinians in Lebanon are registered with UNRWA and no other centralized records are kept.). Since a rebellion broke out in Syria in 2011 and morphed into a factional civil war, an estimated 1.5 million residents of that country have joined them.

The International Monetary Fund warned in May that Lebanon's economic resilience is threatened both by the massive influx of additional refugees and

governmental stalemate.¹² (Lebanon has operated without a president since May 25, 2014, despite 23 parliamentary sessions held to elect a president, all of which failed to attract a quorum.)

Lebanese Social Affairs Minister Rashid Derbas told media that the influx of Syrian refugees is the "most dangerous" crisis the country has experienced in recent years. "Lebanon is fragile and can no longer bear the burden of hosting such a large population of refugees," he said. "We are not a repository for the displaced of war."¹³

The environmental impact of a suddenly burgeoning population is just one of many consequences for Lebanon. "Because of the Syrians, a groundwater balance that should have been negative in 2030 is negative now," Fadi Georges Comair, general director of hydraulics and electrical resources at the Ministry of Energy and Water, told The Guardian¹⁴. "We were organized to fulfill water demand management for about 4.5 million [people]. We were not ready to deal with the 1.5 million to 2 million extras that have come already."

MP Ibrahim Kanaan claims that just over half of the people currently living in the country are not Lebanese. "The number of Lebanese residing in Lebanon doesn't exceed 4 million," he told the Daily Star. "There are 1.25 million registered refugees and more than 500,000 Syrian nationals who are either unregistered refugees or workers. Before that huge influx, there already were about 400,000 Palestinian refugees. This by itself constitutes a demographic imbalance and a factor for instability. This and the burden on the country's infrastructure are pushing more and more Lebanese to emigrate."

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Whether one believes those charges, there is no denying that Lebanon's infrastructure was far from sufficient or effective before the new influx of refugees. While water Likewise, power generated by the stateLebanon's infrastructure was far from sufficient or effective before the new influx of refugees owned Electricite du Liban (EDL) barely covers two-thirds of daily demand, if that—leading to frequent outages and a brisk trade (for those who can afford it) with private, politically connected (and thus corrupt) owners of large power generators. The cost of electricity production in Lebanon is estimated to be the highest in the world.¹⁵ Lebanon's health care system also is in a fragmented and uncoordinated state. The public sector's financial and institutional capacity to deliver health care declined by 45 percent between 2005 and 2011.¹⁶

The World Bank cautioned in a 2013 report that, "It is estimated that an additional 170,000 Lebanese will be pushed into poverty, joining the existing 1 million citizens living below the poverty line, over the next few months (as a result of the lower wages paid to refugees)."¹⁷

There is another side to this story, however. The International Rescue Committee assessed the impact of a winter cash-assistance program last year in Lebanon, and found that for every US\$1 spent for a household, the country's gross domestic product increased by \$2.13, showing that aid for refugees can have a multiplier effect on a host country's economy.¹⁸

Palestinians of Lebanon: 'The forgotten people'

Precise numbers are hard to come by when it comes to how many Palestinians currently live in Lebanon and when they came. Suhail Natour, executive director of the Al-Hamaei Human Rights Center, located in Beirut's Mar Elias refugee camp, estimates that 129,000 were forced to flee to Lebanon in 1948-49, when Israel was created by UN fiat. According to UNRWA, approximately 455,000 Palestinians are registered with the agency in Lebanon. However, its statistics do not include undocumented Palestinians who made it in later, such as in the wake of the Jordanian civil war in 1970 (when the Palestine Liberation Organization was forced out by the latter and moved its base of operations to Lebanon). Overall, it's estimated that about 300,000 Palestinians actually live in Lebanon (the remainder have managed to travel abroad to study or work), accounting for approximately 10 percent of Lebanon's population.

Palestinians in Lebanon: Facts & Figures

Population: ~280,000 No. of official camps: 12 No. of gatherings: 42 Refugees in camps: 62% Living on less than US\$6/day: 66.4% Jobless: 56% Low-skill job: **46%** Never attended school: **10%** Households lacking sufficient living space: **55%** Households with at least one chronic illness: **72%**

Source: AUB Socio-Economic Survey of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, 2010

However, Natour estimates that "only" about 300,000 Palestinians actually live in Lebanon today—mostly women (60 percent) and youth (the average age is 12-26). Why? "Those who can leave Lebanon to attend school or get work have done so," he explains.

Regardless of whose statistics are used, it is consensus that around 80 percent of Palestinians living in what became Israel in 1948 were forcibly displaced. Of these, approximately one-third fled to the West Bank, another third to the Gaza Strip, and the remainder to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon or farther afield. (Although another 300,000 were forced from the West Bank and Gaza in the aftermath of the 1967 war, the overwhelming majority escaped to Jordan.)

Where the Palestinians ended up had a significant influence on their wellbeing and that of their descendants years later. In Jordan, most Palestinians (with the exception of refugees who arrived via Gaza, and some who arrived after 1967) are full citizens and enjoy a standard of living generally equivalent to other Jordanians. Fewer than one in eight Palestinian refugees in Jordan lives in a camp, and most camps have effectively become urban neighborhoods. Prior to the current civil war, Palestinians in Syria were non-citizens, but enjoyed full rights to employment and social services. Only one quarter of the refugees resided in camps, and the conditions in which they lived were generally similar to those of citizens.



The question of why Palestinians have been treated with more discrimination in Lebanon has several answers: The official Lebanese response is that treating Palestinians like citizens would signal to Israel and the international community that their right to return to their original homeland is not important or necessary.

"The government says that keeping us poor strengthens our resolve to struggle for our [national] rights. But how can we think about resistance when we spend our days running after work?" one Palestinian told Diana Allan, author of Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile. "In the end, what good has this done? We have become experts only in survival and that is all. We can buy Eid clothes for three children with \$50 or cook a meal on a gas stove with a single flame."

More credibly, the Lebanese also point to the precarious nature of their "confessional" form of government, in which the highest offices are proportionately reserved for representatives from the various religious communities. To give Palestinians citizenship, they argue, would upset the delicate balance by swelling the ranks of Sunni Muslims. Although many dynamics were at work during the conflict, still

others continue to harbor resentments related to their long and destructive civil war (1975-1990). They blame the strife, and the concomitant Israeli invasion, on the PLO and its resistance fighters (and thus the Palestinians as a people). And finally, there is the objection to immigrants shared by people around the world: "There aren't enough jobs for the rest of us." A 2013 survey found that 50 percent of Lebanese describe their family's economic conditions as either bad or very bad.²¹

A tale of two Lebanese youth and their 'awakening'

With such an entrenched institutional bias against Palestinians, why and how do some Lebanese become their advocates?

Moe Ali Nayel, now an independent Lebanese journalist, left his home country when he was 17 "with the American dream" in the back of his mind. He landed in Dallas, Texas, and worked in hospitality management. Then, in 2001, New York City was attacked and America seemed to change, for the worse. "There was such blatant discrimination against Arabs," he recalls. Nayel moved to Los Angeles, where he hoped the culture would be more accepting, but the mercenary environment was a difficult one in which to make friends. In 2006, Nayel moved back to Lebanon."There was a movement for change going on at home, and I felt hopeful about being able to make a difference," he says. However, his growing social awareness did not yet involve Palestinians.



On July 12 of that year, the Israeli military struck Lebanon in retaliation for the capture of two Israeli soldiers by members of Hezbollah. "It changed my world view," says Nayel. "I went to the south to help displaced people and got to know Palestinians my age. I 'discovered' the camps for the first time, if you can believe it. They have been there for more than 60 years, but they don't exist in any significant way in the Lebanese collective memory. We know they are there, of course, but regard them only as black holes of violence and crime. They are so close, yet so completely hidden in many respects. I was shocked by that. It motivated me to start writing."

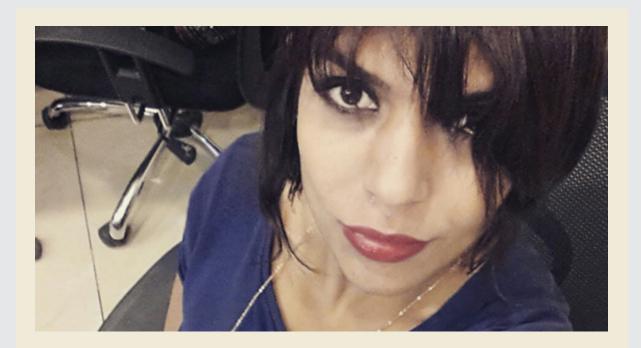
Today? Nayel says he feels comfortable inside the camps—to the point that in addition to writing, he now is working with Palestinian youth to organize a BDS (boycotts, divestment and sanctions) campaign against Israeli products to help build unity and a spirit of personal "agency."

"When foreign journalists come here, they are only looking for what is 'hot," he says. "They look for signs of Islamic extremism, for example, which is really such a tiny fraction of camp society. And then there is the influx of Syrian refugees. For the last four years, that's what everyone focuses on. No one is reporting on the Palestinians, who have been suffering the same way for more than 60 years."

Yara Harake also is a Lebanese journalist, a producer for Al-Mayadeen TV's show "Behind the Wall." She grew up with very politically involved and progressive parents in Borj Al-Barajneh, just outside the camp. However, it wasn't until she was 15 that she actually went into the camp to help some friends who were volunteering with activities for children.

"I knew about their situation," says Harake, echoing Nayel. "But I never imagined that it was that bad until I saw the camp."

However, while for both Harake and Nayel it was seeing the camps for themselves and getting to know the Palestinians that made the difference, she believes change only will come when the Lebanese recognize their own part in the civil war.



"As Lebanese, each one of us must own what he did in the war and be accountable," she says.

In very limited cases, some Palestinians have been granted Lebanese citizenship. (No reliable numbers can be verified, although estimates are as high as 60,000.) During the Nakba, about 6,500 Palestinians (mostly Christians) who could make the case that they had Lebanese origins were naturalized. Citizenship also was given to residents of seven border towns originally part of a greater Lebanon. Today, a Palestinian woman who marries a Lebanese man can share his citizenship either three years after bearing their first child or five years after the wedding in the case of no children. The children automatically take their father's citizenship. The same is not true when a Palestinian man marries a Lebanese woman. (In a particularly bizarre twist of the law, a Lebanese woman can pass her citizenship to a child conceived out of wedlock with a Palestinian man, but not to an adopted Palestinian child or one born out of such a marriage.)²²

In a sign of progress, a study assessing attitudes toward citizenship rights for children of Lebanese mothers and Palestinian fathers, reported in March by researchers from the American University of Beirut's Faculty of Health Sciences, found that 75-85 percent of the public supports granting Lebanese women married to Palestinian men the right to pass citizenship to their children. (Muslims and women are more supportive.) Support for passing citizenship to Palestinian husbands was less strong, however, at 50-70 percent.²³

The few Palestinian citizens of Lebanon aside, 50-60 percent of Palestinians have no other choice but to live in densely crowded and poorly served camps, with the remainder in 42 "gatherings." They are not allowed to own property and must live with numerous restrictions and social norms that severely limit where they go to school, work and get health care (if they can at all). Amnesty International calls these restrictions a violation of international law, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child—all treaties signed by Lebanon.

