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LEBANON'S PALESTINIAN DILEMMA: THE STRUGGLE OVER NAHR AL-BARED

Middle East Report N°117 – 1 March 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2012 marks the fifth anniversary of one of Lebanon's bloodiest battles since the end of the civil war: the deadly, three-month war pitting a jihadi group against the army in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp. Since then, the camp's displaced and resident population has suffered from slow reconstruction of their residences, a heavy security presence that restricts their movement and livelihood as well as the absence of a legitimate Palestinian body to represent their interests. Today, there are bigger and more urgent fish to fry, none more so than dealing with the ripple effects of Syria's raging internal conflict on inter-sectarian relations in Lebanon and the risk that the country once again could plunge into civil war. But it would be wrong to toss the refugee camp question aside, for here too resides a potential future flare-up.

In Lebanon, attention typically shifts seamlessly from one crisis to another. What may look like a sign of stability should be a source of concern. It is the manifestation of a political system almost entirely focused on managing symptoms of conflict without genuinely tackling their causes. Instead, the state, refugee population and UN agency should work together to speed up the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared by freeing up as much land as possible for residential use; minimising the presence of Lebanese security forces in the camp; removing discriminatory laws in the camps; and introducing a Palestinian body to represent the refugees' interests in decision-making.

The conflict that erupted in May 2007 brought face-to-face the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and a previously unknown Islamist fundamentalist group, Fatah al-Islam, based inside Nahr al-Bared. A bank robbery swiftly snowballed into an armed confrontation against the militants who killed several soldiers at an LAF checkpoint on the camp's perimeter. Backed by a public incensed by pictures of the soldiers' corpses, the army entered the camp, from which state security forces traditionally had been barred since 1969. Lebanese forces prevailed, but in the process much of the camp was devastated and 27,000 residents were displaced.

From all this destruction and loss, something good was supposed to come out: a model of coexistence between the state and Palestinian camps. The government appears to have taken the task seriously, developing a new vision, the so-called Vienna Document. It has yet to live up to expectations.

Camp reconstruction, led by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) and funded by international donors, has lagged. Responsibility for this falls on inefficient contractors and a tug-of-war between on the one hand the army and the Internal Security Forces (ISF), which want more space in the camp and, on the other, UNRWA, which needs more land to build residential buildings. Living conditions likewise are unsatisfactory. The LAF has imposed a strict permit system that restricts access to the camp by both Lebanese and non-resident Palestinians, isolating Nahr al-Bared economically and socially. Because the ISF gradually is expanding its presence in the camp, the refugees fear that the discriminatory employment and property laws they face in Lebanon will be imposed for the first time in a camp, thereby severely affecting their livelihood. The Vienna Document does not allocate a meaningful governance role to Palestinian entities, thus marginalising the local population when it comes to key decisions regarding camp management and security.

The Palestinian refugees – and Lebanon – deserve better. The typical model of camp governance has serious flaws and is in need of repair. Power traditionally lies in the hands of Popular Committees comprising unelected faction leaders who derive most of their legitimacy from their weapons. With state security forces essentially banned from interfering, residents often complain of chaos and inter-factional strife in large, armed, and unregulated pockets immune to Lebanese law and order. Nahr al-Bared offered a real opportunity to build something different insofar as faction leaders had lost out – because they no longer possessed weapons and because they no longer enjoyed the trust of refugees who largely blamed them for failing to protect the camp.

But the new model that is taking form is not the answer. It is failing the basic task of restoring refugees to a normal life – at least as normal a life as refugeehood can allow. The relationship between camp residents and the state has not improved; rather, given the overwhelming security presence, refugees tend to see the authorities in the least appealing light: not protecting them, but rather protecting the country from them. They fear enforcement of discriminatory laws. Rigid permit requirements and rough treatment at camp checkpoints hurt intercommunal relations, already significantly damaged by the conflict which many Lebanese blamed on Palestinian refugees for harbouring jihadi militants and during which some Palestinians felt their Lebanese neighbours had been either complicit in their displacement or unwelcoming in the crisis's aftermath. Most importantly, lacking an effective representative, Palestinians in Nahr al-Bared feel more disenfranchised than before.

There is still time to get things right. Should that be the case, the experience of Nahr al-Bared – after all the death and destruction it has endured – could help put relations between Palestinian refugees on the one hand, and the Lebanese and their state on the other, on firmer and sounder footing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Lebanese Parliament and Government:

1. Host a new donors conference to mark the state's commitment to rebuild Nahr al-Bared.
2. Present an updated plan for the camp that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of each actor, including:
   a) Creating a formally recognised governing role for a reformed Palestinian popular committee in Nahr al-Bared;
   b) Defining and circumscribing the army's decision-making powers in the camp; and
   c) Ensuring UNRWA has adequate decision-making power with respect to camp reconstruction.
3. Legalise Palestinian rights to employment, property and assembly inside the camps to formally protect Palestinian civil rights.
4. Revive and strengthen the role of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) in all camps, especially Nahr al-Bared, in order to give the state a civilian face, and task it with producing recommendations on the government's and security forces' roles in the camps.
5. Increase the number of town hall meetings that include Palestinian representatives and Lebanese residents from surrounding areas in order to improve relations between the two communities.

To the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF):

6. Relax permit restrictions to increase the social and economic integration of the camp with the surrounding areas by:
   a) Ensuring orderly conduct of security forces at checkpoints, especially regarding women, elderly and children; and
   b) Establishing a clear, simple and uniform process for obtaining a permit until abolishing the permit system becomes possible.
7. Limit LAF presence to the perimeters of the camp and coordinate security matters with the Internal Security Forces and the Palestinian popular committees inside the camp.
8. Reconsider plans to establish a permanent LAF regiment and a naval base inside the camp, both of which undermine the camp's civilian nature.

To the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF):

9. Forgo plans to build a police station inside the old camp, which would disturb the reconstruction process; instead gradually deploy ISF officers from their base in the new camp to the old camp.
10. Clarify the meaning of community policing to camp residents and ban practice of using camp residents as informants.

To the Palestinian Factions:

11. Empower the popular committees by ensuring their representatives are elected and opening the elections to all adult members of society; in the meantime, develop a list of criteria according to which popular committee members should be appointed.
12. Create a single representative Palestinian body that includes all factions to serve as a unified interlocutor for the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee.
13. Ban the ostensible display of weapons in all camps, especially Ain al-Helweh; in Ain al-Helweh coordinate with the army outside the camp to prevent and punish acts of violence.

To UNRWA:

14. Promote the establishment of a non-governmental organisation, independent of the factions and other political individuals, to bolster the effectiveness of consultations between camp residents and UNRWA architects.

15. Fulfil fundraising commitments to speed up the reconstruction process in Nahr al-Bared and improve living conditions in areas where displaced Nahr al-Bared refugees are living.

Beirut/Brussels, 1 March 2012

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LEBANON'S PALESTINIAN DILEMMA: THE STRUGGLE OVER NAHR AL-BARED

I. INTRODUCTION: THE CONFLICT'S AFTERMATH

On 20 May 2007, a violent conflict erupted between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and a previously unknown Islamist fundamentalist group called Fatah al-Islam inside Nahr al-Bared, a Palestinian refugee camp 16km north of Tripoli. The LAF initially sought to arrest Fatah al-Islam members suspected of robbing a bank; they had taken refuge in the camp to escape the Lebanese security police, the Internal Security Forces (ISF). What began as a chase of bank robbers, however, evolved into a battle to uproot an insurgent group after it killed several soldiers at an LAF checkpoint on the camp's perimeter. Televised pictures showing the soldiers' corpses and unconfirmed reports they had been killed in their sleep provoked widespread outrage and generated instant popular support for the army as it embarked on its endeavour to enter a Palestinian refugee camp, all of which have essentially been no-go areas for Lebanese security forces since 1969. The task proved almost insurmountable.

The LAF's inability to quickly overcome a small, 200-strong jihadi group exposed its fundamental weakness.[1] The fighting soon spread to Tripoli and Beirut, but Nahr al-Bared remained at the conflict's core for three months. When the conflict ended, on 2 September, the LAF was able to assert full control – but not before nearly all of the camp had been destroyed beyond repair and 27,000 residents had been displaced. Today, almost five years later, only eight per cent of the official camp (known as the "old camp") has been rebuilt;[2] a mere four per cent of the 4,585 families displaced from the old camp have returned to their homes;[3] and the camp remains a closed military zone, with the LAF in full control over what used to be a civilian area administered by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

At conflict's end, the government of then-Prime Minister Fouad Siniora promised to rebuild the camp[4] according to a new "model" designed to improve relations between its Palestinian inhabitants and the Lebanese population of nearby Tripoli and its surrounding villages. However, this model entailed an unprecedented degree of state interference in the camp, including the disarmament of its Palestinian political factions and the deployment of both the LAF and ISF inside its boundaries. Use of the word "model" also raised questions for it implied that the governance and security arrangements enforced in Nahr al-Bared might also be applied to other Palestinian refugee camps.[5]

The government first outlined its vision for Nahr al-Bared in a document presented to the 2008 Vienna Donor Conference, convened to raise funds for camp reconstruction.[6] It centred on security, governance and reconstruction, but left unclear the division of roles and responsibilities between the government, UNRWA and camp residents.

