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COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Lebanon (country of habitual residence)
Question(s)	1) Information on the treatment of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) currently residing in Lebanon and whether they are beneficiaries of UNRWA and protection by Lebanese state 2) Information on incidents of deportation for Palestinian Refugees from Syria living in Lebanon back to Syria
Date of completion	2 August 2019
Query Code	Q22-2019
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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 2 August 2019. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.



COI QUERY RESPONSE

1. Information on the treatment of Palestinian Refugees from Syria currently residing in Lebanon and whether they are beneficiaries of UNRWA and protection by Lebanese state

1.1. General overview

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), over 45 000 Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) are present in Lebanon¹ representing approximately 10% of Lebanon's population.²

More than 80% of the PRS claim that the UNRWA provided stipend is their main source of income; approximately 89% live in poverty, including 9% in extreme poverty³ and 95% face food insecurity.⁴ In 2017, according to UNRWA, approximately 90% of the PRS in Lebanon were under the poverty line and 95% faced food insecurity.⁵

According to UNRWA, 'All Palestine refugees from Syria in Lebanon have access to protection services'⁶, including education, health, social, infrastructure and other services according to the agency's mandate.⁷

According to the United States Department of State (US DoS) 2018 report on Lebanon, 'Palestinian refugees who fled Syria to Lebanon since 2011 received limited basic support from UNRWA, including food aid, cash assistance, and winter assistance, such as cash to purchase fuel for heating. Authorities permitted children of PRS to enroll in UNRWA schools and access UNRWA health clinics.'⁸

1.2. Main challenges

¹ UNRWA, Profiling the vulnerability of Palestine refugees from Syria living in Lebanon, 2015, [url](#), p. 10; UNRWA, 2019 Syria regional crisis emergency appeal, 23 January 2019, [url](#), p. 2

² UNRWA, Where we work, Lebanon, n.d., [url](#)

³ UNRWA, Protection brief Palestine refugees living in Lebanon, June 2018, [url](#), p. 3

⁴ UNRWA, 2019 Syria regional crisis emergency appeal, 23 January 2019, [url](#), p. 20

⁵ UNRWA, PRS in Lebanon, n.d., [url](#)

⁶ UNRWA, Lebanon protection, n.d., [url](#)

⁷ UNRWA, UNRWA Statement On The Situation Of Palestine Refugees In Lebanon, 22 July 2019, [url](#); UNRWA, Where we work - Lebanon, n.d., [url](#). For further details on UNRWA's mission and involvement, see: UNRWA, Annual Operational Report 2018, 20 June 2019, [url](#), p. 14

⁸ United States, USDoS, 2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon, 13 March 2019, [url](#)

2018 UNRWA data indicates that around 50% of the PRS in Lebanon reside in the 12 recognised Palestine refugee camps.⁹ The camps are overcrowded, with poor housing conditions and a lack of infrastructure.¹⁰

The PRS in Lebanon have a very complex legal status.¹¹

Lebanon has not signed the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees¹², nor the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.¹³

Since PRS are '[..] not formally citizens of another state, Palestine refugees are unable to claim the same rights as other foreigners living and working in Lebanon'.¹⁴

Based on UNRWA protection monitoring data from July 2018, more than 40% of the PRS in Lebanon did not hold valid legal residency documents.¹⁵

Legal status difficulties faced by PRS in Lebanon, including regularising and/or maintaining a valid legal status¹⁶, affect different aspects of their life in Lebanon, namely 'restricted access to civil documentation (e.g. marriage certificates and birth registration), curtailed freedom of movement, increased vulnerability to abuse and exploitation, and limited access to specialized services including in health and education'.¹⁷

Concerning the legal stay of the PRS in Lebanon, UNRWA states that the state of Lebanon allowed a free of charge renewal of residency documents, which was available for the PRS who entered Lebanon prior to September 2016. However, that provision excluded the individuals who entered irregularly, those who entered Lebanon after September 2016 and those with an exit order. As a result, a significant number of PRS are still unable to regularize their stay in the country.¹⁸

PRS in Lebanon are excluded from owning or inheriting property as well as from access to public health and to the education system.¹⁹

⁹ UNRWA, Protection at UNRWA in 2018, n.d., [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰ UNRWA, Where we work, Lebanon, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹ UNRWA, Protection at UNRWA in 2018, n.d., [url](#), p. 1; UNRWA, Annual Operational Report 2018, 20 June 2019, [url](#), p. 11

¹² ICMPD, Assessing the development – displacement nexus in Lebanon, November 2018, [url](#), p.9; United States, Library of Congress, Refugee Law and Policy: Lebanon, n.d., [url](#)

¹³ United Nations, Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 28 September 1954, Status of Treaties, 2 August 2019, [url](#); United Nations, Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 30 August 1961, Status of Treaties, 2 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁴ UNRWA, Where we work, Lebanon, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵ UNRWA, Annual Operational Report 2018, 20 June 2019, [url](#), p.180

¹⁶ UNRWA, Protection in Lebanon, February 2019, [url](#)

