

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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**COI QUERY**

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Question(s)	Background: Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon 1. Information on forced recruitment of young Palestinians by Fatah in Lebanon (2017-Jan 2020) 1.1. Presence of Fatah in refugee camps in Lebanon 1.2. Fatah-organized recruitment in Palestinian camps in Lebanon 2. Documented cases (and modalities) of recruitment of young Palestinians (including university students) by Fatah outside refugee camps 3. Information on the existence of training camps by Fatah in the Beqaa area 4. Collaboration between Fatah and Hezbollah in training camps 4.1. Cooperation between Fatah and Hezbollah in Lebanon 4.2. Hezbollah-organized recruitment of Palestinians in Lebanon 5. Consequences faced by people who oppose recruitment by Fatah in Lebanon
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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 24 February 2020. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.

COI QUERY RESPONSE

Background: Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon

There are 12 refugee camps for Palestinians in Lebanon. They are run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)¹ and accommodate about 45 % of Palestinian refugees in the country. UNRWA has evaluated conditions in the camps as 'dire'. According to UNRWA, Palestinians are excluded from many rights: they are barred from 39 professions and owning real estate.² According to Amnesty International, Palestinian refugees are also excluded from accessing public education and health services.³

Covering the period between January and December 2018, the UN General Assembly Security Council reported on crossfire between armed actors in the camps of Ain al-Hilweh, Shatila, and Mieh Mieh.⁴ As reported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in 2019, 'armed clashes between rival Palestinian factions and violent crime are common in some camps.' The same source conveyed that the camps of Ain al-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh, both located in the proximity to the town of Sidon (Saida), are 'of the greatest concern' to the Lebanese authorities.⁵

1. Information on forced recruitment of young Palestinians by Fatah in Lebanon (2017-Jan 2020)

1.1. Presence of Fatah in refugee camps in Lebanon

A 'strong Fatah presence' in the camps in Lebanon was reported by Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs in June of 2019.⁶ According to the report of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), Palestinian political movements and factions continue keeping their influence in the Palestinian camps. Referring to the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, the report conveyed:

'Although Palestinian factions such as Fatah and Hamas maintain a strong presence in refugee camps in Lebanon (outside of Lebanese security control) these have however witnessed the rise of Salafi-jihadist factions such as Fatah al-Islam.'⁷

In 2017, the presence of Fatah was communicated by charity organisations working in Shatila camp, as reported by Reuters in 2017:

'Young Syrian refugees are at particular risk of being recruited by extremist groups in Lebanon and elsewhere because their recent displacement often fuels a sense of hopelessness, says UK-based charity International Alert, which funds projects in Shatila camp, including the classes. Palestinian groups including Hamas militants and

¹ UNRWA provides services but does not implement administrative or security measures in Palestine refugee camps as this is the responsibility of the host authorities. See, UNRWA, Palestine Refugees, n.d., [url](#)

² UNRWA, Where we work, 1 January 2019, [url](#)

³ AI, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, The State of the World's Human Rights, [url](#), p. 60

⁴ UN General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, A/73/907-S/219/509, 20 June 2019, [url](#), pp. 16-17. The camps of Ain al-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh are situated in the proximity to the town of Sidon (Saida), see UNRWA, Ein El Hilweh Camp, n.d., [url](#) and UNRWA, Mieh Mieh Camp, n.d., [url](#). Shatila camp is situated within the municipality of Ghobeiri in Beirut, see UNRWA, Shatila Camp, n.d., [url](#).

⁵ DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report – Lebanon, 19 March 2019, [url](#), p. 16

⁶ Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, The Fate of Palestinian Refugees in Syria and Lebanon, 6 June 2019, [url](#)

⁷ ECFR, Mapping Palestinian Politics, updated 14 November 2019, [url](#), p. 9



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement are active inside Shatila, according to charities working there.⁸

1.2. Fatah-organized recruitment in Palestinian camps in Lebanon

No information on forced recruitment of Palestinians by Fatah in Lebanon could be detected in the scope of this response.

While no information on Fatah-organised recruitment for the reporting period was found in the scope of the research conducted, some sources convey the information about recruitments organised by Fatah in 2014 and 2016.

A local newspaper Sidon Online reported in 2014 on military trainings to be organised by Fatah until the end of June 2014 in the camps of Saida, Beirut, Beqaa, and particularly Ain al-Helweh camp.⁹ In January 2016, another local media source reported on the training of fighters conducted by the Palestinian Authority in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. The source mentioned that the majority of the trainees were the members of the Fatah Movement and that the purpose of the training was to prepare them to face the potential threats of radical factions, e.g. IS (Islamic State); the training was reported to be conducted in the coordination with the Lebanese authorities.¹⁰

2. Documented cases (and modalities) of recruitment of young Palestinians (including university students) by Fatah outside refugee camps

No information on documented cases of recruitment of young Palestinians by Fatah outside refugee camps was found in open sources in the scope of this response.

3. Information on the existence of training camps by Fatah in the Beqaa area

No information on the existence of Fatah-organized training camps in the Beqaa valley was found in the scope of this response.