Education

Most Palestinian refugees cannot access Lebanese public schools, and they also cannot afford private education. Thus, they must rely on UNRWA. In fact, Lebanon is the only country where the agency offers secondary schooling, since it is not available otherwise. However, UNRWA does not offer preschool programming, despite the fact that it is compulsory for Lebanese children, thus leaving it to a patchwork of nonprofits.

Unfortunately, the dropout rate is shockingly high among Palestinian children: An UNRWA/American University of Beirut survey found that in 2010, only half of young people of secondary school age (16-18 years) were enrolled in school. Likewise, two-thirds of Palestinians above the age of 15 had not passed the Brevet exam needed to qualify for secondary education.²⁴ Dropout rates for Palestinians in Lebanon are higher at all levels of schooling than those of fellow refugees in Syria, Jordan and the Occupied Territories (and significantly greater than among Lebanese youth).



In fact, over time, there has been a steady and alarming decline in the number of Palestinian students enrolled in school, despite an equally steady increase in the number of registered refugees. Data compiled by the Fafo Foundation in 2003 showed that enrollment dropped from 90 percent for 6– to 10-year-olds, to 80 percent for 11– to 14-year-olds, to 40 percent for 16– to 18-year-olds. By 2012, secondary enrollment had declined to 22 percent. (Although the same trend exists among Lebanese students, the drops are less drastic; by secondary school, the net enrollment of Lebanese students is twice that of Palestinians.)²⁵ Only 4 percent of Palestinian youths have earned university degrees.²⁶

This "educational hemorrhage," as Maha Shuyab, director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies, calls it, is due to a number of factors²⁷:

- *Poverty.* The household survey conducted by AUB found that two-thirds of Palestinianrefugeesarepoor, driving many students to dropout to getajob. According to Shuyab, "many male dropouts in particular go on to engage in child labor."
- Little incentive. Access to Lebanon's public universities is virtually nil for Palestinians, and few can afford private universities. The lack of prospects,

both for a higher education and a professional job after graduation (see the following discussion of employment), undermine the perception of the value of continuing school. One of the UNRWA principals interviewed by Shuyab told the story of a school trip to a university fair for 11th- and 12th-grade students. Two of the teachers who accompanied the students wrote in a later report, "This was an awful journey. Our students felt so disheartened by all of the opportunities available outside the camps, and that are unheard of for most of them." They recommended the school not organize such events in the future.

- Substandard instruction. Throughout the interviews conducted for this report, whether with refugees or NGO administrators, a common theme heard was the poor quality and lack of student engagement in UNRWA schools. This observation is supported by Shuyab's analysis, which concluded that teaching in UNRWA schools is primarily passive and reliant on rote memorization. Sixty-four percent of secondary students said they never are asked to give presentations, fewer than 39 percent said they work in groups and fewer than 15 percent agreed their school encourages critical thinking. Those findings are reflected in the fact that 71 percent of UNRWA teachers stated that, "students are here to learn what the teacher knows." It doesn't help that UNRWA schools have the most crowded classrooms (an average of 30 students) in Lebanon.
- An exclusionary curriculum. The Lebanese government requires UNRWA schools to teach Palestinians using the state curriculum, which has as its primary goal the reinforcement of the value of citizenship. Yet, they are denied those very rights and privileges.

Most Palestinian youth who make it through secondary school either choose a vocational training program or seek to emigrate. In fact, in one study, 56 percent said they consider emigration the most effective way to improve their lives.²⁸

Life education:

NGO targets underprivileged across factions

Through her Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP), Melek El-Nimer is working to improve the education of Palestinian refugees, arm them with practical life skills and integrate them in a meaningful way into the country's broader social fabric.

The Turkish expat is married to one of the few successful Palestinians in Lebanon, Rami El-Nimer: chairman and general manager of the Beirut Building Company and First National Bank, and a member of the board of trustees of the Palestinian Health Care Society. However, she has become a charitable tour de force in her own right. Founded in 2010 to break down the social barriers caused by years of civil conflict and political instability, ULYP operates with a foundational philosophy that the country's lower-income populations—Lebanese, Palestinians and now, Syrians—must come together around their common problems to improve life for everyone.

"When they first get involved in our activities, the different groups of students sit separately," says El-Nimer. "The Lebanese youth, for example, often tell



Unite Lebanon Youth brings together low-income children and youth

the Palestinians they would never go to their neighborhoods because they are too dangerous. But then they have to do projects together and that changes. The tipping point is when the youths realize their most important problem poverty—is common to all of them. I recall one Lebanese girl responding to a Palestinian who complained about her lack of rights by saying, 'Why don't you go back to where you came from?' But by the end of the program, she was defending her. There is an Arabic saying that means, being different doesn't mean you have to be in conflict."

ULYP currently sponsors 11 programs, nine of which are open to disadvantaged youth from all sectors of Lebanon. Two others are targeted specifically for Palestinians, due to their particularly chronic challenges:

Skills for Life: Targeting Palestinian students aged 8-18 who are at risk of dropping out of school, the program seeks to counteract the weaknesses of UNRWA by focusing on personal goal-setting and creative activities such as drama, music, art and sports (not offered in agency schools). Participants also learn entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills to improve their future prospects. In the final unit of the 11th-grade track, participants work in small groups to develop new-business proposals. Selected teams spend



Youth from crowded camps are given the opportunity to learn organic gardening at the organization's retreat

a weekend with the UYLP staff, then pitch to a committee of business people. Winners are placed in internships and runners-up get volunteer positions with UYLP. Programming spans two years and encompasses 1,000 students and 40 UNWRA teachers. Selected teams spend a weekend with the UYLP staff, then pitch to a committee of business people. Winners are placed in internships and runners-up get volunteer positions with UYLP. Programming spans two years and encompasses 1,000 students and 40 UNWRA teachers. "It is important to include the teachers, as well as the students, so that we can produce broader, long-term change," says El-Nimer. "We offer training for them as well as programming for the youth, so that we can 'pass the baton' to them. But they often have no motivation. That's why, as we've learned, principals are so critically important. Some schools are committed partners and some are not."

Nicole Eid Abuhaydar, senior consultant and acting director of UYLP, adds that the other essential player is the mother. "It really doesn't matter if she is a single mother or not. What matters is if she is focused and knowledgeable about how to take care of herself and support the success of her children. That's why we started our MOMs (Most Outstanding Mothers) program. They would tell us, 'I was somebody's daughter, then suddenly I became a mother. But no one taught us about that.' And at the same time, because we mix low-income Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian women, they learn about each other and become friends."

Bridge: Although not limited to Palestinians, they account for 90 percent of the 500 annual participants. The program focuses on English-language instruction, training for college entrance exams and guidance on applying for higher education. A scholarship unit helps Palestinians accepted into one of the two better Lebanese universities

or schools abroad. Although UNRWA also offers scholarships, the number available has dropped significantly, from approximately 90 in 2010 to 39 in 2014.²⁹ This year, 380 students are attending university with UYLP help and there were 50 in the first group to graduate in 2014. When they complete their studies, the organization helps them find jobs.

"Whatever the problem, I believe education is the solution," says Abuhaydar. Traditionally, vocational schools have served as an alternative path for young people who are unable to receive higher education. However, according to the International Labor Organization, only 4 percent of Palestinians attend vocational training schools (a third of them run by UNRWA). Moreover, only 27 percent of young people who receive vocational training end up working in their chosen field. This may be due to the fact that NGOs provide training courses of only six months, hardly enough time for proper learning, and the certificates are not equivalent to those offered by schools run by the Lebanese government.³⁰

Employment

A 2010 survey by UNRWA and the American University of Beirut found that only 38 percent of working-age Palestinian refugees are employed and, largely as a consequence, 66 percent of all Palestinians in Lebanon are so poor they cannot meet their basic needs (compared to 35 percent

Only 38 percent of working-age Palestinian refugees are employed

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of Lebanese).³¹ [Note that unlike the International Labor Organization, UNRWA includes all working-age Palestinians in its statistics, including those who have stopped actively looking for work.] Even those who secure jobs (half of whom are employed by another Palestinian and a quarter inside the camps) are largely confined

11

to commerce and construction or are under-paid. Fifty percent of Palestinian workers make less than USD\$360 a month.³²

Although 90 percent of Palestinians of working age in Lebanon were born in the country³³, they are subjected to legal regulations governing foreign workers. Thus, permits are legally required for Palestinians to work (although, since they are commonly waived for "under-the-table" jobs such as construction, only 2 percent of Palestinian employees have them), and benefits such as health care are not provided. In addition to the work permit requirement, Palestinians are prohibited from practicing 25 professions—including medicine, engineering and law—(except for inside the camps) due to membership restrictions imposed by their governing syndicates. Palestinians also are prohibited from starting their own businesses outside the camps, forcing them to work for Lebanese employers.³⁴

Despite these obstacles, UNRWA has found that employment opportunities for Palestinian refugees are significantly greater for those who have completed some form of higher education; according to the agency, around two thirds of those 23-65 years old with a vocational or university degree have jobs. The likelihood of a higher-status job increases as well.35 However, International Labor Organization research shows that Palestinian recipients of university degrees find it more difficult to secure commensurate employment than those without.36 This reflects the fact that those who are poorly educated are more likely to live in very low-income households and are therefore more likely to settle for any job available.

Two Palestinian women insist on the right to work

Zeinab Hajj lives in Beirut's Shatila refugee camp, supporting both her mother and two sisters on her salary as an assistant secretary at an aluminum extrusion company. Initially, Hajj worked "informally," without a permit. When government inspectors would visit, she would be forced to hide. However, as the quality of her work led to increasing responsibilities and value to the company, a permit was eventually secured.



Hajj and her sister, in Shatila

What did not change, however, is her title and pay band. After 10 years on the job, Hajj is doing the work of an executive secretary, but she can rise no further than the ceiling imposed by her status as a Palestinian refugee.

"I have no chance for promotion, despite the fact that I am already doing a higher job," she says. "But what can I do? I have to live."

Instead, Hajj is working to help Palestinian youth from her refugee camp have better prospects themselves. She is the volunteer executive director of the Sabra-Shatila Scholarship Program, launched in 2013 at Martyrs Square, the burial place for many of the individuals who were slaughtered in the camp by Israeli-backed Christian Phalangists three decades ago. Since its inception, the program has awarded 539 tuition grants to Palestinian students accepted into university in Lebanon.

In July 2014, participating students donated their semester's tuition grants to Gaza City's Al-Shifa Hospital, in care of Norwegian Dr. Mads Gilbert, as a gesture of solidarity. More than 2,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip were killed in last summer's Israeli assault on Gaza—an incident only too familiar to Shatila residents like Hajj, who was 5 years old when her camp was attacked in 1982, killing as many as 1,500 people.

"We know what it is like," recalls Hajj. "I remember it like it was yesterday, even though I was so young. It was around 5 p.m. on Sept. 14, when my cousin Abu Ali came running down our street, shouting and covered with blood. He was saying, 'Escape! There is a massacre on the next street!' Some didn't believe him and stayed in their houses. But we did, and got out 15 minutes before the men came."

Iqbal Al-Assaad, also born in Lebanon, is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's youngest doctor at the tender age of 20. Clearly, she is an incredible talent; yet, she has no choice but to finalize her medical training and begin her practice in another country. Why? As a Palestinian, she is not allowed to practice medicine in Lebanon.