[1] See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°84, *Nurturing Instability: Lebanon's Palestinian Refugee Camps*, 19 February 2009, p. 11.

[2] Crisis Group email correspondence, UNRWA Operations Support member, 27 February 2012.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Siniora said: "In earning [the Palestinian refugees'] trust and showing them that they are not the targets but the unintended victims of this crisis we have pledged to them that their evacuation is temporary, their return to Nahr el-Bared is guaranteed and the reconstruction of their homes is assured". See "For Nahr al-Bared Humanitarian Flash Appeal", press release, Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) www.lpdc.gov.lb/Media-Room/Speeches/for-Nahr-al-Bared-Humanitarian-Flash-Appeal.aspx

[5] The government announced its intention to make Nahr al-Bared a "model" for other camps, including with regard to security arrangements, in its appeal to the 2008 Vienna Donor Conference: "A closer partnership between the ISF and the community would ultimately help make the rebuilt NBC [Nahr al-Bared Camp] a safer place and would promote a successful security model for other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon". The appeal does not refer to any LAF role because the Siniora government's original vision was to maintain an ISF presence inside the camp and keep the army on its perimeters. See *A Common Challenge, A Shared Responsibility: The International Donor Conference for the Recovery and Reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared Palestinian Refugee Camp and Conflict-Affected Areas of North Lebanon* (henceforth referred to as "the Vienna Document"), 23 June 2008, p. 51, at http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/NahrElBared_GovtLeb.pdf.

[6] Ibid.

Who will administer the camp remains unclear and contested among the government, Palestinian factions and the camp population. As the former sees it, security will be exclusively in state hands, although it has yet to decide which security force should be put in charge inside the camp, the ISF or LAF.[7] As far as governance is concerned, moreover, the Vienna Document makes no mention of any role for traditional Palestinian structures. Instead, it calls for a memorandum of understanding between the government and UNRWA to delineate decision-making roles and responsibilities.

While Palestinian political factions begrudgingly have accepted their new unarmed status, they see it as a concession to be used to lobby for their interests, including official recognition of their political authority; their leaders in Nahr al-Bared aspire to a role akin to that of a municipal council. Lebanese political and security officials have expressed willingness to allow informal political Palestinian activity so long as the refugees remain unarmed.[8] Whatever the precise outcome, Palestinians are convinced that without a clear decision that addresses their governance role, their governing bodies will not be afforded any legal protection or recognition, leaving them and the camp population essentially powerless.

For its part, UNRWA has had to struggle with its own problems. It has had to balance the demands of the two competing Lebanese security forces while also fulfilling an advocacy role on behalf of camp residents at a time when Palestinian governing bodies have been significantly weakened. It has resisted taking on a governance role of its own on the grounds that it would be outside its mandate. There also are geographical limitations to its role. Indeed, Nahr al-Bared consists of two sections: the "old camp", covering the official UNRWA-mandated territory established in 1949, and the "new camp" – also known as the "adjacent area" – which comprises subsequent spillover into what is officially Lebanese territory, a consequence of Palestinian population growth. Under Lebanese law, UNRWA has neither the mandate nor the legal right to operate in the new camp; this has complicated many issues, especially reconstruction, for which the agency bears important responsibility.[9]

The issue of reconstruction likewise has been an object of some political controversy. Camp inhabitants seem to prefer for this to be done according to the exact previous layout; the LAF has placed restrictions on infrastructure design and layout to ensure the rebuilt camp will accommodate its own presence; and the ISF has insisted on including a new police station inside the camp. UNRWA champions a compromise between these conflicting visions. As for Lebanese political parties, their views range from resistance to the very notion of rebuilding the camp to embracing reconstruction as an "important trust-building exercise for future interventions" in other camps.[10]

[7] The LAF's authority derives from the declaration of Nahr al-Bared as a military zone, a condition the government has said it will not lift until reconstruction has been completed.

[8] For example, the former LAF chief of staff said: "We will only interfere if the factions make problems. With respect to their political activities, we won't interfere at all. Our only condition is that they do not have arms in the camp". Crisis Group interview, Chawki Masri, Beirut, 22 June 2011.

[9] Although UNRWA does not have a role in reconstructing the new camp, it does continue to provide services in the new camp, including services such as electricity that the government normally provides in Lebanese territory. Since the 2007 conflict, the local municipality of Muhammara has not exercised its service provision role in the new camp. Crisis Group email correspondence, UNRWA officer, February 2012.

[10] See the Vienna Document, p. 13.

II. THE ARMY ENTERS NAHR AL-BARED

A. BREAKING WITH PRECEDENT

For years, relations between Palestinian camps and the state have been regulated by the 1969 Cairo Agreement signed by the PLO and the Lebanese state represented by army commander General Emile Bustani, which endorsed Palestinian self-rule inside the camps. Although the government unilaterally annulled the agreement in 1987, the state effectively refrained from exercising its authority; notably, security forces for the most part did not enter the camps, leaving internal security and governance to Palestinians.[11] For decades, this arrangement has been a sore point for Lebanese authorities and citizens, who consider it an infringement on state sovereignty. In this sense, the current situation in Nahr al-Bared is unique among Lebanon's twelve official Palestinian refugee camps: since the 2007 crisis, security forces have regularly entered it; at the same time, the government has been reshaping the roles of UNRWA, Palestinian political bodies and other stakeholders. All of which constitutes a radical break with the past.

The fight over Nahr al-Bared was an important moment for the army. Its reputation had been significantly tarnished during the 2006 Hizbollah war with Israel, in which it played at best a tangential role. By 2007, it was badly in need of a victory to boost its public image; the army highlighted its "triumph" in the Nahr al-Bared conflict,[12] using it to prove it was capable of defending the country in the eyes of both the domestic public[13] and the international community. Chawki Masri, the army chief of staff during the conflict, said:

> The LAF's morale was very high after the conflict and we were proud that all the Lebanese, and the U.S., UK, Spain and other friendly countries, were astonished by how we were able to throw a 4,000-pound bomb. They came here and asked how we did all of this with such limited capabilities, and they told us they were very proud. It was a very good sign for us that not only the Lebanese but also the great armies from around the world said they were proud of what we did in Nahr al-Bared".[14]

While its military prowess was questionable – the LAF struggled for three months to overcome a relatively small number of militants and destroyed the homes of 27,000 people in the process – its takeover of the camp and defeat of Fatah al-Islam were hailed as significant victories.[15] The sense of triumph was bolstered by two other elements: first, it was the only major combat operation that the army as an institution had ever fought after the 1975-1990 civil war;[16] second, the army did not split along sectarian lines as a result of the conflict, as it had during the war.[17] The

[11] See Crisis Group Report, *Nurturing Instability*, op. cit.

[12] That said, the heroic image that the LAF gained in this war soon would be overshadowed by its passivity during the 2008 Hizbollah takeover of Beirut. See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°23, *Hizbollah's Weapons Turn Inward*, 15 May 2008.

[13] The LAF mobilised popular support and boosted soldiers' morale with an emotionally charged public relations campaign facilitated by the fact that the conflict's victims were mostly non-Lebanese.

[14] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 22 June 2011. See also, "The Lebanese Armed Forces: Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Syria Lebanon", Center for Strategic and International Studies, 10 February 2009, for more on the LAF's limited capabilities and successes in Nahr al-Bared, csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090210_lafsecurity.pdf.

[15] Even as sporadic army shooting could still be heard in Nahr al-Bared, Defence Minister Elias Murr declared: "I dedicate this victory to the Lebanese people", and explained away the clamour by saying: "What is happening now is some cleanup that the army's heroes are carrying out, and dismantling some mines". See "Army ends Nahr al-Bared operation, declares victory over terrorists", NaharNet, 22 June 2007. The LAF website claims that Fatah al-Islam's defeat "led to an unprecedented popular support to the role of the army and for the first time in the history of Lebanon as the protector of the national unity". See www.lebarmy.gov.lb/english/Commander_12.asp. The LAF also played upon the country's emotional heartstrings by publishing and widely distributing a poignant 72-page booklet entitled "No Price for Martyrs' Blood Save for the Nation: The Battle for Nahr al-Bared". See Joseph A. Kéchichia, "A Strong Army for a Stable Lebanon", Middle East Institute, Policy Brief no. 19 (September 2008).

[16] The only other combat operation in which the LAF was engaged was minor compared to Nahr al-Bared: in December 1999, in the north-eastern town of Seer Dinniyah, it fought against a small group of Islamist militants who were accused of aiming to create an Islamist state in North Lebanon. 13,000 Lebanese soldiers defeated the group in six days of fighting, a much smaller challenge than that posed by the protracted three-month conflict in Nahr al-Bared. See Bilal Saab, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism", Brookings Institute, p. 833.