The Beqaa (Bekaa) valley accommodates Wavel refugee camp for Palestinians, which is situated near the town of Baalbeck and 90 km east of Beirut.¹¹ There are also several informal refugee camps, which accommodate Syrians, many of whom fled from nearby border areas, such as the town of Qusayr (15 km from Syria's border with Lebanon¹²) which was seized by Hezbollah in early 2013.¹³

In 2019, DFAT pointed out that the Beqaa valley is the region which is particularly affected by poverty, instigated by the mass influx of Syrian refugees.¹⁴ The report also mentions clashes between Lebanese security forces and the IS (Islamic State) militants in the north-eastern Beqaa valley region.¹⁵

⁸ Reuters, Syrian child refugees taught to release stress and resist recruitment, 2 January 2017, [url](#)

⁹ Sidon Online, حتى أواخر حزيران "فتح" تدريبات عسكرية لـ [Military Trainings by "Fatah" Until the End of June], 23 May 2014, [url](#)

¹⁰ Eldorad Al-Shamiya, السلطة الفلسطينية تدرب مئات العناصر المسلحة في مخيمات لبنان [The Palestinian Authority Trains Hundreds of Armed Elements in Lebanon's Camps], 24 January 2016, [url](#)

¹¹ UNRWA, Wavel Camp, n.d., [url](#)

¹² Asharq al-Awsat, Exclusive – Syrian Refugees Trickle Back to Qusayr under Watchful Eyes of the Regime, Hezbollah, 13 November 2019, [url](#)

¹³ Guardian (The), 'No one can guarantee our safety': Syrians stuck in squalid exile, 22 January 2019, [url](#)

¹⁴ DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report – Lebanon, 19 March 2019, [url](#), pp. 9, 11

¹⁵ DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report – Lebanon, 19 March 2019, [url](#), p. 15

The Israeli Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center named the Beqaa valley ‘the second-largest power base’ of Hezbollah in Lebanon and stated that ‘[b]ased on the structure of the society in the Bekaa Valley, which is a tribal society, it can be said that in this region there is a combination of a family tradition of recruitment [to Hezbollah] and a local practice at the village level.’¹⁶

In April 2019, the independent team of journalists DEBKAFfile communicated that:

‘...some 2,500 young Palestinians men have already enlisted to the new Hamas force and are undergoing training at Hizballah facilities in central Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley. Most have come from the refugee camps outside Sidon and Tyre, and in Beirut and Baalbek.’¹⁷

4. Collaboration between Fatah and Hezbollah in training camps’

No information on the collaboration between Fatah and Hezbollah in training camps could be detected in the scope of this response. Some sources, however, pointed at the political cooperation between the parties in Lebanon and recruitment of Palestinians in Lebanon by Hezbollah.

4.1. Cooperation between Fatah and Hezbollah in Lebanon

As reported by Reuters, Hezbollah and its allies won in the elections held in May 2018 more than 70 of the parliament’s 128 seats.¹⁸ In June 2019, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs wrote:

‘In the Lebanese context Hamas and Fatah are closer to Hizbullah, Hamas directly and Fatah through the Lebanese government, of which Hizbullah was a part when they joined forces against the Salafists.’¹⁹

Reporting on the relations between Fatah and Hezbollah in February 2019, al-Monitor stated:

‘Fatah and the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] have become more eager to strengthen political relations with Hezbollah as it could play a role in containing any security problems that erupt in the refugee camps, where preserving the peace and stability are mutual goals of the PLO and the Lebanese government. The PLO is also seeking to improve living and social conditions in the camps, which can only be accomplished with all Lebanese parties being onboard.’²⁰

4.2. Hezbollah-organized recruitment of Palestinians in Lebanon

According to a local media source in Arabic, 200 young Palestinian men from the region of Bar-Elias, Beqaa governorate, were recruited by Hezbollah in July 2015.²¹ Another Arabic local media source reported in 2016 on the Hezbollah-organized recruitment of the Palestinian youth residing in the

¹⁶ Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Estimate of Hezbollah’s fatalities during the Syrian civil war and the conclusions arising from the analysis of their identity, 11 March 2019, [url](#)

¹⁷ DEBKAFfile, Hamas & Hizballah set up new March of Return militia on Lebanese-Israeli border, 18 April 2019, [url](#)

¹⁸ Reuters, Lebanon agrees new government, PM vows bold reforms, 31 January 2019, [url](#)

¹⁹ Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, The Fate of Palestinian Refugees in Syria and Lebanon, 6 June 2019, [url](#)

²⁰ Al-Monitor, Why is Fatah getting cozy with Hezbollah?, 7 February 2019, [url](#)

²¹ Arabi 21, "سرايا المقاومة" بمقابل مالي, حزب الله يجند فلسطينيين في "Resistance Brigades" with Money], 23 July 2015, [url](#)



refugee camps in Lebanon: according to the source, the aim of the recruitment was to join the party's ranks or to fight in Syria.²²

The 2019 report of the UN General Assembly Security Council on children and armed conflict pointed out the fact of the recruitment of children by Hezbollah and 'unidentified militia'. The report mentioned the continuation of the practice of recruitment and use of children by armed groups in Lebanon. The report named Ansarullah Movement (5), Hezbollah (1), and unidentified militia (16) as perpetrators and stated that children 'were mostly used as guards or in support roles, for carrying weapons or food'.²³

5. Consequences faced by people who oppose recruitment by Fatah in Lebanon

No information on the consequences faced by people opposing Fatah recruitment in Lebanon was found in the scope of the research conducted for this response.

²² Erem News, "كيف يجند حزب الله شباب المخيمات الفلسطينية للقتال في سوريا؟" [How Does Hizbollah Recruit Youth of the Palestinian Camps to Fight in Syria?], 22 June 2016, [url](#). The source specified also the financial reimbursement in case of joining Hezbollah fighters in Syria and being killed.

²³ UN General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, A/73/907-S/219/509, 20 June 2019, [url](#), p. 16



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