Assaad graduating from university in Qatar

Assaad graduated from high school at the top of her class, at the age of 12. By 13, she had caught the eye of Lebanon's education minister, who helped her secure a scholarship to attend medical school in Qatar. She completed the program in 2013, the youngest medical graduate from Cornell University's Qatar branch. Today, she is in the United States completing a three-year residency in pediatrics at the prestigious Cleveland Clinic's Children's Hospital.

"My dream is to come back to do something for the Palestinian refugees in the camps, even by opening a free clinic for them," she told The National³⁷. "If you're a Palestinian doctor, you're not allowed to work in public hospitals."

It was a lack of health care for Palestinians, which she observed in the refugee camps, that inspired Assaad. Although UNRWA provides primary medical care facilities, it does not pay for more advanced treatment, forcing many to choose between going without care that often is life-saving or going deeply into debt.

"I want to come back to the Middle East and travel between Qatar and Lebanon when I complete my training," she says. "I feel it would be the first step if Lebanon could let refugees work as doctors." But working in an independent Palestine would be an even better solution. "Palestine is always the dream."

Health care

One out of three Palestinian refugees in Lebanon suffers from a chronic illness such as hypertension, cancer and diabetes. Infant, child and maternal mortality rates are high.³⁸ Over-crowding also increases health risks, from respiratory infections to mental health disorders—which are exacerbated by social tensions among a population that has quadrupled since the camps were established.

Abdullah Mohd Barakeh, north area coordinator for the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training, adds that sexually transmitted diseases, domestic abuse and leukemia (which he believes may be linked to the Lebanese army bombs that hit his camp, Nahr Al-Bared, in 2007) are on the rise.

However, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are prohibited from accessing the country's public health care system, although they pay taxes that pay for the service

if they are formally employed. Private care is expensive, leaving many refugees reliant on care subsidized by UNRWA or from nonprofit clinics. However, these are chronically understaffed and underfunded. The ratio of doctors to patients is very low; a doctor at an UNRWA health clinic usually sees 117 patients per day. In addition, not all medical services are provided in every camp. Refugees may need to visit another camp for dental work or laboratory tests. For example, there is only one kidney dialysis center. People must travel, often cross country, three times a week for dialysis, the cost of which is not covered by UNRWA.

Barakeh notes that UNRWA does not have urologists on its staff, and in his camp, offers only male gynecologists. "In a conservative society, that is unacceptable," he notes. "UNRWA also offers mental health services only for adults, not for youth. So we must offer those services. It's a huge challenge, because the need is so very great."

Hospital care often is simply not possible, since Palestinians cannot afford the expense and UNRWA only offers partial (50 percent) coverage in agency-contracted hospitals. Patients, especially those suffering from chronic diseases, must seek financial help from family, friends or local charities to cover hospital expenses.

One innovative solution developed by the Palestinians themselves is the jam'iyyat, savings associations. Diana Allan, PhD, an anthropologist and founder of the Nakba Archive, describes how it works in her book, "Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile." Most refugees don't have bank accounts or the other requirements needed to qualify for a formal loan. Thus, many neighbors or coworkers (primarily women) in the camps form a collective in which each member contributes a set amount every week or month and the participants take turns collecting the sum of the donations.

Allan quotes one Shatila participant as explaining, "The number of jam'iyyat has gone up (over the past decade) as the money available has gone down." There's no interest charged and in the case of an emergency, like a hospitalization, the order of payouts can be changed—allowing a significant sum of money to be collected quickly. Given the difficulties, it 's not surprising that a study made public in March by a consultancy called Pursue found that in none of the camps is a majority of residents satisfied with UNRWA health services. In only two of the camps did more than half of the residents surveyed say they thought they could get adequate care in the event of a medical emergency.

Filling in the gaps in social services

Jamile Shehada, who manages the Shatila office for the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training, tells of one Palestinian family in which the husband/ father is in prison for trying to flee Syria to Germany. His wife (now in Lebanon) is left with a mentally and physically disabled 8-year-old son, keeping her from finding work. UNRWA offers no special care or education for special-needs children, so Shehada's organization, which arranges family sponsorships by international donors, placed him in a private school.



Jamile Shehada and one of her teachers with two of their Palestinian students in Shatila camp

However, the sponsorship was not able to cover transportation, which also is expensive, or the family's rent of \$200 a month. (Technically, UNRWA owns the original buildings in the camp; however, if a resident moves or expands, he or she may rent the space to another to earn extra money.) The family had gotten to the point that it could not even afford to fix the handicapped child's walker. "The son had not left the house for a month when we got involved," recalls Shehada. "We gave the mother money to repair it. And then we found a job for one of the other children, a 17-year-old girl who had studied only until the ninth grade, in a physician's office. There are so many others like them."

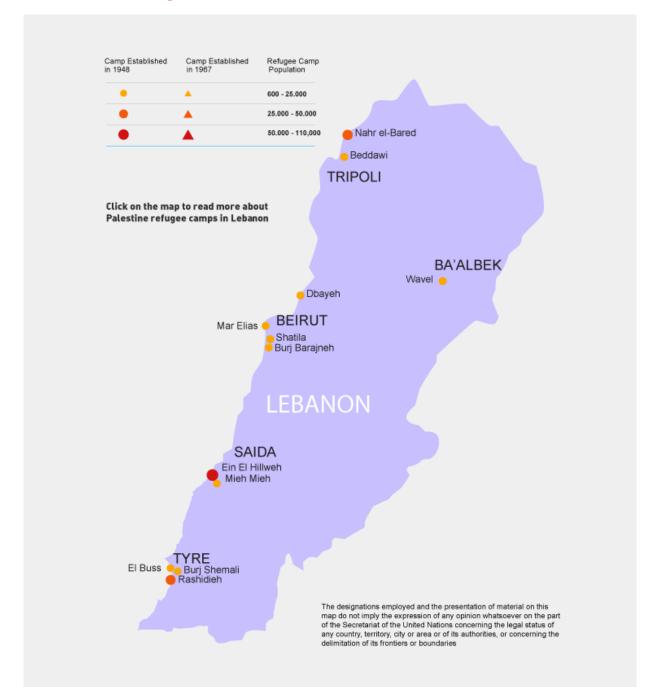
In addition to the sponsorship of hardship families, the organization offers services such as preschool programs in all of the camps (since UNRWA does not offer education for that age group) and dental clinics. In Shatila, each member of Shehada's staff contributes US\$2 a month to a health care fund, to help pay for procedures families can't afford. To purchase books for children to read, each participating household is asked to contribute 1,000 Lebanese pounds (66 U.S. cents).

When the organization, also called Beit Atfal Assumoud, was founded in 1976, its mission was to care for the children of parents killed in the massacre at Tal El-Zaatar refugee camp during Lebanon's civil war. In 1982, after the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Sabra and Shatilla became the site of another horrifying massacre—one Shehada remembers well. Her family escaped just four days before the worst of the attack by Israeli-backed Christian Phalangists, cramming into a two-room flat in Beirut lent by friends, along with 30 others.



"Big stones from the crumbling stadium fell around us, as we carried our children and ran with them. Airplanes were bombing overhead," she recalls. "There was no time to look back. We only found out afterwards who was killed. When I finally could come back to my home, only one room was left out of five, with just three walls standing. There were no men left around, and no machines to move the rubble. We cleared out the stones with our hands. It took five months. When a woman has a man, she gets him to do the work. But when she must be alone, she is strong."

Life in the camps

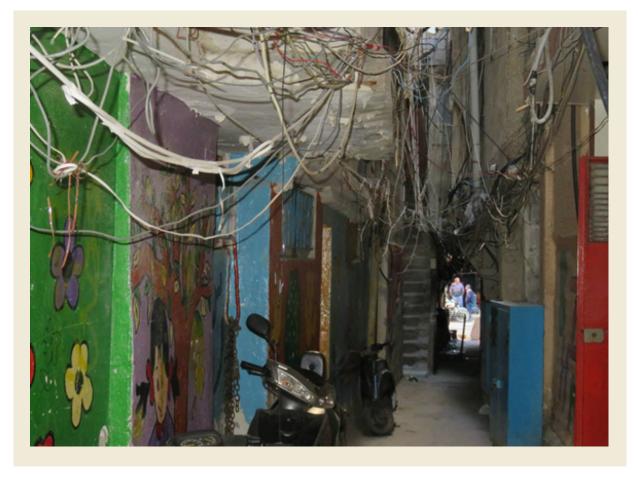


Sixty percent of registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in 12 UNRWA camps, while 38 percent live in approximately 27 "gatherings" (informal communities). They are notoriously overcrowded, squeezing an ever-increasing population into a finite area. Shatila's population, for example, swelled from its original 4,000-5,000 in 1949 to about 22,000 today. Expansion of the camps to accommodate the increased population, however, is prohibited by local laws—thus forcing families to build up in sometimes-precarious fashion.

Most of the structures, originally built as temporary shelters, have deteriorated over the decades due to lack of funding for proper maintenance. Leaky pipes, malfunctioning sewage-treatment systems (if present at all), contaminated water and jerry-rigged electrical connections all contribute to substandard living conditions.

One of the most ubiquitous trademarks of the camps is the chaotic mass of electrical wires and water hoses that hang precariously over almost every alleyway, disappearing occasionally into rooms and windows and connecting to boxes on the corners that are accessible to anyone, including children—contributing not only to a chronic shortage of power but also a regular incidence of electrocutions. According to the Pursue study, the state power company provides six or less hours of electricity per day in the Ayn Al-Hilweh, Bourj Al-Barajneh and Shatila camps. Generators are the only alternative, costing an average 11 times more than state-provided power. As a result, 80 percent of households in both Shatila and Ayn Al-Hilweh reported having to throw food out due to spoilage. Sixty percent or more said the same in Bourj Al-Barajneh, Al-Buss and Rashidieh camps.

Water quality is another problem. The water supply in the Shatila refugee camp is now so salty and laden with chemicals that metal cutlery rusts after less than half an hour's exposure to the brine. Families who used to receive four subsidized gallons of clean drinking water a week now must make do with half of that as cash-strapped camp providers struggle to meet demand.39 At times, even water for washing is lacking. The Pursue study found that in six of the camps, a majority of households do not receive any water supply at all at least once a week.



More than half of residents in six of the camps report sewage in the streets whenever it rains, and Bourj Al-Barajneh households say there is a problem with sewage even when there is no precipitation. In part as a result, 60 percent or more of the residents in all but one of the camps report problems with rats and other vermin in the streets.

These conditions make it all the more worrisome that there are very few open areas in the camps for playgrounds and parks, thus forcing youth to play in the streets, alleyways, drainage ditches and damaged buildings.

From Nahr Al-Bared to Ayn Al-Hilweh: Camps and insurgency

The conflict that erupted in Nahr Al-Bared camp in 2007, the tragedy that followed and a similar pattern simmering today in Ayn Al-Hilweh has a lesson to teach both about the disadvantages of confining refugees to camps and the makings of militancy.

The trouble in Nahr Al-Bared camp in northern Lebanon had its roots during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006. Abdullah Mohd Barakeh, a camp resident and coordinator for the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (Beit Atfal Al-Sumud), recounts that extremists (mostly non-Palestinians) infiltrated during the conflict, and three months later declared themselves Fatah Al-Islam. In the aftermath of the Israeli assault, they gradually became the strongest of the factions. In May of 2007, they attacked several Lebanese army checkpoints, killing 27 soldiers.