[17] At the start of the civil war in 1975, the army split along sectarian lines when the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its allied parties took over army bases and expelled Christian soldiers from the barracks, setting a pattern for the next fifteen years of war. This precedent makes the army's unity – or at least, sustaining the perception of an army impervious to sectarian tensions – a particularly sensitive issue for all parties in Lebanon. Because of this, the army tried to build on its defeat of Fatah al-Islam to solidify its image as a unified national institution. The reality was somewhat different, however. The camp battle revealed deep distrust among soldiers. According to several former soldiers, troops from different sects traded accusations, some saying their counterparts failed to back them up or, worse, allowed them to die. Crisis Group interview, former

strong offensive in the camp contrasted starkly with its traditional reluctance, based on fear of potential sectarian splits, to intervene in disputes among Lebanese communities.[18] This was the case most notoriously during the 2008 Hizbollah takeover of Beirut but also occurred during sectarian clashes in neighbourhoods such as Jabal Mohsen and Bab Tebbaneh in Tripoli.[19] Because the army comprises citizens of all sects, intervening in domestic disputes is considered riskier to its unity than doing so in a non-Lebanese area and to defeat a foreign group.[20]

B. Tensions Between Palestinians and the Army

If the army's intervention did not trigger a backlash among Lebanese, the same cannot be said about its impact on relations between the LAF and Palestinian refugees. Several Nahr al-Bared residents accused the LAF of intentionally targeting civilian homes and humiliating the residents by burning men's suits and leaving the charred remains on the beds, and hanging up women's undergarments from visible outdoor locations.[21] The common perception that the LAF blamed the Palestinians for Fatah al-Islam's presence in the camp and fought the war to exact revenge has done nothing to help the relationship between residents and soldiers stationed there in the conflict's aftermath. A woman from Nahr al-Bared said: "When the LAF came, a five-year-old child said 'look, it's the *Israeli* army'. The children think the Lebanese army is the enemy. This is a favour to Israel".[22] A Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) representative in northern Lebanon echoed the view:

> When the Nahr al-Bared battle ended, [President and then-LAF Commander Michel] Suleiman said we were

Lebanese Special Forces member, December 2010. Another former LAF soldier alleged that some Shiite soldiers refused orders to enter the camp when Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah voiced his opposition; however, there is no proof to substantiate these claims. Crisis Group interview, former LAF soldier, May 2010. Moreover, the conflict was exploited for sectarian purposes. Elias Murr, the (Orthodox Greek) defence minister at the time, used it to argue that the number of Christians in the army should be increased. According to a 2008 WikiLeaks cable, he told U.S. diplomats while discussing the role of LAF special forces in Nahr al-Bared: "When you want to fight terrorists, you are fighting Sunni and Shia; you need Christians in special forces to do this mission. If you maximize Christians, you will have the best results". See www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08BEIRUT459.

[18] In the 1970s, clashes with Palestinians divided the Lebanese along sectarian lines. The fact that this did not occur during the Nahr al-Bared conflict suggests an evolution in relations with the refugee community toward one in which the Lebanese largely are united on the need to contain the Palestinian presence in their country. Lebanese from virtually all communities blame the Palestinians for the outbreak of the civil war, a legacy that has marred the relationship between the two communities. Although there were some differences on the issue of entering the camp (Hassan Nasrallah declared this to be a "red line"), political parties for the most part agreed on the need to respond in some way to the attack on the army. See Crisis Group Report, *Nurturing Instability*, op. cit., p. 6.

[19] In 2011, the LAF stationed itself between the Sunni and Alawi communities as a neutral buffer but did not take military action to end the fighting. See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°29, *New Crisis, Old Demons in Lebanon: The Forgotten Lessons of Bab-Tebbaneh/Jabal Mohsen*, 14 October 2010. Former LAF Chief of Staff Chawki Masri explained how the LAF takes sectarianism into account when deciding whether or not to intervene: "We cannot interfere on behalf of one side, because then we will lose all the confidence of the Lebanese people. So we try to protect Lebanon but we can't use force if both sides have arms – even though we can intervene to protect one side from the other. If both sides have arms, it is very dangerous". Crisis Group interview, 19 January 2011.

[20] Sari Hanafi, a professor at the American University of Beirut, argues that the LAF considered Nahr al-Bared to be a "space of exception": "In spite of all that the war against terror has legitimised in the administration of violence globally, and the license for retaliation spurred by the murder of thirteen Lebanese army soldiers, it is doubtful that such an excessive and indiscriminate use of force, disregard for human life and property, would have been exercised in any other urban realm in Lebanon were it not for Nahr el-Bared being perceived as a 'space of exception' ... that houses non-citizen refugees excluded from a host of civic rights in Lebanon, represented by internally divided Palestinian factions and serviced by a UN agency that lacks a mandate for their protection". See Sari Hanafi, "Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion?", ArteEast, 1 March 2010. A former LAF soldier who fought in Nahr al-Bared denied this, saying: "It wasn't because the camp was Palestinian that we went in. In fact, the camp has always had a large Lebanese population living in it, including soldiers. We had no hesitation about going into the camp because 25 soldiers had been killed. Every Lebanese saw the images of the slain soldiers on TV. If we did nothing about this, we never would have been able to go on another mission again". Crisis Group interview, June 2011.

[21] A Nahr al-Bared resident said: "The LAF committed an aggression against the camp. They took out their anger on the Palestinians. They wrote on the wall of my clinic: 'Where did you get this from, you refugee?' and they found our wives' undergarments in the houses and hung them up outside". Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 14 April 2011. According to interviews conducted by Sari Hanafi, the LAF committed a "systematic pattern of burning and looting. Racist graffiti were found inscribed in homes, tagged by the names of various Lebanese army battalions involved in the operation.... While a preliminary looting had seemingly been committed by Fatah el-Islam and some camp residents, speculations over the identity of the perpetrators need not dwell far and wide considering the army's tight policing over who can enter the camp". "Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp", op. cit.

[22] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 28 September 2011.

> victorious in the face of terrorism and the Palestinians are our partners in the face of terrorism. We are asking: if we are really victors, why are we being treated like we were defeated?[23]

Some Palestinians also identified sectarian motivations in the army's attitude toward the camp. As they saw it, the battle against the camp implicitly became a surrogate for the country's Sunni-Shiite conflict. A resident expressed the feeling that, in resorting to indiscriminate shelling, the LAF not only exacted revenge for the deaths of a reported 169 soldiers[24] at the group's hands, but also took out its perceived sectarian frustrations on the residents:

> We are not sectarian ourselves but the victims of Lebanon's sectarian system. When [Hizbollah leader] Hassan Nasrallah said that entering the camp was a red line, the army's Sunni soldiers struck the camp even harder in order to take revenge on Hizbollah. And then, when [Prime Minister Fouad] Siniora promised to rebuild the camp [in a speech delivered soon after the fighting started], the army's Shiite soldiers deployed there intensified their attack on the camp.[25]

Such judgments are, at best, questionable. Indeed, there is no evidence the army comprises separate factions divided along sectarian lines and whose orders come from different commands. Still, they reflect Palestinians' feeling that they are trapped in and victims of Lebanon's sectarian divisions.

By the same token, many residents reject the idea that the LAF could be a reliable source of security in the camp today. One said: "Of course I don't trust the LAF to protect the camp. Look what the LAF did for us! It destroyed our camp".[26] Since the conflict, the army is stationed in the new camp; its intelligence enters the old camp at will. For its part, the ISF has maintained a police station in the new camp, while its officers operate in all of Nahr al-Bared, ie, in both the new camp and the rebuilt portion of the old camp. It has been lobbying for the right to build a police station inside the old camp as well.

Today, even though its official mandate covers security alone – namely preventing the inflow of weapons – the LAF is the most powerful decision-making institution in the camp. An UNRWA official said: "The Palestinian popular committees and the army coordinate and meet all the time, but you feel that you're dealing with negotiations between one powerful and one non-powerful side".[27] Among LAF policies most responsible for generating tension is the permit system which severely restricts access to the camp: Palestinians who are not residents of Nahr al-Bared and foreigners must apply for a temporary permit to enter, and Lebanese citizens theoretically can show their national identity cards at the checkpoints manned by army intelligence.[28] The LAF reviews permit applications, a process that can take between a few days to a few weeks. In practice, even a permit or valid Lebanese identity card does not guarantee easy entrance; many visitors report verbal and sometimes physical harassment and interrogation at the checkpoints, further discouraging outsiders from seeking entrance.[29]

Mistrust is further exacerbated by widespread suspicion among Palestinians that the LAF's intelligence branch recruits residents to serve as informants. A representative of an international organisation active in the camp said:

> Mistrust is entirely there. The army has stepped up its interrogations of people. There are lots of spies. This is part of the reason why the army has lost a lot of credibility. The LAF's Shoabat al-Maalumat [intelligence section], not the army as such, is present in the camp.[30]

As a result, conspiracy theories flourish. These typically expose purported Lebanese involvement in bringing Fatah al-Islam to the camp in the first place in order to give the LAF a pretext for taking control of land that had been off-limits to security forces for the previous four decades.[31]

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[23] Crisis Group interview, Beddawi camp, 14 April 2011.

[24] According to the UN's Regional Information Network (IRIN), at least 169 soldiers, 287 insurgents and 47 civilians were killed in the Nahr al-Bared conflict. See www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=75296.