¹⁷ UNRWA, Protection in Lebanon, February 2019, [url](#)

¹⁸ UNRWA, Protection brief Palestine refugees living in Lebanon, June 2018, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁹ AI, Human rights in the Middle East and North Africa, Review of 2018, 26 February 2019, [url](#), p. 40; AI, Lebanon: a human rights agenda, 11 February 2019, [url](#), p. 4 ; HRW, Lebanon. Events of 2018, 17 January 2019, [url](#)

Palestine refugees in Lebanon are not allowed to practice a number of professions.²⁰ According to UNRWA, that is either due to the fact that it is a precondition to hold the Lebanese nationality, or due to the need for meeting the reciprocity of treatment condition in order to access the profession, a condition that is not feasible due to the circumstances concerning the establishment of the State of Palestine.²¹

According to the United States 2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for Lebanon all those limitations placed on the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon result in them being highly dependent on UNWRA, which is 'the sole provider of education, health care, and social services.'²²

According to same report, despite amendments to the labour code and administrative decrees issued by Lebanon, the Palestinian refugees have not acquired access to the majority of skilled positions and continue to work in an unofficial capacity.²³

Based on an article by The Guardian, refugees in Beirut, including undocumented ones, started being fired from their jobs since the beginning of July 2019, in relation to a government decree aiming at prioritising Lebanese labour over foreign workers.²⁴

According to different news agencies, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been holding protests in late June 2019, in reaction to Lebanon's crackdown on businesses hiring foreign workers without permits.²⁵

The protesters' main demand is that the government no longer requires them to have a work permit, in order to be able to work.²⁶ The demand to have a work permit in order to gain employment will further affect the Palestinian refugees' employment opportunities, given that they are already excluded from a number of professions, as stated above.²⁷

According to the news agency Haaretz, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon will be exempted from the new regulations concerning the need for working permits in order to gain employment. The source states that the Lebanese Minister of Labor 'ordered working permits to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon [...]'.²⁸

²⁰ For a detailed listing of the professions Palestinian refugees in Lebanon do not have access to, see UNRWA, Employment of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, 23 May 2016, [url](#), p.2

²¹ UNRWA, Employment of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, 23 May 2016, [url](#), p. 2

²² United States, USDoS, 2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon, 13 March 2019, [url](#)

²³ United States, USDoS, 2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon, 13 March 2019, [url](#)

²⁴ Guardian (The), Syrian refugees in Beirut and Istanbul detained and deported, 29 July 2019, [url](#)

²⁵ NPR, In Lebanon, Palestinians Protest New Employment Restrictions, 26 July 2019, [url](#) ; Al Jazeera, Why Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are protesting, 20 July 2019, [url](#) ; Middle East Eye, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon denounce new 'inhumane' work restrictions, 23 July 2019, [url](#)

²⁶ Al Jazeera, Why Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are protesting, 20 July 2019, [url](#)

²⁷ Al Jazeera, Why Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are protesting, 20 July 2019, [url](#)

²⁸ Haaretz, Lebanon Exempts Palestinian Refugees From Foreign Worker Clampdown Following Protests, 18 July 2019, [url](#)



2. Information on incidents of deportation for Palestinian Refugees from Syria living in Lebanon back to Syria

UNRWA states that many PRS in Lebanon that have an expired visa are issued with 'departure orders' by the General Security Office (GSO).²⁹ Those orders have not been actively enforced, but the situation results in a large percentage of PRS fearing deportation, and therefore unwilling to move or to approach the authorities for matters such as civil registration.³⁰

No further information on incidents involving specifically Palestinian Refugees from Syria was found during the research for this COI Query. However, some further information on the general situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is described below.

Similarly, according to Amnesty International, the government of Lebanon does not 'physically' force refugees from Syria to return, and are given the option to change their minds about returning. However, the same source states that the conditions in Lebanon, including the difficulty around legal stay and the subsequent exclusion from services, 'raise doubts about the ability of Syrian refugees to provide truly free consent'.³¹

According to an article dated 25 July 2019 by Al Jazeera, the Lebanese security forces have been increasingly raiding businesses and refugee camps resulting in concerns that Syrian refugees might be deported and mistreated.³² Al Jazeera further states that the Lebanese Minister of Labor commented that "'We are only asking foreign workers to get their papers in order", and "They don't need to fear deportation. The Lebanese government wants to [sic] displaced to leave as soon as they can and when the conditions are feasible, but the decision is not to deport them.'"³³

²⁹ UNRWA, Protection brief Palestine refugees living in Lebanon, June 2018, [url](#), p.3; UNRWA, UNRWA response and services to PRS in Lebanon, March-April 2015, [url](#), p. 1

³⁰ UNRWA, Protection brief Palestine refugees living in Lebanon, June 2018, [url](#), p.3

³¹ AI, Q & A – Why are returns of refugees from Lebanon to Syria premature, 12 June 2019, [url](#), p. 2

³² Al Jazeera, Syrian refugees panic as threat of deportation rises in Lebanon, 25 July 2019, [url](#)

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