"What shocked me the most was how the Lebanese army reacted," recalls Barakeh. "Imagine a very tall building filled with people. Then some wild dogs enter and the army destroys the entire building, including everyone's homes, in order to kill the dogs. That's what happened here. Two million missiles hit our camp over the next 105 days and they destroyed 6,000 homes, sheltering approximately 33,000 people."



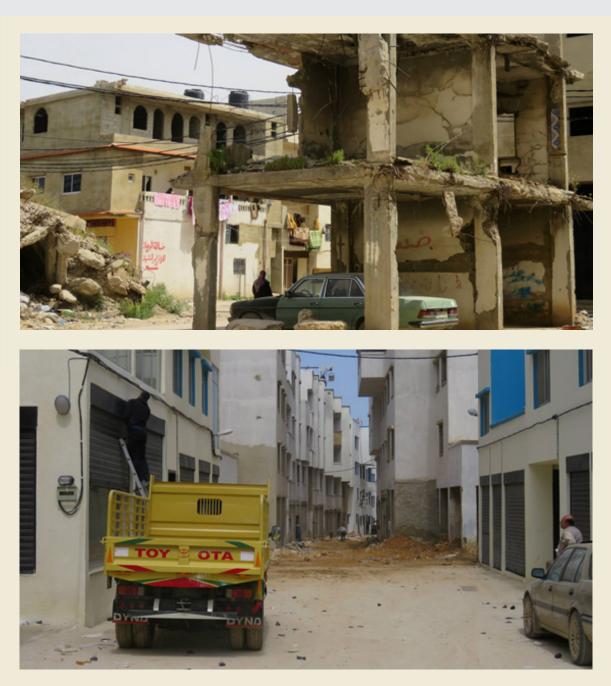
About 5,000 families continue to live in pre-fabricated "container homes."



Although a minimal 55 civilians in the camp were killed, the effects have been long lasting. Two-thirds of the camp emptied, with the fleeing residents cramming into every empty room and other space in other camps such as nearby Baddawi (which nearly doubled in population almost instantly), with up to 65 people sometimes crowded into one flat, says Barakeh.

About 5,000 of the residents who did not have friends or relatives to take them in, and could not afford to rent (since the US\$150 a month doled out by UNRWA as aid frequently was not sufficient), were literally warehoused in pre-fabricated containers just outside Nahr Al-Bared. The living conditions are barely habitable in the older ones and in those whose residents have the least resources. Most still are living there today.

Eight years later, Barakeh estimates that only about a third of the camp is rebuilt and that about 9,000 people still wait to return—despite a master plan presented at a 2008 donor conference in Vienna that envisioned completion in 2011. Reconstruction has been slow due to bureaucratic snags, lack of funding and what many people interviewed labeled as corruption.



The newly rebuilt areas of Nahr Al-Bared look almost nice with their wide streets and freshly painted buildings. But there was a price paid: Living spaces more than third smaller.

However, many residents are reluctant to return even to the newly reconstructed homes. On the outside, the new building fronts look colorful and fresh, with wide streets reminiscent of promenades. However, says Barakeh, the wide streets were dictated without resident input by the Lebanese military, to make it easier for the entry of tanks should they be needed in the future. And the residents have paid a significant price: No trees are allowed and the housing units are 33 percent smaller, now, ranging from 38-120 square meters (409-1,300 square feet) in size.

The newly rebuilt areas of Nahr Al-Bared look almost nice with their wide streets and freshly painted buildings. But there was a price paid: Living spaces more than third smaller."Keep in mind," says Barakeh, "that most of these units house at least five people each."

Today, Ayn Al-Hilweh—the largest of the camps, which has swollen from 70,000 to about 100,000 with the influx of refugees from Syria—has all the signs of taking Nahr Al-Bared's place as a hotbed of insurgency.

In April, Marwan Issa, a member of the Hezbollah-linked Resistance Brigades, was found murdered in the camp. He reportedly had been completing an arms deal with a Palestinian national and a Syrian. Two men were detained and turned in to the Lebanese authorities,⁴⁰ but at publication, a third suspect in the murder remained at large in the camp—under the protection of Jund el-Sham, a jihadist faction in the Taamir area. Use of force has reportedly been ruled out, since he is hiding beyond the area controlled by a new coalition of the mainstream factions, including Hamas and Fatah.⁴¹

Then, in June, another conflict broke out in the camp, pitting gunmen of the mainstream Fatah movement against militants of Al-Qaeda-linked Jund al-Sham, which some feared would be pave the way for more such incidents. A Fatah gunman shot and wounded a Jund al-Sham member, leading to an incident in which two people were killed and 11 injured.⁴² Just a month later, an argument between two men escalated into a shootout between groups close to the Fatah movement and Shabab al-Muslim that left at least 10 people wounded⁴³. The speed of the developments, the number of gunmen and the amount of ammunition involved led many within the Palestinian community to conclude that an armed outlaw presence was at work, independent of camp leadership.

The Pursue survey of camp residents found that more than 60 percent consider Ayn Al-Hilweh to be less safe than two years ago and about half had personally witnessed armed violence in the previous six months. Most respondents there (63 percent) believe the primary cause of the violence to be political.

"You can't force bad elements out when they have good relations with some of the village groups," observes Barakeh, who has been watching the events in Ayn Al-Hilweh with interest. "And the Lebanese army can't go in like it did with Nahr Al-Bared, because there are far more people both in the camp and surrounding it. The only real prevention is to address the root causes of support for extremist approaches: poverty, poor health care, and lack of equality and opportunities. Sometimes it's like the Lebanese government thinks we should be happy just to be able to breathe oxygen in their country. But life must be more than that."

The Syrian Influx

Syria is the world's biggest producer of both internally displaced people (7.6 million) and refugees (3.88 million at the end of 2014).⁴⁴ If the number of refugees continues to rise as expected, the Syrian conflict could result in the largest mass exodus of citizens from any country in the world since the 1994 Rwandan genocide⁴⁵ and the worst refugee crisis since World War II.⁴⁶ By mid 2014, about 14 percent of the original population of Syria was outside its borders, and Syrians accounted for nearly a quarter (23 percent) of all refugees under the protection of UNHCR.⁴⁷

Lebanon is home to an estimated 1.5 million of the refugees from Syria (about 300,000 of whom have not registered with UNRWA or the UNHCR)—the highest per capita number of all the countries serving as haven. Feeling overwhelmed, the government has taken steps recently to prevent new refugees from entering, ranging from visa limits and restrictions to a military presence along the border. On June 16, for instance, the Lebanese Army increased its security measures on its southeastern border to prevent another influx as warring Syrian factions stepped up battles near Mount Hermon. In addition, surveillance cameras have been erected in at least one border town, Shebaa.⁴⁸

However, while virtually all of Syrian refugees live in harsh, tenuous conditions in Lebanon, they cannot be assessed as one group. The relatively small influx of Palestinian refugees who had been living in Syria, estimated at 45,000, faces a uniquely different situation than the vastly larger number of Syrians now sheltering in Lebanon.

Syrian refugees in numbers

3.88 million registered Syrian refugeesMore than 70,000 awaiting registration1.07 million refugees in Lebanon748,000 refugees in Turkey596,000 refugees in Jordan

Source: UNHCR

Syrian Palestinians: Displaced twice-over

It is estimated that half of the roughly 500,000 Palestinian refugees living in Syria have been displaced due to the civil war, both internally and to other countries. A survey conducted in 2013 by Pursue, a consulting company based in Beirut and Cyprus, found that most of the approximately 45,000 who ended up in Lebanon fled from their former home in a Syrian refugee camp—most commonly Yarmouk, in the suburbs of Damascus. The largest Palestinian camp in Syria, Yarmouk has been the object of intense fighting, both initiated by the Syrian regime and opposing Palestinian factions (those aligned with the state military and those loyal to the rebel Free Syrian Army).

According to Pursue, most of the Syrian Palestinians (87 percent) escaped to Lebanon due to their fear of violence, while 47 percent cited lack of access to food and clean water, and another 36 percent reported their homes had been destroyed. Prior to August 2013, Palestinians living in Syria could enter Lebanon freely if they had authorization from their own government to leave. Their entry card then could be converted to a residency visa valid for three months and renewed, free of charge, up to four times. After one year, these refugees could pay a moderate fee to stay for an additional year. (Those who crossed unofficially could "regularize" their status by paying a higher fee in what was known as a "plea of mercy."⁴⁹)

Then the policy changed. The only Palestinians allowed into Lebanon from Syria were those who had a pre-approved visa at that time, proof that they were merely transiting to a third country, a scheduled medical or embassy appointment, or family members already living legally in Lebanon (as evidenced by a residency permit). In May 2014, the rules unofficially changed again. On May 4, the government of Lebanon forcibly returned around 40 Palestinian refugees to Syria, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement (the commonly accepted agreement not to return individuals to a situation in which they would be at risk of persecution or serious human rights abuses) and Lebanon's obligations under international law.⁵⁰ The individuals were deported after being arrested and detained at Beirut airport for allegedly possessing forged identity documents. They were escorted by the Lebanese authorities to the Lebanon-Syria border and ordered to re-enter Syria.

On the same day, non-governmental sources reported that Palestinian refugees from Syria seeking to enter Lebanon through an official border crossing were denied entry and an official memo to airlines was leaked, saying: "Do not transport any traveller who is a Palestinian refugee in Syria to Lebanon no matter the reason and regardless of the documents or IDs that they hold, under penalty of fine as well as return of the traveller to where he or she came from."

Five days later, the Lebanese Minister of Interior issued a statement saying **Palestinian** refugees from Syria only could enter if they have:

- an entry permit approved by General Security;
- a one- or three-year residency visa;
- an exit-and-return permit; or
- a valid ticket and visa to a third country, in which case they can get a 24-hour transit permit.

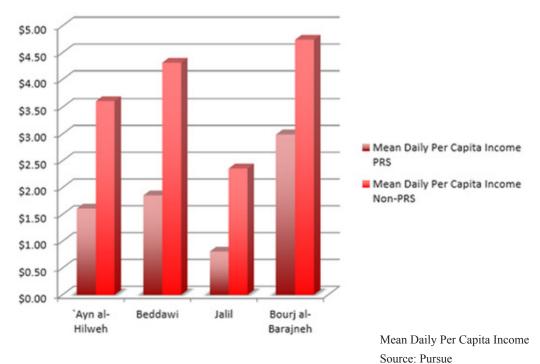
Non-governmental sources told Amnesty International that meeting these requirements is extremely difficult and costly. "The effect of these requirements has been to deny people fleeing conflict in Syria the ability to seek refuge in Lebanon," said Amnesty International in a July 2014 report. "Moreover, despite official denials, there is evidence that since May of 2014, some Palestinian refugees from

Syria already residing in Lebanon are not being allowed to renew their temporary residency visas, leaving them without a clear legal status in the country and at risk of arrest and deportation."

Meanwhile, however, the thousands already there must cope with conditions that are even harsher than the Palestinians who are long-term residents of Lebanon.

Income. According to the Pursue survey, the average per capita monthly income for Syrian Palestinian households is about half the earnings for their Lebanese counterparts—for example, US\$426 a month vs. \$607 in Bourj Al-Barajneh. And in Jalil camp, the percent of persons living in abject poverty ranges from 95 percent of Syrian Palestinians to 67 percent of Palestinians from Lebanon. It's not surprising, then, that very few Syrian Palestinians have reliable employment.