[25] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 14 April 2011.

[26] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 28 September 2011.

[27] Crisis Group interview, Nahr al-Bared, April 2011.

[28] The process of obtaining a permit is not always clear. According to a 2010 camp survey, "Perhaps the greatest grievance regarding the checkpoints was that there was no clear policy on what was required of Palestinians and non-Palestinians to enter the camp .... The documentation required for this, some said, was always changing, and this LAF policy retarded both the economic and social reintegration of Nahr al-Bared into the surrounding area". "Nahr al-Bared report for the US Embassy in Beirut", produced by Pursue Ltd., July-October 2010, 22 (on file with Crisis Group).

[29] Although the LAF implemented a policy in June 2011 to let Palestinian women and children in without a permit, in practice, residents say, this does not always occur. A few residents complained that around June 2011 the LAF became stricter about allowing men with a permit to enter the camp. One of them suggested that this might be because of heightened security concerns in northern Lebanon since the outbreak of the popular uprising in Syria. Crisis Group interview, 28 September 2011.

[30] Crisis Group interview, March 2011.

[31] A Nahr al-Bared resident said: "One must ask, we, the Palestinians of Nahr al-Bared live in a set piece of land controlled by the Lebanese, so how did Fatah al-Islam manage to get past the LAF? This is proof that there was a plan that these people

Practically, the end result of this situation is that the camp is both economically and socially isolated, with freedom of movement of Palestinians living inside and outside severely curtailed.[32] This new reality is especially jolting to residents who had grown accustomed to living and working in what used to be one of the country's most economically prosperous camps.[33] Under the current security regime in Nahr al-Bared, tension and mistrust between residents and LAF have vastly increased.

Today's heavy LAF presence and tomorrow's possible concentration of a substantial ISF presence will obstruct the process of turning the camp back into a civilian zone.[34] Moreover, because outsiders generally are discouraged from entering a militarised zone by inconvenience or fear, a security presence will further isolate the camp economically and socially. Palestinians see the camp's "securitisation" as proof of Lebanese distrust and a continuation of the policy of treating Nahr al-Bared residents as complicit in Fatah al-Islam's actions. It also is a considerable imposition insofar as the LAF's and ISF's continued presence means taking precious land that could have been used to build homes for Nahr al-Bared's long-displaced families. A camp resident said:

> The Palestinians are paying the price for a war that they didn't cause. Now, it's not as if the Lebanese are in Nahr al-Bared to protect the Palestinians. It's as if they're there to protect everyone else in Lebanon *from* us. The barbed wire, the isolation, the curfews – all of this alienates the Palestinians and none of it makes the Palestinians feel safe.[35]

Robbing the camp of its civilian nature risks giving rise to an increasingly distrustful and frustrated population – the opposite of what the LAF and ISF purport to want to accomplish.

would come to Nahr al-Bared and that the LAF would react in this way. Whose responsibility was it? The Palestinians are being made to pay the price for a group that was brought to the camp". Crisis Group interview, Nahr al-Bared, 14 April 2011. Similarly, PFLP representative Imad Odeh said: "At first, the factions received a green light from the government saying there would be a guerrilla force of Palestinians to fight Fatah al-Islam, because the LAF tactics are systematic and they would have to destroy the whole camp in order to destroy Fatah al-Islam, and so guerrilla tactics would be more applicable. This went well until the U.S. and the Europeans said, 'this goes against [UN Security Council resolution] 1559 [which called, inter alia, for Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2004 and the disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias]'. (the connection with the UNSC resolution on Syria's withdrawal is not completely clear.) This brings me to believe that the plan was to disarm the factions on the pretext of targeting Fatah al-Islam". Crisis Group interview, Imad Odeh, Beddawi camp, 14 April 2011.

[32] According to the Palestinian Human Rights Organisation (PHRO), a Lebanon-based NGO, "The LAF is not in theory allowed to apply military law in a civilian area ... yet, the LAF remains the sole recognized authority in the camp, and the ISF... play only an auxiliary function. It remains unclear what influence, if any, the civilian Government of Lebanon ... has over military operations in and around Nahr al-Bared". See "Camp in Fear, Camp in Want: Human Security Assessment for Nahr el-Bared Camp", PHRO, March 2011.

[33] A camp resident asserted that Nahr al-Bared was targeted precisely because of its relative prosperity: "The Lebanese soldiers were crazy with aggression. Certain soldiers would rather have died than see the Palestinians come back to their luxurious cars in Nahr al-Bared. The Palestinians here had better houses than the Lebanese have in Akkar [the greater North Lebanon region in which Nahr al-Bared is located]". Crisis Group interview, 28 September 2011.

[34] According to ISF Chief Achraf Rifi, the security arrangements in the camp are made with the goal of allowing it to feel like a civilian area: "The Lebanese government's original intention was not to make Nahr al-Bared an enclave. This is not a normal living environment, but as the ISF enters and the LAF gradually withdraws to the perimeters of the camp, the Palestinians will have easier access getting in and out of the camp and it'll begin to feel like a civilian area". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 14 May 2011.

[35] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 21 April 2011.

III. THE EROSION OF PALESTINIAN POLITICAL INFLUENCE

One of the chief consequences of the 2007 crisis and its aftermath has been a significant erosion of Palestinian political influence and clout in the camp. Three factors account for this: first, residents blamed the factions collectively for not doing enough to protect the camp from destruction;[36] second, the camp's ultimate disarmament deprived the factions of the principal means they used to possess to demonstrate and exercise authority; and, third, the government's vision for the camp, outlined in the Vienna Document, did not mention its traditional governance structures – the popular committees. Having lost popular support and the power deriving from arms, the factions largely have been reduced to civilian players with little leverage over the population and hence little credibility as the camp's representatives in negotiations over its status with the government and UNRWA.

A Hamas leader said: "There are no longer any strong groups in Nahr al-Bared now. The factions have become civilians, meaning we don't have weapons anymore and we can only resort to peaceful protests".[37] An engineer in the camp made a similar point: "Because our leaders are weak, we are now waiting for the Lebanese to present an alternative approach. If our Palestinian leadership were strong and had vision, we could do something for ourselves".[38] As an UNRWA official put it, "The factions in Nahr al-Bared are disempowered because they don't have guns and they are resented by the population because it believes they didn't do enough to stop Fatah al-Islam. This isn't a good platform on which to negotiate a new way forward".[39]

A. INTER-PALESTINIAN RIVALRIES

To an extent, the diminution of their influence is a manifestation of debilitating Palestinian divisions. When the crisis erupted, different factions took markedly opposite positions. Hamas (along with Hizbollah) strongly opposed the Nahr al-Bared's disarmament, as it threatened to undermine what had traditionally been the camp's dominance by factions that make up the Alliance of Palestinian Forces (Tahaluf al-Qiwa al-Filastiniyya), which traditionally enjoyed close relations with the Syrian regime.[40] Hizbollah additionally feared forcible disarmament of the camp could bolster efforts to disarm its own militia, which likewise carries weapons outside of government control.

By contrast, the PLO and the March 14 movement supported the camp's disarmament and the assertion of Lebanese sovereignty, viewing this in part as an opportunity to regain a measure of authority.[41] At times, they went further, accusing members of Tahaluf of aiding Fatah al-Islam.[42] Media quoted unidentified Fatah leaders as accusing Hamas of helping the Islamist movement, a claim the latter vehemently denied.[43] As it sought to marginalise Tahaluf factions, the PLO moved ever closer to the Siniora government.[44] Then-PLO representative Zaki offered

[36] A doctor in the camp said: "The factions did nothing to vocalise the fact that families were being uprooted, so people lost their trust in them". Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 12 April 2011.

[37] Crisis Group interview, Jamal Shehadi, Nahr al-Bared, 28 September 2011.

[38] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 12 April 2011.

[39] Crisis Group interview, UNRWA official, Beirut, 28 February 2011.

[40] Tahaluf was founded in 1993 in opposition to the Oslo peace accords. Its members include Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC), Fatah al-Intifada, al-Saiqa (Lightning), the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, the Palestinian Liberation Front and the Palestinian Revolutionary Communist Party. See Crisis Group Report, *Nurturing Instability*, op. cit., p. 1. Pro-Syrian factions began to dominate the camp after the PLO was forced to leave Lebanon in 1982 due to the Israeli invasion. Between 1990 and 2000, the pro-Syrian Lebanese government restricted Fatah's political activities to the southern camps, allowing the Tahaluf factions to establish themselves as the dominant political players in the northern camps. Ibid, p. 6. Tahaluf factions began to lose their influence when the Syrian occupation of Lebanon ended in 2005; the 2007 crisis further levelled the political playing field by weakening all factions in Nahr al-Bared. For more on the PLO expulsion from Lebanon, see Rashid Khalidi, *The Palestinian Dilemma: PLO Policy after Lebanon* (1985).