These gaps only will become worse. UNRWA announced that beginning in July 2015, Syrian Palestinians in Lebanon no longer will receive monthly stipends of US\$100 per family toward housing. The only assistance that will continue is the \$27 per-person monthly food allowance.⁵¹



- Housing conditions. For the most part, Palestinian Syrians migrate very quickly to the refugee camps, with the largest concentrations in Ayn Al-Hilweh, Baddawi, Jalil and Bourj Al-Barajneh. They are more likely than other Palestinian refugees to have to rent (historically unusual for the camps), build a temporary shelter or "squat" in a vacant building. Rent is the highest in Bourj Al-Barajeneh, where Syrian Palestinians pay approximately US\$200 a month—about 70 percent of their total monthly household incomes. These households also are more crowded, with an average of 5.7 Syrian Palestinians sleeping in one room in the Jalil camp, for example, compared to 3.6 for their counterparts from Lebanon.
- **Electricity.** Palestinian Syrian households in all of the camps surveyed by Pursue were significantly less likely to be able to supplement the limited state electrical supply with a private generator.

One could be forgiven for assuming this gap would cause some tensions between the two Palestinian populations in Lebanon. However, while most Lebanese Palestinians report believing that the influx of refugees from Syria make the camps less secure and contribute to worsening economic conditions, more than 80 percent express solidarity with the new arrivals and say they have a great deal of faith in their neighbors' trustworthiness and willingness to help. As for the future, the Pursue survey found that if after another year no victory or peace agreement was at hand in Syria, the preferred options range from staying put (the majority in Bourj Al-Barajneh) to emigrating to Europe or America (popular sentiment in Ayn Al-Hilweh and Jalil). There were some, however, who said they would return to Syria anyway (29 percent in Ayn Al-Hilweh vs. 11 percent in Bourj Al-Barajneh).

Two Syrian Palestinians: Fleeing from one hot spot to another

Raja Sadiah Miriana recalls that she and her husband, a tile-layer who made what she considered "a good living," moved to the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp near Damascus from another part of the city because they thought life would be safer there. Living conditions were known to be relatively good, and the camp was home to a large number of professionals - from physicians to engineers.



However, as the civil war raged, roving militias were looking for men to pressgang into recruitment, and her husband soon escaped to Lebanon. He joined several family members and found work. When he could, he would visit Miriana and their three sons. "But then my oldest son turned 20 and was drafted into the Syrian army," Miriana explains. "We didn't want to risk him dying, so my husband came back to try and get him out. I never saw my husband again. Six months later we learned the army had arrested and killed him."Pregnant with their fourth child, Miriana decided she had no choice but to flee to Lebanon with her 19- and 15 year-old sons.

Her in-laws helped her make the journey, and her daughter was safely born in Lebanon's densely packed Shatila refugee camp. Miriana now lives there with 9,000 other Palestinian refugees, as well as low-income Lebanese citizens and asylum-seekers from countries such as Iraq.

That was nearly two years ago. But life has not gotten much easier for Miriana. Her daughter has been diagnosed with thalassemia, a blood disorder requiring medicine costing US\$100 a month. With a monthly rent of \$220, she is struggling to get by on the irregular hard labor her oldest son manages to find, and the \$80 a month her younger boy earns selling coffee. At the time of this conversation, it had been

more than a month since she was able to phone the son she left behind, who is still training with the army. She is afraid to leave the infamous Shatila camp, in case she is deported. "I am constantly worrying," she says, tears welling in her eyes.

Safa Hammoud says she had a "very beautiful life" in Yarmouk camp before Syria was torn apart by war. She had a home, a husband who was a house painter and four children. But then the bombing started, and her children lived in a constant state of fright. One day it got so bad, they all left their home, bringing only some papers, the keys to their house and other mementos with them. They found shelter in a mosque. An hour and a half later, they received word their house had been destroyed.

Hammoud and her husband lived in the mosque for a week, until that was targeted too and they fled to the nearby home of some relatives. But the house was too full and they soon found their way to Bourj Al-Barajneh in Lebanon, where other relatives lived.

Today, two and a half years later, life is hard. Whereas many essentials in Syria were free, their meager home in the Lebanese camp costs US\$350 a



Safa Hammoud holding the deed to the home she fled in Syria.

month. They also have to pay \$100 a month for medicine for her husband, who has developed seizures and struggles with a deep depression. The medicine makes him constantly drowsy. Her \$200-a-month income as a cleaner for a school is nowhere near enough to cover the expenses.

"It is like the Nakba all over again," she says.

Syrian refugees and the UNHCR

Unlike the Palestinians, Syrians were welcomed into Lebanon until very recently. Thanks to the Agreement for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination, signed by the two countries in 1991, Syrians did not need a passport to enter the country. Even work permits were not required.

However, in January of 2015, the Lebanese government reversed that policySyrians. Now, Syrians must qualify for one of eight types of entry visa, each requiring supporting documentation: tourist, business, real estate owner, student, transit, medical, foreign embassy consultation or Lebanese sponsorship. (Thus, the middle class and rich are unlikely to be affected.) Stays in all cases are restricted to one month.⁵²

The government also issued new regulations governing the renewal of residency permits. Syrians who are registered with UNHCR must pay a fee of US\$200 as well as produce a certified copy of a lease agreement or real-estate deed, certification from a mukhtar (village leader) that the landlord owns the property, a notarized pledge not to work and proof of their financial resources or of the support they receive. Some refugees also are asked to sign a notarized pledge that they will return to Syria when their permit expires or when requested by the government. Most refugees are not able to pay the \$200 fee, nor can they produce the required documents since most do not have formal lease agreements or ways of demonstrating they have the financial means to live in Lebanon. As a result, there is a growing sense of insecurity and unease in refugee communities. Many are fearful of arrest or detention because of lapsed residency visas or are feeling increasingly vulnerable to abuse given their

irregular status in the country. In addition, those who try to return to their home country to see a loved one or check on property risk losing their refugee status.⁵³

The fear and uncertainty are fed by news reports such as one on June 10 that the Lebanese army had arrested nine Syrian nationals on suspicion of belonging to "terrorist groups." Separately, 13 Syrians were arrested for lacking legal documents.⁵⁴ Syrian men without passports are caught in particularly a troubling bureaucratic tangle. They have no legal way to stay, but they also have nowhere safe to go, since they face conscription upon their return to Syria. As the news media exposed in December, a rise in casualties, desertions and avoidance of military service has caused the government of Bashar Al-Assad to resort to desperate means of recruitment, among them sweeping arrest campaigns.

Likewise, the sponsorship system—in which workers are bound to a single employer and face difficulties changing jobs—increases the vulnerability of already desperate refugees. This system has a troubled history in Lebanon, where human rights advocates claim it has led to the violation of domestic workers' rights.

"There is no doubt we will find an increase in exploitation due to the new restrictions," Lebanese lawyer Ghida Frangieh told AlJazeera, adding that many Syrians have resorted to bribing sponsors to extend their legal residency.⁵⁵

Dalia and Abdullah: When home is so close, yet so far

Dalia Swaid's What'sApp profile reads, "I left my soul there." Her photo is of a peaceful backyard garden in Homs, Syria, not too far from the northern border with Lebanon. In fact, on clear days, she can almost make out where her small farm used to be from her gloomy little room in Bire, Lebanon. Swaid, her husband Abdullah and her three sons, Hadi (now 13), Mohammed (12) and Taym (6), had a comfortable life. She taught school and Abdullah, who had retired early from the military, raised chickens. Her garden and grape vines were her pride and joy.

Then the civil war broke out and in July 2013, when she traveled to Lebanon to visit relatives with her youngest son, her life totally changed. "It was getting so hard there, we just needed a break," she recalls.

Ten days later, however, Abdullah called and said, "Don't come back." She knew why. Swaid could see and hear the bombing. Several other men in town still served in the military and had decided not to report for duty. The Syrian army retaliated. Fortunately, friends warned Abdullah and he was able to bribe his way across the border with their other two sons. "Most of the people in our village could not afford to pay and died," she recalls sadly.



Dalia Swaid holding a picture of her garden in Syria, which she carries everywhere

At first, the family stayed in a cramped shelter with 21 other people. Their situation improved a little when Dalia was able to get a job teaching English in a private school run by Alaa abd Wahed. He took over management of the school after his brother, instrumental in supporting the early opposition to Assad, was assassinated. Not surprisingly, he is very sympathetic to the plight of the Syrians, and has opened up his school for an afternoon shift of free education for refugees living in the area. All they have to pay is transportation to get there, if needed.

Swaid teaches Lebanese students during the first shift for US\$200 a month, then teaches Syrian children in the afternoons and early evenings for free. However, the family is always scrambling for money, because her husband only works irregular construction jobs and aid from the UNHCR is a "nutrition card" worth just \$19 a month per person. Compare that income to their expenses: rent of \$250 a month and an estimated \$400 a month for food for her family of five and Abdullah's elderly parents, who live in a concrete-slab room nearby. The elderly couple passes their days in a depressed haze, after learning that one of their sons and a grandson, who had stayed behind in Syria to try to protect their farm, were killed in a random bombing.



Dalia Swaid's mother- and father-in-law, mourning for what they left behind

"How I will pay for the disc surgery I need, I don't know," says Swaid. "We have to save everything we can for rent and food. Sometimes we go many days without a dollar in the house."Making their situation even worse is the fact that their residency permits have expired, and to seek renewal would mean giving up her job—the only reliable income they have. Dalia and Abdullah, who is particularly at risk due to his former military status, are afraid every time they hear of local men being arrested or sometimes, just disappearing.

"They don't want us here, even when we die," she says. "Abdullah's uncle just died. He was old and sick. But (the authorities) said Syrians are not allowed to be buried here! What were we to do? Finally, a little village far away agreed to take him."

Shelter

Unlike the other neighboring countries to which Syrians have fled, Lebanon has not built or allowed formal refugee camps for Syrians, fearing they would facilitate the permanent resettlement of the refugees—as with the Palestinians before them.

Initially, most shelter with family or friends, since historically, traffic between the two countries was heavy. However, as weeks and months turn into years, the refugees have been forced to pay high rents for tiny spaces, "squat" in abandoned buildings, move into tents or find accommodation in the Palestinian camps. (Although originally established for Palestinians, Shatila, for example, now has a population of 22,000— of which the majority are low-income Egyptians, Syrians, Kurds and even Lebanese.)

With the Palestinian refugee camps now permanent fixtures in Lebanon, the government has made a conscious choice not to do the same for the Syrians. This also means the government prohibits any intervention to enhance tent settlements. As a result, the demand for shelter exceeds supply in many parts of the country, with 81 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon forced to rent their accommodation, paying an average of US\$200 for what is often little more than a plot of land. Fifty-five percent currently live in insecure and exposed places such as garages, unfinished buildings

and informal camps—a 15 percent increase compared to 2014.⁵⁶ It's not surprising, then, that the UNHCR has reported that 27 percent of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon lack adequate access to potable water, 29 percent are living with substandard sanitation and 70 percent cannot maintain good personal and household hygiene.⁵⁷

From farming to chicken coops

Renting is difficult for many Syrian refugees to afford, forcing them to move into tents donated by aid organizations or occupy whatever vacant buildings they can find.