[41] Less than a week after the start of the conflict, then-PLO representative Abbas Zaki announced that the organisation would "not object" if the LAF decided to send troops into Nahr al-Bared. "This is a Lebanese decision", Zaki said. *The Daily Star*, 24 May 2007. Some March 14 supporters raised the possibility of arming Fatah. A Future Movement member said: "I suggested at the time that we arm and finance Fatah to gain control of the camp and make a deal with Abbas Zaki to return these weapons to us afterward, but the government wasn't conspiracy-minded enough to go through with this". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, May 2011.

[42] In so doing, they deviated from the government's official line which was that the group was not indigenously Palestinian and that Lebanese and Palestinians were partners in the fight against Fatah al-Islam. ISF Chief Achraf Rifi went further, alleging that one of the Tahaluf Palestinian factions, the PFLP-GC, had fought alongside Fatah al-Islam against the LAF. See "Lebanon's troublesome camps", *Time*, 15 June 2007.

[43] See "First families' return to Nahr al-Bared Tuesday", *The Daily Star*, 8 October 2007.

[44] When the conflict erupted, Zaki was the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee's (LPDC) only Palestinian delegate member with the rank of ambassador, allowing for close cooperation between the PLO and the government – at Hamas's expense.

unconditional support for any Lebanese decisions in Nahr al-Bared and publicly apologised to "our dear Lebanon" for the harm the Palestinian presence had inflicted during the 1975-1990 civil war.[45]

Indeed, such inter-Palestinian divisions could be said to have significantly contributed to the 2007 crisis by undercutting the various movements' effectiveness. A PFLP representative, Imad Odeh, said: "One of many reasons for the birth of Fatah al-Islam was that the factions were too preoccupied with their internal disagreements to take notice of what that group was doing".[46] Likewise, Jamal Shehadi, a Hamas leader, acknowledged the role disunity had played, saying Palestinians had "failed to come up with a solution to the Fatah al-Islam problem and were not united in fighting it".[47]

B. A Setback for Palestinian Political Representation

Traditionally, Nahr al-Bared – like other camps – has been governed by a popular committee, a unified body of sixteen representatives from Palestinian groups from across the political spectrum. Its secretary general rotates among the factions every month, giving each group the opportunity to exercise its influence.[48] Yet, the Vienna Document makes no mention of these committees, reduces the scope of governance responsibilities to issues related to security concerns and camp reconstruction and delegates these tasks, respectively, to Lebanese security forces and UNRWA.[49] Ignoring typical Palestinian governance structures and political leaders, the document essentially leaves residents without a strong, credible representative at a time when the government is taking critical decisions about the camp's reconstruction and governance arrangements.

Faction leaders predictably oppose this perspective, arguing for a governing role similar to that of a civilian municipality. Jamal Shehadi, the Hamas representative, said: "We accept that we will remain unarmed, and that LAF should be in charge of security while remaining outside of the camp. But we want rights for duties. We want to have the right to continue our political activities and we insist on freedom of movement within the camp".[50] Fatah representative Abou Jihad similarly suggested that Nahr al-Bared should "become like Muhammara [a village adjacent to the camp] or any other neighbourhood, with the popular committees in charge of local governance. Nahr

"[T]he Nahr el Bared crisis opened the way for closer relations between the government, the LPDC and the PLO. This effectively sidelined Hamas while strengthening the PLO, thus reproducing the current void (in Palestine) between the PLO and Hamas in a Lebanese context". Are J. Knudsen and Sari Hanafi, *Palestinian Refugees: Identity, Space and Place in the Levant*, Routledge (2010), p. 106. Hamas official Jamal Shehadi complained about this dynamic, saying that "the LPDC circumvents us and works only with the PLO. We ask the PLO to form a united representative body that includes Hamas to talk to the LPDC. We want a real dialogue". Crisis Group interview, Jamal Shehadi, Nahr al-Bared, 28 September 2011.

[45] Although his position during the crisis helped improve PLO relations with the government, it was poorly received by Palestinians, many of whom considered his apology a betrayal of their suffering at Lebanese hands. See Knudsen and Hanafi, op. cit., p. 106.

[46] Crisis Group interview, Imad Odeh, PFLP representative in northern Lebanon, Beddawi camp, 14 April 2011.

[47] Crisis Group interview, Jamal Shehadi, Nahr al-Bared, 28 September 2011. Palestinians contrasted this with what happened in the Beddawi camp: "Nahr al-Bared was different from Beddawi; in Beddawi factions cooperated to form a security apparatus that is armed. On 23 September 2006, there were clashes between Fatah al-Islam and the security committee in the camp, and Fatah Intifada kicked Fatah al-Islam out. That's when Fatah al-Islam set up a centre in Nahr al-Bared". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian faction leader, North Lebanon, September 2011.

[48] While the position does not carry veto power or a weighted vote, it does entail the authority to coordinate among the factions in taking and implementing decisions. Also contributing to the unofficial governing apparatus are several "neighbourhood committees" formed by the population but which later became political and thus operate under the faction-led popular committee. Crisis Group interview, Beddawi camp, April 2011. See also Sari Hanafi, "Policy and Governance in the Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Arab East", Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (October 2010).

[49] The document, which calls for establishing "a transparent and effective governance structure" defines governance in the following limited terms: "(i) security and rule of law inside Nahr al-Bared through community and proximity policing; (ii) transparent land use agreements with UNRWA following the land expropriation by the Government for Nahr al-Bared's reconstruction which will allow UNRWA to build without entering into an indefinite lease for the continued use of the land; (iii) clear burden-sharing arrangements with UNRWA to cover the cost of service provision as well as the operation and maintenance of both Nahr al-Bared on-site and off-site infrastructure". The Vienna Document, p. 46. Sari Hanafi declared: "The document answers solely to the concerns of Lebanese security bodies, in vision and perspective. The popular committee, for instance, is remarkably absented as an interlocutor to the 'community police'. The document glosses over the reality that preceded the eruption of the conflict, and the various actors that played a role, in addition to the Popular Committee, such as the Security Committee, the political factions, neighbourhood committees, notables, various professional unions and local NGOs, in other words all the bodies that interacted and competed to negotiate the public good of the camp. Obviously, there were tremendous problems in the management of this formal and informal type of governance that includes conflict and corruption; however, there was no ground for excluding these local actors". Hanafi, "Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp", op. cit.

[50] Crisis Group interview, Jamal Shehadi, Nahr al-Bared, 28 September 2011.

al-Bared doesn't have weapons, so the factions won't be involved in security".[51]

In fairness, the committee itself, which was comprised of faction leaders, was defective; the factions' disappointing performance during the crisis only further weakened it. But to say it is in need of substantial reform is not to say it ought to be disbanded altogether. To gain credibility and be able to exercise authority, Nahr al-Bared's popular committee members likely would have to be elected rather than appointed by the factions.[52] As an UNRWA official explained, elected representatives, far more than appointed faction leaders, would force all interlocutors – including the international community – to give Palestinian demands more serious consideration:

> Even UNRWA fears the idea of having a genuinely democratically elected set of camp representatives. You'd have to really pay attention to them. At the moment the factions are sidelined. Where's their mandate? UNRWA would have to pay attention to elected popular committees, we wouldn't be able to just fob them off, as we do sometimes.[53]

A camp resident echoed this view, which is widely shared by other refugees and activists in Nahr al-Bared and throughout other Palestinian camps:

> The factions failed in Nahr al-Bared. They couldn't protect the camp against these terrorists. My ideal model for Nahr al-Bared would be for the popular committee to be elected by the community and be composed of qualified people representing all sectors of society. It should not be hijacked by the factions.[54]

Of all the Palestinian camps, Nahr al-Bared arguably presents the strongest case for an elected popular committee with a defined governing mandate. Such a committee could play a municipal and political role without infringing on the government's insistence that it be exclusively responsible for security. It would merely cooperate with security forces in an unarmed, civilian capacity.[55] By contrast, the Vienna Document's more radical solution – entailing the loss of traditional Palestinian authorities and the lack of a defined Palestinian governing body – risks creating the sense that the camp no longer "belongs" to its Palestinian inhabitants. This can only further exacerbate current feelings of disenfranchisement.

C. The Reduced Role of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee

The Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), established in October 2005 as an inter-ministerial coordinating body, was mandated to improve refugee conditions, eliminate Palestinian arms outside the camps and regulate possession of arms inside the camps. It has been an important regulator of relations between the two communities, yet it too has begun to lose influence as an intermediary logistical and political player in Nahr al-Bared.

Its utility was in evidence both during and immediately after the Nahr al-Bared crisis. It was involved in a series of activities: organising town hall meetings;[56] coordinating relief; advising on legal issues regarding the government's expropriation of the old camp's lands; taking steps to reduce tensions between Palestinians and Lebanese in surrounding areas, including through media and communication campaigns; and organising workshops to bring together donors, UNRWA and municipal members assigned to work on Nahr al-Bared's reconstruction. Under Prime Minister Siniora, the LPDC also played an important

[51] Crisis Group interview, Abou Jihad, Beddawi camp, 28 March 2011.