As one drives through a little town in northern Lebanon called Bire, the countryside looks idyllic. Pastures roll out toward the border with Syria. If you turn down a country road, soon a few rows of old cement chicken coops appear. When you look closer, you see them: People. Families. Living in the coops.

In each building, there are about 12 families. Mohammed Ghazi Harfoush explained through an interpreter how they found themselves there: "We are from the city of Koussair (south of Homs), very close to the border. After the demonstrations during the rebellion, the army destroyed so much. We had no food or medical care. We spent many weeks shutting between our houses and the shelters we dug to get away from the bombs. "



Harfoush has seven children; one, a baby girl, was born in their homemade shelter. In 2013, the family fled on foot when they heard that a Hezbollah militia was entering the city to support the army. "They killed everyone they saw!" he says. "We were lucky to get out alive."

When they reached the border with Lebanon, they paid about US\$300 per family to pass safely into the country. At first, they crowded into a school; they had no money left. Later, an aid agency gave them some tents. Fares Faisal Al Harfoush, one of



Mohammed's relatives, explains why they eventually left: "There were seven families in just two tents, and it was so crowded that my youngest child was burned by a candle. Then we found a snake in his cradle. We applied to UNHCR to move someplace else, and that's how we ended up in the coops. As bad as it is, the farmer who owns them is threatening to make us leave."

Mohammed's wife is struggling to afford milk and diapers for the new baby. The UNHCR-supplied "nutrition card," each worth \$US19, is simply not enough. Five of her children do not attend school because they can't afford the transportation.

"I regret we came to Lebanon," she says. "I wish we had just died."

Education

According to the International Labor Organization, more than half of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are below the age of 24 and one out of three is either illiterate or has never attended school (in addition, 40 percent only have a primary education). That lag has continued in Lebanon, with only 31 percent of school-age children enrolled in classes. The primary drivers for this lack of participation are fees their families can't afford, lack of transportation to the closest school and language barriers (Lebanese schools teach some classes in English or French, whereas Syrian classes are taught exclusively in Arabic).⁵⁸ The UN reports that, as of March, "there are more school-age refugees in Lebanon than the entire intake of the country's public schools."

Although the government in Lebanon in general has appeared somewhat paralyzed by the "refugee tsunami," a bright spot has been the 2014 appointment of Lebanese Education Minister Elias Bou Saab. He has launched a three-year strategy called "Reaching All Children with Education," which aims to enroll more than 400,000 children in school by 2016. The first step was the introduction of a double-shift system in the public schools, which began early in 2015 in 156 public institutions. In the morning, Lebanese children are educated in French and English. In the late afternoon and early evenings, about 500,000 Syrian children will be taught in Arabic. The program — at a cost of US \$263 million — is the largest educational humanitarian effort ever mounted during an emergency.

In addition, Saab has initiated an "Accelerated Learning Program," geared toward those Syrian children who have missed more than a year of school and need a more intensive catch-up on coursework. However, full funding has not yet been raised.⁵⁹



Syrian refugee children in a classroom in northern Lebanon

Are American companies attempting to turn aid into profit?

The last question one would expect to get from a Syrian refugee teaching English to seventh-grade students using a Lebanese state-authorized textbook is, "what is Olestra?"

For those who don't know, Olestra is the generic name for a fat substitute made by U.S. conglomerate Procter & Gamble, touted as aiding in weight loss but shunned in the 1990s for causing side effects such as cramping and diarrhea.

She asked the question because one of the segments in the book is headlined, "Are We Ready for Fat-Free Fat?" It went to describe a dinner prepared by "Chef John Folse" for a private party, which "tasted rich and delicious." In fact, it went on to say that of the dishes served, including salad with dressing and ice-cream cake, "every bite tasted heavenly." Yet, it exclaimed, "the whole thing…was a low-fat meal." The secret? Chef John used an oil called Olestra. "As far as the human body is concerned, Olestra is fat-free fat." (Caveat: Later, brief reference is made to some concern about side effects.)

On another page, Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's all are mentioned as fast foods available in Lebanon. The question: Is a discussion of products like Olestra appropriate for 12- to 13-year-olds struggling to learn and like a new language? And why are American brand names being promoted in the guise of instruction?

Employment

A 2013 International Labor Organization (ILO) study reported that while 70 percent of "active" Syrian refugees (working age and either employed or looking) have obtained some kind of work, the rate is much lower for women (32 percent). In addition, the vast majority of the jobs are semi- or unskilled (88 percent) and/or seasonal, daily or weekly (56 percent).⁶⁰

Frequently, the work is unsafe. One out of two refugee workers in Lebanon reported suffering from back and joint pain or severe fatigue as well as extreme cold or heat. Almost two-thirds of Syrian refugees reported exposure to dust and fumes in the workplace.

The pay, however, doesn't reflect these risks. The ILO assessment found that Syrian workers in Lebanon earn substantially less than their Lebanese counterparts. Average monthly income for a Syrian refugee in Lebanon is almost 40 percent less than the minimum wage of 675,000 Lebanese pounds (US\$448). (Not surprisingly, Syrian women earn about 40 percent less on average than their male counterparts.)

Mary Kawar, senior employment specialist for the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, comments that, "The large supply of low-wage Syrian workers expands informal employment, resulting in downward pressures on wages and the deterioration of working conditions. In turn, this negatively affects Lebanese host communities and refugees who are both increasingly unable to live in dignity or maintain sufficient access to livelihoods."

Syrian refugees: employed, but struggling

- 88 percent: Syrian refugees in Lebanon employed in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.
- **5**6 percent: Syrian refugees employed on a seasonal, weekly or daily basis.
- 418,000 LBP (277 USD): Average monthly income for a Syrian refugee worker, compared to Lebanon's minimum wage of 675,000 LBP (448 USD).

* Source: International Labor Organization, 2014

Health care

Many refugees fleeing Syria have serious health care needs due to, among other things, pre-existing chronic conditions and injuries suffered during the conflict. However, on arriving in Lebanon they are met with an overstretched system in which the services available to refugees are limited and difficult to access. As with Palestinians, Syrian refugees are largely reliant on care subsidized by the UNHCR, due to the expense of private care. In May 2013, UNHCR was forced by financial shortages to limit its funding to primary health care and to narrowly defined emergency treatment. Even when refugees meet the tight criteria, most must pay 25 percent of the costs themselves. People unable to access subsidized care under the UNHCR program include those needing care for non-life threatening injuries such as burns and bullet wounds, as well as those suffering from life-threatening conditions such as cancer and kidney failure.

The Way Forward:

Toward a More Humane Refugee Policy

More than 51 million persons around the world are displaced because of conflict and violence. The majority is living in what is called a "protracted" or "warehoused" existence, stagnating for years or even decades in what was supposed to be a temporary state—mostly in developing countries barely equipped to care for their own people.

Years Sind Situation Began		Host Country	Number
60	Palestinians	Gaza, West Bank, & Lebanon	2,106,100
50	Tibetans	Nepal	20,000
41	Palestinians	Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait	536,400
40	Eritreans	Sudan, Ethiopia	207,500
35	Filipinos	Malaysia	72,400
33	Angolans	Zambia	27,100
33	Sahrawi	Algeria	90,000
32	Congolese (Kinshasa)	Angola	12,700
29	Afghans	Iran, Pakistan	2,790,900
29	Iraqis	Iran	58,100
28	Ethiopians	Sudan	10,000
25	Sri Lankans	India	120,000
25	Sudanese	Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, et al.	145,200
24	Myanmarese	Thailand	111,100
20	Myanmarese	India	100,000
19	Liberians	C ™te dÕlvoire, Ghana, et al.	71,100
19	Mauritanians	Senegal	32,400
19	Myanmarese Chin	Malaysia	30,000
17	Afghans	Russia, India	92,000
17	Bhutanese	Nepal	101,000
17	Georgians	Russia	40,000
17	Myanmarese	Bangladesh	193,000
17	Somalis	Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen	460,300
15	Burundians	Tanzania	240,500
14	Myanmarese	Malaysia	49,000
14	Rwandans	Uganda	17,300
12	Congolese (Kinshasa)	Tanzania, Zambia, Rwanda, et al.	300,200
12	Myanmarese	Thailand	200,000
8	North Koreans	China	11,000
5	Sudanese	Chad	268,000
TOTAL 8,177,800) 8,456,800 for 10 years or more)			

While emergencies tend to attract a significant amount of funding, that support tends to diminish over time. Long-running, seemingly intractable dislocations lose their urgency in the eyes of the media and policymakers, and thus among donors.

The media typically limit their already meager refugee coverage to dramatic, largescale outflows and repatriations and to only the more accessible of those. Refugees languishing year after year in inhospitable, dangerous, desolate no-man's lands near remote and often contested borders are no one's favored assignment or story. As a result, warehoused refugees tend to fall off the radar of international attention and into an Orwellian black hole. According to Tom Kuhlman, an Oxford economist, even "members of the humanitarian community have a natural tendency to concentrate their attention on…new refugee emergencies and large-scale repatriation programs."

Thus, refugee camps and "gatherings" metastasize into isolated, unproductive islands sustained largely by the international community—or neglected altogether.

"Condemning people who fled persecution to stagnate in confinement for much of the remainder of their lives is unnecessary, wasteful, hypocritical, counterproductive, unlawful and morally unacceptable."

Merrill Smith of USCRI, author of "Warehousing Refugees: Denial of Rights, a Waste of Humanity."

Recommendations

Eliminate 'begging' from the equation

While legitimate grievances are rife with relief agencies that, often inadvertently, perpetuate dependence and its associated depression, such organizations that deliver aid are necessary. However, their dependence on donor governments that use their contributions as political football has hindered their ability to be effective within their mandates. UNHCR is currently \$1.6 billion short of the \$1.9 billion required to meet the needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Likewise, UNRWA officials say they may completely run out of cash by October.⁶² The same crisis is hitting the UN's World Food Program, which often fills gaps in UNHCR services. It had been paying Syrian refugees in Lebanon \$27 each per month for food. But in January, a funding crunch forced the WFP to limit monthly food assistance to \$19 per refugee per month. On July 1, it was cut again, to \$13.50.63

Too often, funding for new influxes of refugees, or in response to an emergency such as severe winters without heat, is dependent on donor conferences. However, as author Jonathan Katz notes in "The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster," such conferences are, to put it harshly, a bit of a sham.

" It is a rule of donors' conferences that pledges are not typically delivered." Katz

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It is a rule of donors' conferences that pledges are not typically delivered observes. Foreign ministries, such as the U.S. State Department, typically announce huge pledges that receive much media coverage. However, lawmakers who are less interested in diplomatic heroics and more about keeping the money at home then must approve them. There also is, he says,

a "sleight of hand" that goes into pledging: "One beloved donor tactic is to pledge

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money already allocated for an existing project. Another is to count debt forgiveness as part of pledged funds. And then there's the fact that once the enthusiasm abates, the donors just simply move on to other things."

However, it is rare for the media to follow up over months or years, and difficult for interested members of the general public to hold anyone to account. For Palestinians in Gaza, a new group called "Aid Watch Palestine" is forming, with a mission of "producing and disseminating research and commentary that stimulate self-reflection, debate and exchange of ideas about how to change the aid system." It also aims to connect and mobilize the growing community of aid critics, accountability advocates, justice-oriented philanthropists, self-reflective international aid actors, supporters of the Palestinian right to self-determination in development around the world and local Palestinian leaders. "Palestinians in Gaza have a right to scrutinize aid to ensure their priorities are respected," says the organization's Facebook page.