[52] The only experience of an elected committee was in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut but the committee – called Lajnet al-Ahali or People's Committee – did not enjoy the factions' resources and political experience. It collapsed under pressure from the ruling popular committees alongside which it existed and which consisted of representatives appointed by the factions. Its mandate was focused strictly on improving camp living conditions. According to the Fatah representative in Shatila, prior to its establishment, the camp was governed by a Tahaluf popular committee. Soon after Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon, the PLO established its own committee in the camp. As the PLO and Tahaluf committees competed, Lajnet al-Ahali's role quickly eroded. Services that it once handled, such as electricity provision, were taken over by the faction committees. Crisis Group interviews, Fatah representative and NGO activist in Shatila, 19 February 2012. For more on popular committee structures, see Knudsen and Hanafi, op. cit., p. 201.

[53] Crisis Group interview, UNRWA official, Beirut, 2011.

[54] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 14 April 2011; Crisis Group interviews, camp residents and NGO activists, Beirut, South Lebanon, Bekaa and North Lebanon, 2008-2009.

[55] This would include civil intervention in disputes among families and cooperating with security forces in cases of petty crime. ISF Chief Achraf Rifi himself suggested it could be a possible arrangement if it were to be approved by the government; he said it could play a role in unarmed security matters such as traffic control. Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 14 May 2011.

[56] The LPDC and UNRWA held town hall meetings that brought LPDC representatives to Nahr al-Bared to discuss government decisions and the reconstruction process with Palestinian community leaders and the heads of the six surrounding municipalities. Crisis Group interview, former LPDC field officer, Beirut, 12 May 2011.

role as a civilian government body that could negotiate with the LAF, mainly concerning the relaxation of permit restrictions.[57]

The LPDC's role progressively diminished for several reasons. The government created the Nahr al-Bared Recovery and Reconstruction Cell (RRC) in 2008 to take over the reconstruction file from the committee.[58] Moreover, the replacement of its president, Khalil Mekkawi, a seasoned diplomat who engaged Tahaluf as well as PLO factions,[59] by Maya Majzoub, a much younger candidate widely considered to be aligned with the Future Movement,[60] marked a new approach based on top down policy formulation more than on-the-ground engagement.[61] In addition, the Nahr al-Bared crisis itself generated mutual resentment among both Lebanese and Palestinians, creating an even more difficult environment for the LPDC to fulfil its mission. Finally, by the time Majzoub took over the helm in 2010, the Nahr al-Bared issue had dropped significantly on the government's agenda, superseded by more recent crises such as the fight between Hizbollah and March 14 over the credibility of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon,[62] the collapse of the Hariri government in 2011 and the uprising in Syria.

The conflict further diminished the LPDC's role in Nahr al-Bared. The fight against Fatah al-Islam caused more Lebanese to view the camps as security threats and engendered both popular and government support for the LAF's bid to become the predominant actor in the camp. As a non-military actor, the LPDC lost out in relative terms. That said, it still could and should play a central role, one focused on its existing mandate of facilitating relations between camp residents and Lebanese living in the surrounding areas; it also could use its standing to include traditional Palestinian governing bodies in decision-making regarding camp management. It is the only non-military Lebanese body with an active presence in the camp and, as such, crucial to demonstrating to Palestinians that the government is willing, as it repeatedly says it is, to deal with the refugee camps as more than just a security threat.

D. THE CAMP IN ITS SURROUNDINGS

Before the crisis, Nahr al-Bared was integrated with the surrounding (Lebanese) municipalities through social and economic ties. In particular, due to its location on the highway from Tripoli to Syria and the lack of Lebanese policing inside the camp, it became an economic hub for Lebanese looking to buy smuggled goods from Syria. The camp's relative legal vacuum also attracted producers from Akkar, an impoverished agricultural region north of Tripoli in which the camp is located. For example, farmers who could not afford to register their cars would sell their produce in Nahr al-Bared instead of Tripoli, which has many checkpoints and thus poses a greater risk of getting caught.[63]

[57] A former LPDC official explained: "In dealing with the relationship between the LAF and Palestinians, the LPDC gave the Lebanese presence a civilian face. For example, the LPDC was involved in negotiations to allow Lebanese citizens to enter without permits and in increasing the number of entry points". Crisis Group interview, Lina Maqdisi, Beirut, 12 May 2011.

[58] The RRC, established in June 2008 under the presidency of the Council of Ministers, was mandated to coordinate with the donor community, while the LPDC was to focus on the political, security and diplomatic dimensions of Palestinian-Lebanese relations. However, the committee also became involved with the donor community by leveraging its diplomatic ties. Former LPDC head Khalil Mekkawi said that under his presidency the committee worked closely with UNRWA on fundraising: "During our time, we had the best relations between the LPDC and UNRWA, because we helped them a lot with diplomatic campaigns with donor countries. We held two or three donor meetings, raising $52-53 million for the UNRWA. During our time, the LPDC was the government's interlocutor with donors and the PLO". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 9 June 2011. See also "Aid Coordination Newsletter", Lebanese finance ministry, Issue no. 9, August 2008.

[59] A former LPDC staff member claimed: "Under Mekkawi, everyone, including [former Hamas representative in Lebanon] Osama Hamdan, would come to the office. Mekkawi was appointed not by Prime Minister Siniora but by the Council of Ministers before the resignation of the Shiite ministers [in November 2006]". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 28 July 2011. A former LPDC official said: "We used to have all kinds of events, even film nights. And Nahr al-Bared would have someone from the LPDC come and talk to people here regularly. It was the first time anyone from the government spoke to people without being on a podium. Now the LPDC has become a mess. It used to be a bipartisan governmental initiative, but now it belongs to one party". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, July 2011.

[60] Before assuming the LPDC presidency, Majzoub was an assistant to Bahia Hariri, the sister of late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. Prime Minister Najib Mikati appointed the current LPDC president, Ambassador Abdel Majid Kassir, in 2011.

[61] During Majzoub's administration (2010-2011), important legal reforms such as lifting employment restrictions were passed. However, the LPDC was less present in the camps during this time; for example, it held fewer town hall meetings. An UNRWA official said: "LPDC has become more low-profile, partly because it used to have a more visible leadership. This is a huge problem for us because it forced us to step in and fill some of the gaps. This in turn has made UNRWA more vulnerable, because we had to play an additional advocacy role on the right to job access in Nahr al-Bared". Crisis Group interview, 2011.

[62] See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°100, *Trial by Fire – The Politics of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon*, 2 December 2010.

[63] Crisis Group interview, Ahmad Salman, *mukhtar* (neighbourhood representative), Muhammara, 26 April 2011.

The conflict disrupted the Lebanese-Palestinian relationship throughout the country and especially in the north.[64] Many Lebanese further lost trust in the Palestinians, seeing them as harbouring terrorists targeting the LAF; conversely, many Palestinians suspected Lebanese of having conspired to introduce Fatah al-Islam into the camp in order to punish its population for tolerating a group it did not have the ability to control.[65] A former LPDC consultant explained:

> Everyone forgot who the enemy was. It started out as a war against extremists, but then the Lebanese forgot that they were fighting a faction that had taken over the camp and the Palestinians forgot that the army was fighting a faction, so the enemy lines got blurred.[66]

Some Palestinians in Nahr al-Bared expressed resentment toward neighbouring Lebanese they saw as complicit in their displacement and unwelcoming in the crisis's aftermath. A resident explained:

> After the Nahr al-Bared war, even the sentiments of the Lebanese in the adjacent areas changed. Some openly protested our return to our homes. We always approached the Lebanese as if we are one people, but they don't see us that way. I learned from this experience that we should never leave our homes, but be prepared to die in the camp.[67]

Suspicions concerning the government's alleged discriminatory use of compensation funds also frustrated ties by creating feelings of injustice and economic inequality. A popular committee member contended: "We weren't compensated but the Lebanese, if they lost a single cup, they received compensation".[68]

The break in good relations took on different forms, depending on a given Lebanese community's relationship with LAF soldiers and the degree of Lebanese-Palestinian intermarriage. The *mukhtar* (neighbourhood representative) of Muhammara, a village adjacent to Nahr al-Bared, said:

> We have a long tradition of intermarriage between Nahr al-Bared and Muhammara, so both politically and socially the crisis did not effect a change in Muhammara residents' perception toward the Palestinians. But there was a big change in [nearby] Bibnine, because many LAF martyrs [soldiers killed in the battle] came from there. Lebanese-Palestinian social and cultural activities subsided, and Lebanese stopped visiting and working inside the camp. Our local economy declined a great deal because Muhammara residents used to depend on selling their wares in the Nahr al-Bared market.[69]

The Lebanese government, working through the LPDC, potentially could play an important role in reviving the relationship between local Lebanese and Palestinians in three ways: by presenting residents' demands regarding the relaxation of permit restrictions and checkpoint procedures to the LAF in order to facilitate economic activity across Nahr al-Bared's boundaries; having the LPDC hold town hall meetings that bring together members from both communities; and having a continuous LPDC presence in the camp in order to offer a civilian face to government policies as an alternative, or at least a complement, to the military face with which camp residents are confronted on a daily basis.