Such a grassroots-led initiative should be encouraged to serve all protracted refugee populations, to monitor the receipt and use of aid money from governments mandated to give according to a set formula (determined according to criteria such as gross domestic product and current "load" of forced migrants hosted) every time certain "triggers" exist (such as the number of refugees created and the length of their displacement). It's time to stop making victims of war and other disasters beg for the right to survive and regenerate.

Incorporate capacity building and grassroots development from the very beginning

The most dramatic example of refugee management gone very wrong is the Palestinians the largest and longest-warehoused population in the world. Since its inception in 1949, UNRWA (funded by donor governments) has spent a total of \$16.5 billion (in constant 2004 dollars) on care and maintenance for a population that was initially 670,000—or \$25,000 per refugee.⁶⁴ At the time, few thought the situation would last so long, but that's typically the case at the beginning of protracted refugee situations. "It is better to plan for a protracted refugee situation than for a short-lived crisis," writes Oxford's Kuhlman. "Only if during the first year it already appears abundantly evident that the refugees will soon be able to return home can programs aimed at local integration be abandoned."

It is better to plan for a protracted refugee situation than for a short-lived crisis

Yes, emergency relief such as tents and food packets are needed in those early days, but development and self-sufficiency should be prioritized as soon as the emergency phase has stabilized. That is not, however, the current operational paradigm. International assistance continues to be sourced from humanitarian budgets. Not surprisingly, programming follows funding. "The provision of emergency relief comes first, as dollars from donor emergency funds flow in," says T. Alexander Aleinikoff, UN deputy high commissioner for refugees. "But soon after, UNHCR and other multilateral and NGO actors shift to general forms of assistance, underwritten from humanitarian funding streams. Referred to as 'care and maintenance,' it is now the reigning paradigm for assistance to the long-term displaced. Perhaps it is time to recognize more frankly the funding and spending category assigned to most of the world's displaced for what it is: dollars for dependence."In fact, in April 2014, a number of development organizations, affected states, donor nations, academics, the private sector and civil society players came together and formed what they call the Solutions Alliance, "driven by a clear purpose and commitment to finding solutions to protracted displacement and rethinking how displacement is managed. Our overall goal is to promote and enable the transition for displaced persons away from dependency towards increased resilience, self-reliance and development." The first pilot projects are focused on Somalia and Zambia. The language is lofty and somewhat bureaucratic; the judgment is still out. However, the sentiments are admirable.

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The question is how to change systems so they result in concrete behaviors. And that requires the involvement of the refugees themselves at every stage.

Sonbola: Syrians empowering Syrians through education

When Luca Renda, country director for the UN Development Program in Lebanon, spoke at the Dubai International Humanitarian and Aid Development Conference (Dihad) earlier this year, she called on countries to help fund a US\$2.1 billion plan to create opportunities for the poor among Syrian refugees.

What she received was a quick challenge from Massa Mufti, founder of a new nonprofit called Sonbola. "What have you done to empower them?" she asked. "I am very critical of the UN contracting international NGOs to bring staff to work with the Syrian community rather than engaging the Syrians themselves to help one another at a fraction of the price. These people need to be empowered and have a self-sustained income."⁶⁵

Mufti is herself Syrian, and with a master's in education and leadership from the American University in Beirut, she spearheaded an innovative educational program sponsored by First Lady Asma Al-Assad. Designed to bridge the gap between formal and informal education, it employed a network of museums and used technology to connect them to the schools. The responsibility of citizenship was an important



Sonbola serves women and their children living in tent communities in southern Lebanon



Syrian teachers are employed by Sonbola to teach refugee children

component of the curriculum."I believed so much in that project," she recalls sadly. "But then came the protests, and the government crushed them. I felt like I had been duped."Mufti resigned, and after a period in Lebanon, today lives in Dubai where her husband works. However, her heart is with the Syrian people, particularly the displaced children and youth.

"I believed so much in that project," she recalls sadly. "But then came the protests, and the government crushed them. I felt like I had been duped."Mufti resigned, and after a period in Lebanon, today lives in Dubai where her husband works. However, her heart is with the Syrian people, particularly the displaced children and youth.

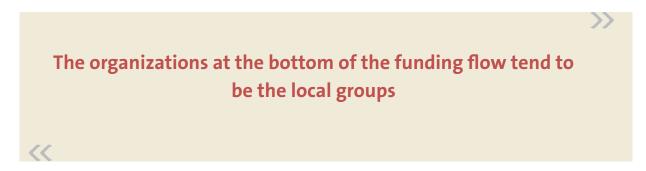
"They are the ones described as the lost generation," she says. "Vocational education has not been addressed by any of the international interventions. (The international NGOs) talk about food and shelter and soliciting money, but I feel we are only creating a generation of beggars. I want my people to be empowered. They need to be engaged in helping one another and that is the foundation for peace building."

Sonbola targets children in the Bekaa Valley in southern Lebanon who have received no education and psychological support for the past two to three years, both through independent programming and by preparing them to be able to succeed in Lebanese schools. Many of the children live in tent communities along the border. Sonbola most unique characteristic, however, is its use of Syrian teachers and young professionals, who would otherwise be unemployed and unable to develop their own skills. They join together to provide sustainable education to refugee children."This is not emergency education," Mufti says. "It's not just literacy, although we provide that too. It's also what they need to be complete people—art, music, theater, science."

Plan from the 'bottom up' instead of 'top down'

In a report titled, "Aid Inside Syria: A Step in the Right Direction?" Refugees International has this to say: "Donor governments, UN agencies and INGOs have attempted to take steps toward incorporating more local and diaspora Syrian aid organizations into their operations. However, in the case of Syria, it is not clear that this capacity-building process is taking account of and responding to the actual needs and concerns of the Syrian organizations on the ground. While these major donors and operational entities know that local partnerships are best practice in humanitarian work, with regard to the response in Syria, they rarely seem to achieve them."

The international aid community involves a huge and complex system of beneficiaries, implementers, coordinators and donors. A very simplified description of the most common method of providing aid is this: Governments and private donors contribute money to UN agencies, which then give grants to partner organizations that either implement the programs themselves or sub-contract them to local organizations, or both. The organizations at the bottom of the funding flow tend to be the local groups that are based inside the country and actually have staff who know the language, culture and dynamics of the region they serve.



In addition, local humanitarian groups told the Refugees International (RI) team that the work they do often is dictated by what funders want to sponsor, rather than by what the beneficiaries say they need. Some local Syrian groups described positive experiences with INGOs that treated them as partners, rather than just the deliverers of aid, because it translated into real organizational and operational improvements. However, the majority of local aid workers with whom RI spoke felt that the UN's and INGOs' purported commitment to the development of local groups was not backed up by action.⁶⁶ "Too many international professionals and organizations want to come in with their own programming," agrees Associate Professor Court Robinson, PhD, who is on staff with the Johns Hopkins Center for Refugee and Disaster Response. "I was in Indonesia a few days after the tsunami there and I can't tell you how many organizations were there trying to set up their own field clinics. There were literally fistfights over it."

Instead, says Robinson, the Johns Hopkins team, which focuses on public health, concentrates on "training other people to do our work." In addition, the center researches and incorporates refugee opinions. A lot of the impact evaluations conducted by other organizations say they talked to "stakeholders," but too often that means donors or providers. Rarely, he says, do they sample beneficiaries.

Another common practice is to select the most positive recipients and share their stories. "Those are anecdotes, but hardly representative. It is imperative to randomly sample the population you want to serve," says Courtland.

Even in the case of natural disasters, when events are developing fast, Courtland believes it is possible to incorporate beneficiaries as partners in the first two to three days. The evolution of communications technology, and the increasing affordability of mobile telephones, for instance, is aiding this process. Today, mobile phones can be used in the most remote of areas to text the locations of stranded people or political violence. "This helps put the solutions to their problems in the hands of the displaced," says Courtland.

In an innovative experiment that Euro-Med would like to see replicated elsewhere, the International Rescue Committee announced earlier this year the launch of IRC Serv Info, an online platform that enables Syrian refugees in Lebanon to search and rate aid and commercial services–ranging from health care to financial services and retail–online or over the phone.

Similar to websites and applications that allow users to search for hotels or restaurants and then rate those services, Service Info can be accessed on a smart phone, tablet or computer. Organizations that provide assistance to refugees—such as NGOs, medical facilities and even supermarkets—can promote services on the site. Once refugees have used a service, they can rate their experience on Service Info.Another admirable model is the founding philosophy of the Dalia Association, established in 2007 by members of the Palestinian community from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Israel and the diaspora with the goal of "realizing our rights as Palestinians to control our resources and sustain our own development." Its "Village Decides" model focuses on:

- Involving the entire community in decision-making and priority-setting related to funding
- Activating local society in monitoring and evaluating civil society institutions and aid organizations
- Achieving social change throughgrassroots action.
- Activating the role of the Palestinian diaspora to involve them in the development process.

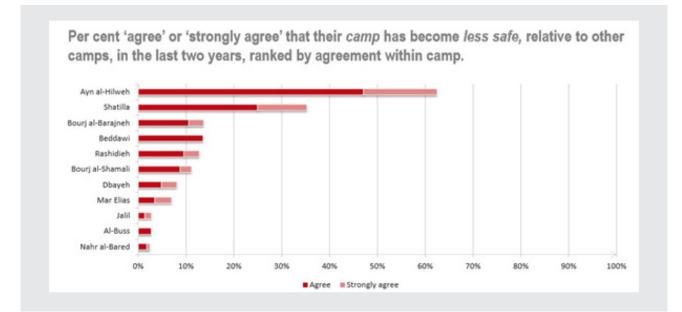
More such community-based approaches are needed in Lebanon and elsewhere.

Pursue: the community decides

"Pursue" is a development consultant serving Lebanon and Yemen that was founded by Alistair Harris, a former British diplomat and UN investigator who set out to close the gap between donors and beneficiaries. Pursue operates in all 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, focusing on youth and good governance.

A central tenet of the way Pursue operates is to first ask camp residents what they think and want, and then to design programs that meet those needs. For example, in September-October 2014, it conducted a survey among a randomly selected sample of 3,400 residents to assess satisfaction with and perceptions of five aspects of camp life, including security, electricity and housing. Priority needs were identified, then addressed through small grants. For example, in the Ayn Al-Hilweh camp, the market that serves as a hub of economic activity needed an overhead canopy and better lighting. "It's a partnership. For example, we are providing the transformer, and the grocers committee will pay for the fixtures," explains Nizar El Laz, program manager for Lebanon. Local labor was used, creating or supporting 250 jobs. "We are trying to create a new culture in the camps. They take the initiative and we play a facilitating role."

In addition, Pursue developed a community-monitoring program, in which needed repairs and other improvements can be reported online. In less than four months,



Host countries must, first and foremost, give refugees the right to work

14,500 incidents were recorded, with totals compared between camps and with surrounding Lebanese neighborhoods.

Laz also serves on a cross-camp youth committee that takes as its motto: "Weapon yourself with three pillars: Trust yourself. Have a vision. Have the will to fight for what you want." A current priority is to teach youth how to work with and hold the popular committees that govern the camps to account. "There is no security and stability without good governance, and no good governance without security and stability," notes Edward Kattoura, political and development consultant for Pursue.

Better support host countries and demand that standards are met

A relatively small number of countries bear the brunt of the world's refugee crisis. In 2014, developing countries hosted more than 86 percent of the world's refugees, compared to 70 percent 10 years ago. The country hosting the largest number of refugees was Turkey, with 1.6 million refugees. Afghanistan was the biggest source country, a position it has held for 33 years. However, with 2.47 million refugees, Syria now is a close second^{.67}

In order for host countries to be able and willing to accept the seemingly neverending flow of refugees and treat them humanely, they must receive aid that will build up their economies and benefit their citizens as well.

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In return, host countries must, first and foremost, give refugees the right to work. This does not require a paradigm shift. The requirement simply recognizes a right already included in the 1951 convention that originally created the international refugee regime. A 2014 analysis of the situation of nearly 5 million refugees in 18 different countries found that 45 percent have no legal right to work, while the remaining number frequently face significant de facto barriers to employment.⁶⁸ According to the convention, even otherwise acceptable restrictions on foreigners' employment rights are inapplicable to refugees who have completed three years' residence in a host country or are spouses or parents of nationals of the asylum state.



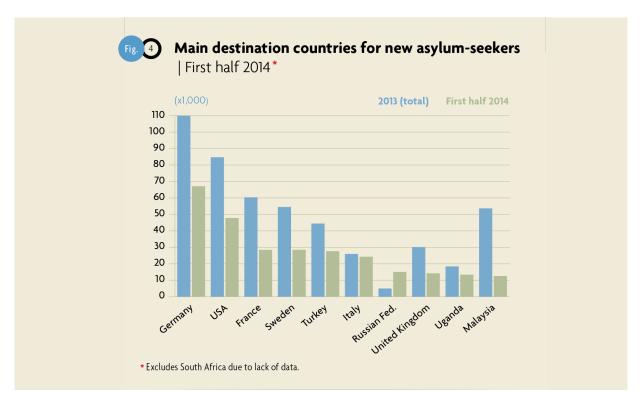
To build or not to build camps

In the simplest description, camps are locations where refugees live and where, in most cases, host governments and humanitarian agencies provide assistance and services in a centralized manner. The defining characteristic of a camp, however, is typically limitation on the rights and freedoms of refugees and their ability to make meaningful choices about their lives. Globally, in 2012, nearly half of the world's refugees were living in some type of camp, with an average population of 11,400.⁶⁹ "UNHCR's experience has been that camps can have significant negative impacts over the longer term for all concerned," the agency states in a recent white paper. "Living in camps can engender dependency and weaken the ability of refugees to manage their own lives, which perpetuates the trauma of displacement and creates barriers to solutions, whatever form they take.⁷⁰

The agency goes on to point out that, faced with these risks and challenges, many refugees decide to settle outside of camps or designated areas when they can afford a move. "When this violates national laws and policies, refugees often face serious consequences, such as detention or the confiscation and destruction of property or businesses. Refugees in these circumstances may avoid registering with UNHCR, placing them beyond the effective reach of protection."

However, others argue that there are downsides to the absence of formal refugee camps. Camps make it easier for host countries to monitor and more easily target violent factions. Camps also can be advantageous during emergency response, by making it easier to quickly identify, provide service to and assure security for refugees.

Countries outside of the immediate "traffic zones" are far from willing to resettle their proportionate share



The poorest Syrians in Lebanon, who mostly do not live in camps, lacked adequate housing in the midst of winter, for example. The lack of formal camps also means that, with refugees dispersed over 1,750 different locations, vital aid and services do not always reach many of those living in more remote areas.

Associate Professor Court Robinson, PhD, on the faculty of the Johns Hopkins Center for Refugee and Disaster Response, agrees that camps do assure centralization of services and thus some degree of protection. "But we now have mobile technology that can help us keep in communication with people," he adds. "And we are documenting the alarmingly high cost of protracted confinement. It is high time we find and apply other solutions."Euro-Med agrees with Dr. Robinson's point of view, and joins his advocacy for portable rights that refugees can carry with them. Rights should travel with people. "We should create a virtual camp: a package of portable services, perhaps accessed through some sort of electronic ID or voucher, available to people who flee across a border. People have a right to move, and to seek a better life."

Spread the burden with dramatically increased opportunities for resettlement

Currently, the rising number of smuggler boats making it across the Mediterranean is focusing attention on the role of the Europe and the United States in easing the pressure on immedi`ate host countries. After all, Western governments often play at least a background role in stoking the regional conflicts that create refugee flows.

However, despite the increasing length of time refugees are spending in a sort of purgatory, countries outside of the immediate "traffic zones" are far from willing to resettle their proportionate share. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, member countries have accepted 150,000 Syrian refugees while the country's immediate neighbors – Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq – have taken in over 3 million.⁷¹

"We are witnessing the worst refugee crisis of our era, with millions of women, men and children struggling to survive amidst brutal wars, networks of people traffickers and governments who pursue selfish political interests instead of showing basic human compassion," said Salil Shetty, Amnesty International's secretary general, in a report released for World Refugee Day in 2014.⁷²

UNHCR has called on other governments to resettle just 130,000 Syrian refugees from among the 4 million displaced. So far, states have offered to resettle fewer than 90,000. Of those, European Union members have pledged to offer about 45,000 places.⁷³ Specifically, in response to the influx of refugees and migrants trying to escape by boat, the European Commission has proposed redistributing the new arrivals more equitably across the Union. Some 24,000 from Italy and 16,000 from Greece would be relocated among other EU members according to a "distribution key" that takes account of factors such as population, gross domestic product and unemployment, as well as the number of refugees already accepted. A separate proposal would resettle 20,000 mainly Syrian refugees currently living in camps in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.⁷⁴

However, the plan is encountering stiff opposition. No one disagrees that countries like Lebanon and Italy (the most easily reached by boat) need help, but neither do they want to be told how many refugees to take in. France and Germany, which together would be expected to receive more than 30 percent of the relocated refugees, have asked for "fairer burden-sharing." The French interior minister, Bernard Cazeneuve, is calling for waiting centers in Italy and Greece, where "illegal economic migrants" could be distinguished from "those who are persecuted and therefore covered by asylum law."

Spain says the commission has not given adequate consideration to its 23 percent unemployment rate. And the fact that under EU law, Britain, Ireland and Denmark will be exempt from the scheme adds to the sense of general discontent among those who aren't. The UK is particularly a justified target for criticism: Last year, the government committed to accepting up to 500 Syrian refugees by the end of 2017 after The Independent newspaper supported a campaign to force it to open its doors to the most vulnerable survivors.

However, only 187 Syrians have been granted entry into the UK since January 2014. Although the prime minister said the government would increase the number of places to resettle the most vulnerable Syrians, he added that the figure would not exceed 1,000. This compares dismally with the number of Syrian refugees taken in by fellow European countries. Germany has offered 30,000 places to resettle Syrians, Sweden has committed to resettling 2,700, Switzerland has offered 3,500 places and Austria 1,500.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, the United States is doing even less—admitting just 853 Syrian refugees, for example, since the crisis began. That fact has prompted 14 U.S. senators to appeal to President Barack Obama to dramatically increase the number to 65,000. The UNHCR has referred about 12,000 to the United States for asylum to date—a number that was limited due to earlier requirements that applicants have no connection to any of the various armed armies and militias in Syria.⁷⁶

However, in the United States, too, there is opposition, with some conservative lawmakers charging that young male refugees would become terrorists.

"Resettlement is traditionally used as a protection tool, for individuals who are at risk in their home countries—not as a method of relieving heavily burdened host countries," explains Daryl Grisgraber, senor advocate for the Middle East at Refugees International. "Should we expand beyond protection? It's a fair question. I think we're going to have to get there. There is going to have to be some thought about why all these people are trying to escape and what is our obligation to bring them here, if in fact we are committed to humanitarian aid, reducing poverty and ending conflict. But politically it is going to be a real hard fight."

Both Grisgraber and Johns Hopkins' Robinson point out that numerous studies show that communities that allow refugees to integrate into their social fabric are typically the ones that thrive. The question is, how do you change the mindset?

"Many governments exploit xenophobia. They say, we can't...you fill in the blank. But the answer is 'we can.' We can absorb these refugees and we can and should do a lot more," says Robinson. "We must stop complaining so much about the short-term impact and look at the benefits of doing the right thing. With the Western world's largely aging population, younger immigrants should be welcomed."

The special case of the Palestinians: Restore their human rights

Perhaps nothing more aptly captures the plight of the Palestinians in Lebanon than the response of Refugees International's Grisgraber to the question about her organization's role in advocating for their rights. Although she characterized RI's mission as focusing on "forgotten crises," she said the Palestinians are not a focus for the organization because there are "too many intractable aspects. They carry so much history and politics with them. This is kind of the worldwide problem, no matter where (Palestinians) are located. Everyone thinks, 'you're not ours. Leave it to UNRWA.' It's going to have to be the role of activists."

The problem, of course, is that UNRWA has a limited mandate: no protection, and not much in the way of "work" these days; "relief" is all it can handle, and even that is seriously undermined. Dependence on donors whose attention is highly fragmented and politicized has resulted in a funding shortage so severe that vital services are shutting down, such as cash-for-rent assistance for newly arrived Palestinians in Lebanon. "Currently, UNRWA confronts a funding shortfall for core activities—such as schools for half a million children—to cover the year 2015 of US\$101 million. UNRWA at present can pay salaries and cover activities only into September," Commissioner General Pierre Krähenbühl told the Beirut-based Daily Star⁷⁷.

The Star quoted one Palestinian protester as saying, "We have been beggars for 67 years. Since the 1948 Nakba, we've been begging UNRWA and donor countries."⁷⁸ He says it better than any politician or policy expert. This longest warehousing of human beings is a moral travesty and it is time to put it to an end.

UN General Assembly Resolution 194 states that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for the loss of or damage to that property. Euro-Med joins with Palestinians and their supporters everywhere in insisting that the UN and its member countries finally honor this resolution, demand that Israel offer a fair response and, if it is not forthcoming, impose sanctions. However, how well or poorly Lebanon treats its Palestinians won't speed, slow or otherwise affect the process. "The question for Lebanon, therefore, is this: Is it really in the country's interest to have a quarter million or more alienated, impoverished and marginalized refugees within its borders?" writes Rex Brynen on Palestinian Refugee Research Net. "Extending civil and economic rights to the refugees—as the Arab League itself called for in the 1965 Casablanca Protocol—would reduce the risks of radicalization, and make it easier to sustain a dialogue on other issues (such as Palestinian arms in and outside the camps)."⁷⁹

Tawteen—the naturalization of Palestinians in Lebanon—has been explicitly prohibited by the Lebanese constitution since the Taif Agreement of 1989. However, Palestinian groups throughout the country are virtually unanimous in agreeing they would forego citizenship in return for civil rights such as the freedom to work in every profession and to be treated and compensated in line with Lebanese employees. Surveys conducted by the International Labor Organization estimate that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon contribute more than US\$300 million a year to the Lebanese economy, with a particular benefit in rural areas, where most Palestinians live. This is in spite of the strict limitations that hold back their earning potential. The alternative, of course, is growing unrest, as seen today in Ayn Al-Hilweh.It is time for the international community to offer the government of Lebanon the support it needs to do what is morally right: allow the Palestinians to live productive, fulfilled lives as they wait for the status they deserve in their rightful homeland.

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