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[64] A former LPDC consultant took a somewhat more positive view, noting that Lebanese in surrounding areas blamed the Palestinians in the conflict's immediate aftermath but that attitudes quickly moderated afterwards: "The prime minister [Fouad Siniora] called for a meeting with all the mayors of the surrounding region and they were very angry, saying: 'We are paying the price for this. We are fed up with the Palestinians. This is not the first time a camp has been destroyed and each time we have to take in the people. Send them away to Gaza. We don't want them anymore'. But in the end it was peaceful. If you consider how much potential for tension existed between the camp and the surrounding area, it's quite amazing that no violence has erupted between the two sides. It shows that some in the camp's environs actually sympathised with the people there". Crisis Group interview, Nadim Shehadi, Beirut, 2 August 2011. Three camps – Nabatiya, Jisr al-Basha and Tall al-Zaatar – were destroyed during the civil war.

[65] The souring of relations between the two communities also affected UNRWA's flexibility in the reconstruction process. The Vienna Document noted: "Divisions between the displaced from Nahr al-Bared and Lebanese communities in the north are worsening. UNRWA has experienced difficulty, for instance, in trying to lease plots of land from local Lebanese landowners for the construction of temporary shelters". Vienna Document, p. 39.

[66] Crisis Group interview, Rima Abou Shakra, Beirut, 28 July 2011.

[67] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 1 April 2011.

[68] Crisis Group interview, Abou George, Nahr al-Bared, 1 April 2011. Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine leader Arkan Bader expressed a similar complaint: "There was an Italian fund that ended up in the wrong hands. Some 29 Lebanese villages in the surrounding region benefited from road rehabilitation, even though this money was designated for the new camp. It was reallocated for political reasons". Crisis Group interview, Beddawi camp, February 2011.

[69] Crisis Group interview, Ahmad Salman, *mukhtar*, Muhammara, 26 April 2011. Muhammara was the first municipality in which UNRWA implemented 100 per cent of its planned post-conflict infrastructure projects. This likely played a part in the relatively positive views its Lebanese residents hold toward Palestinians. See http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/reliefweb_pdf/briefingkit36a4a09453687edcbd77cf765e8c2d4d.pdf.

IV. THE PLANNED DEPLOYMENT OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES

A. THE ISF'S UNCLEAR MANDATE

As it envisioned the post-conflict situation in 2007, the Siniora government believed it should maintain an ISF presence inside the camp and withdraw the LAF from the camp to its perimeters. For now, however, as a result of the conflict's immediate outcome, the army has been deployed both inside the camp and on its perimeters. For its part, the ISF gradually has begun to move into the camp.

The debate over what roles the two security bodies should play has obvious political overtones. The ISF leadership largely is aligned with Saad Hariri, the former prime minister and leader of the Future Movement and March 14 Alliance, while the political background of LAF senior commanders is more heterogeneous.[70] As a result, although the ISF and the LAF formally cooperate on security matters, in practice they often compete, including in Nahr al-Bared.[71]

ISF and LAF officials do little to conceal their tensions. Achraf Rifi, the ISF chief, said: "We will deal with Nahr al-Bared in the same way we deal with any other piece of Lebanese territory. In the future, the LAF will be on the outside of the camp and will enter only if necessary".[72] Former army Chief of Staff Chawki Masri offered a conflicting vision, pointing to a January 2009 Cabinet decision to permanently station an LAF regiment inside the camp,[73] as well as an LAF naval base on the camp's shores, effectively creating a permanent military presence inside Nahr al-Bared.[74]

Inter-Lebanese divergences aside, the proposed presence of an ISF police station and officers inside the old camp unquestionably would constitute an important symbolic demonstration of law and order being applied throughout

[70] The ISF's political inclination is repeatedly revealed in spats with political figures from other camps. One example is the May 2011 public showdown over access to a facility affiliated with the Telecommunications Ministry between the ISF and former Telecommunications Minister Charbel Nahhas (Free Patriotic Movement, part of the March 8 bloc). The dispute led then-Interior Minister Ziad Baroud (belonging to president Michel Sleiman's bloc) to announce his resignation after ISF Commander Achraf Rifi ignored the minister's intervention on behalf of Nahhas to grant him access to the facility. Baroud argued that the ISF "had turned the law into a point of view". See "Baroud ends his duties as caretaker minister", NaharNet, 26 May 2011. In contrast, many in the March 14 camp have accused the army, particularly its intelligence branch, of being increasingly dominated by pro-Syrian figures. According to a 2009 WikiLeaks cable, Samir Geagea – head of the Lebanese Forces, a party to the March 14 bloc – said that Syria is "giving orders to the LAF" and referred to former LAF Intelligence Deputy Chief Abbas Ibrahim as being "to the liking of Syria and Hizballah". See http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10BEIRUT118.html. U.S. concerns about Hizbollah's influence over the LAF have prompted it to develop a closer relationship with the ISF, adding to the perception of the security forces' alignment with the more pro-Western camp. The 2008 Hizbollah takeover of Beirut also highlighted political tensions between the two organs, as the ISF criticised the LAF for not playing a more active role. See www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08BEIRUT680.

[71] Tension between the two security forces during the Nahr al-Bared conflict was exposed in a 2007 WikiLeaks cable in which then-Defence Minister Elias Murr told U.S. diplomats that the captured Fatah al-Islam fighters would be investigated by a joint task force made up of intelligence officers from the ISF and the LAF, because: "If the G-2 [the LAF's intelligence division] had sole authority and discovered Saudi or even Hariri connections to Fatah al-Islam, then the ISF and even March 14 political leaders would tend to disregard the findings as being somehow politicized against them. By contrast, if the ISF were in charge and found Syrian links, then the LAF and March 8-Aoun politicians would claim that the ISF is exaggerating and distorting to advance March 14 political goals. Only a joint operation will blunt the ability of either political camp discrediting the investigations and interrogations". See http://forum.tayyar.org/f8/wikileaks-lebanon-cables-44295/index131.html.

[72] Crisis Group interview, Achraf Rifi, ISF chief, Beirut, 14 May 2011. Likewise, a pro-March 14 former official who was a member of the LPDC voiced support for a stronger ISF role: "We found there is no need for an LAF presence inside the camp. We have many ISF here, but their presence is symbolic. Why do we have this delay in deploying ISF and withdrawing LAF? Why do we still have LAF inside the camp?" Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 11 May 2011.

[73] Masri claimed that this regiment would only be living, not operating, inside the camp. He said: "Our presence alone will help us secure the camp. Having LAF soldiers living inside Nahr al-Bared will make people think twice before trying to bring in arms". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 10 December 2011. That said, such a presence would come at a high cost given the camp's extreme spatial restrictions. Any request for land for any purpose other than building refugee dwellings will meet a great deal of resistance from UNRWA and Nahr al-Bared's population. The LAF's push for this terrain suggests it wants to be present inside the camp for more than merely symbolic reasons, possibly to gather intelligence, a factor that would further fuel camp residents' frustration.

[74] Masri said: "We can't say what the exact number of deployed military men will be. The naval base doesn't have to have a lot, so we can say maybe a total of 1,000 to 1,200 people inside and outside the camp". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 22 June 2011. Nahr al-Bared residents responded to the government's January 2009 decision with a letter criticising the permanent militarisation of the camp and "beseech[ing] you to place military and naval bases far from Palestinian and Lebanese schools and neighbourhoods". See http://electronicintifada.net/content/refugees-prime-minister-end-military-siege-our-camp/923.

the country, including in a Palestinian refugee camp.[75] But for Palestinians, the significance would be quite different. Indeed, replacing the LAF inside the camp with the ISF presents a potential risk insofar as the police, unlike the army, have the legal authority to interfere directly in residents' daily lives. Although Palestinians in Lebanon face employment restrictions in many syndicated professions[76] and cannot form associations or own property, they nonetheless engage in all such activities in order to meet the needs of daily existence inside camp confines.[77] Because Lebanese authorities typically are not present in the camps, these technically illegal activities essentially have been out of their reach.[78] The presence of the ISF, mandated to enforce all Lebanese laws – including those that discriminate against Palestinians – could change that.

The government has defended the planned ISF deployment in Nahr al-Bared as a way to generalise the application of law; in the words of Achraf Rifi, the ISF chief, "Nahr al-Bared will become like any other part of Lebanese territory, and we will deal with it accordingly".[79] Camp residents take a different – and dimmer – view:

> If the ISF enters the camp now, will they close all the shops and pharmacies? There's also a problem of land ownership. Will they make Nahr al-Bared an exception or change the laws for all Palestinians? For us, it would be better to have the army in the camp – even with the permit entry system – than to have the ISF, because the army doesn't enforce these civilian laws.[80]

Some officials have indicated that the ISF will turn a blind eye to such economic activities in Nahr al-Bared.[81] Still, without an agreement defining precisely which laws it would implement, residents would enjoy scant protection for their work, property and assemblies. If the law is fully enforced, the population will become increasingly isolated from its surroundings and ever more economically dependent on UNRWA. Changing laws that discriminate against Palestinians might well be politically unfeasible at this time; still, the government in the short term could more precisely define and limit the ISF's role, allowing Palestinians to continue to exercise rights in the camps that Lebanese citizens are legally protected to enjoy. In this respect, Achraf Rifi has proposed that limitations on the ISF's role could be implemented in the context of a rights-for-duties exchange, a potentially important acknowledgment:

[75] A former LPDC adviser said: "A police station is a symbolic presence of Lebanese authority in the camp and this is linked to a Lebanese consensus to establish Lebanese sovereignty over all Lebanese territory, including Palestinian refugee camps". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, May 2011.

[76] Under Lebanese labour law, nationals of a country that allows Lebanese citizens to work may themselves seek employment in Lebanon; this reciprocity condition has historically been used to discriminate against Palestinians, who do not have a country with a sovereign government that could legislate on aliens' right to employment. Parliament passed a law in 2010 to exempt Palestinians from the reciprocity law, theoretically lifting restrictions on work permits. In practice, however, Palestinians are still barred from over 30 professions, including engineering, law and medicine, for which Lebanese law requires membership in a trade union or professional association; many of which have their own reciprocity laws or are limited to Lebanese citizens. See "Lebanon: Palestinians still dissatisfied despite labour law changes", IRIN News, 30 August 2010.

[77] A Lebanese lawyer explained: "There is a parallel system in these other camps today. If you go to Ain al-Helweh or Shatila, Palestinians use their own informal trading system, bound by its own rules. If they are married to a Lebanese citizen – and there is lots of intermarriage – they will put down the name of their spouse, but otherwise they will resort to this informal system, outside of Lebanese law". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, May 2011.

[78] The above-mentioned lawyer said: "The idea is that Nahr al-Bared will be placed under Lebanese sovereignty, so if anything illegal happens in the camp, it would be the same as if something illegal happened in Beirut. It's a de facto, not a de jure, situation in the camps that Lebanese law does not apply. The government relinquished its sovereignty in the camps [as a result of the 1969 Cairo Agreement], so the camps became islands with their own rules. The problem is that camps have become a closed environment in which you can do anything illegal". Ibid.

[79] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 14 May 2011.

[80] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 26 April 2011. In reality, the roles of the two security forces in the camp have not been that clearly differentiated. Former LAF Chief of Staff Chawki Masri explained that the army could play a law enforcement role in the camp even after the ISF establishes itself inside, but only if the ISF required back-up. Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 22 June 2011. This anxiety about the possibility of the ISF shutting down pharmacies and shops reveals how little impact the 2010 change to the labour law has had on the ground.

[81] Future Movement parliamentarian Khaled Daher claimed: "There is an agreement among parliament members that it's okay for a Palestinian doctor or pharmacist to work inside a camp. It's not a written agreement, it's just generally known that the role of the ISF in Nahr al-Bared will be to monitor infringements of the law *except* regarding employment". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 10 May 2011. According to Sari Hanafi and Taylor Long, "Given the sensitive nature of the refugees' legal status with regard to Lebanese domestic politics, it is unlikely that Lebanese security forces will make any significant adjustment to their outlook on the refugees in the near future. At best, as a senior ISF official said concerning laws restricting Palestinian access to the labour market, the authorities 'will let these laws sleep'". See Sari Hanafi and Taylor Long, "Human (in)security: Palestinian perceptions of security in and around the refugee camps in Lebanon", *Conflict, Security & Development* (November 2010), p. 18.

> Having the Palestinians enter civil life in a new way will enable them to do some things but not others. As a man mandated to carry out the law, I am obliged to enforce all laws everywhere, unless the government makes an exception for Nahr al-Bared. For example, the government could institute a transition phase, let's say for five years, to allow Palestinians in the camp to work in any profession, and then revert to the situation where the camp is governed by regular Lebanese law. This is not for me but for the government to decide.[82]

If its role is defined and adapted to the peculiarities of Palestinian refugees' legal status, the ISF could present a civilian-friendly alternative to the army, diluting the camp's overly militarised character created by ubiquitous LAF personnel and checkpoints.[83] There is some indication that such an approach – in effect granting Palestinians greater rights in exchange for their relinquishing their weapons – might be welcomed by camp residents nationwide and even by some factions.[84] A PFLP representative explained:[85]

> The Palestinians don't mind if weapons are removed. There was chaos before. As the Palestinian people and factions will say, we don't have a problem with being under Lebanese law, but if I give my duties to the state, then the state should give me justice. Security means maintaining justice, not creating a highly militarised zone.[86]

B. Community Policing

The ISF has said it plans to adopt a "human security" – more commonly referred to as "community policing" – approach in Nahr al-Bared.[87] However, just as the ISF's mandate in the camp remains undefined, so does the policing approach, the first of its kind in Lebanon. According to the government's original vision outlined at the 2008 Vienna Donor Conference:

> Community policing in the NBC [Nahr al-Bared Camp] context entails the presence inside the camp of a culturally and politically sensitive ISF that will work to reduce the fears and tensions that existed prior to and after NBC conflict. Such type of policing will promote community engagement, partnership and proactive problem solving. The above security arrangements for NBC were agreed upon with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Building trust between the ISF and the NBC community would encourage camp residents to be more supportive and forthcoming in reporting community problems and security issues. Police officers would engage in various types of community activities (youth schemes, community programs, etc.) to foster a closer relationship with the residents of the camp.[88]

What concerns Palestinians is that this broad definition outlines what the ISF *may* do, not what it *may not* do inside the camp. To camp residents whose sole contact with Lebanese security forces for the past five years has been largely unrestrained army control, this emphasis on collaboration between residents and police sounds alarmingly like the LAF's and ISF's reported practice of recruiting Palestinian informants.[89] Moreover, an ISF police station built with U.S. funding in a part of the camp delineated as

[82] Crisis Group interview, Achraf Rifi, Beirut, 14 May 2011.
[83] An UNRWA official argued: "People are more willing to coordinate with the ISF because they present a civilian image". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, March 2011.
[84] A 2010 U.S. embassy study on Palestinian attitudes in Nahr al-Bared regarding the introduction of the ISF into the camp concluded: "Palestinian support for the ISF was higher than expected. ... however, this was not necessarily a reflection of the ISF's ability to fight crime or to provide police services ... instead, it had more to do with the increasing dissatisfaction residents felt for the LAF ... the ISF are starting to occupy the position of 'problem solver' as the LAF have become increasingly inflexible in their willingness to consider revising existing security measures". "Nahr al-Bared report for the US Embassy in Beirut", op. cit., p. i. According to the report, the percentage of Nahr al-Bared residents who identified the ISF as their preferred security provider more than tripled from 2009 to 2010; over three quarters of those who had heard of community policing said they were favourably inclined toward it. These positive numbers were likely due at least in part to the fact that 97 per cent of Palestinians surveyed had not come into contact with an ISF officer. This may have led them to believe that the ISF would be deployed, and the community policing program implemented, outside the camp. Less than half the residents said they would accept the idea of ISF policing anywhere inside the camp, and 70 per cent rejected the idea of a police station in the "new camp" directly adjacent to Nahr al-Bared. Ibid.
[85] Palestinians are divided on this issue. After the Nahr al-Bared conflict, the then-PLO representative in Lebanon, Abbas Zaki, publicly said that Palestinian weapons should be "subject to Lebanese law". However, the idea of a weapons-for-rights trade does not enjoy unanimous backing among PLO factions or even within Fatah. Crisis Group interviews, PLO and Fatah officials, Palestinian camps, 2008-2009, 2011. See Crisis Group Report, *Nurturing Instability*, op. cit., pp. 7-9.
[86] Crisis Group interview, Imad Odeh, Beddawi camp, 14 April 2011.
[87] A small group of ISF officers to be stationed in the camp were trained at a community-policing academy at the University of Louisville in the U.S. The practice of community policing is not currently practiced anywhere else in Lebanon.
[88] The Vienna Document, p. 51.
[89] In 2010, Sari Hanafi wrote, "The ISF still resorts to recruiting local 'informants' who ultimately use their connections with the security apparatus to exert influence and deploy intimidation. After the crisis in Nahr al-Bared, this practice intensified through the recruitment of collaborators, focusing specifically on disenfranchised youth". "Governing Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Arab East", op. cit., p. 28.

"package 3" (see map in Appendix A) has fuelled local suspicions that "community policing" is part of a foreign – ie, Western – plot to control the camp. Under this view, the ISF will be more akin to an intelligence service acting on behalf of national and foreign interests than to a police force working to protect camp residents.[90]

Because a police station already exists in the new camp, Palestinians also see the second ISF post as redundant and serving no obvious security purpose other than to make it easier for the authorities to monitor their lives.[91] Fatah representative for North Lebanon Abou Jihad said: "The Lebanese want to increase transparency in order to keep tabs on the camp".[92] Relatedly, Palestinians evoke the likelihood that an increased police presence inevitably will translate into stricter permit requirements and more numerous checkpoints.[93]

There also is considerable confusion among faction leaders and camp residents about what else community policing includes. A PFLP-GC representative said he considered "community policing not a bad idea if it means cooperation between the popular committees and the ISF".[94] Going further, Abou Jihad said his movement had suggested that the security structure in Nahr al-Bared be "a joint Palestinian-Lebanese police force".[95] While this suggests that many faction leaders – including the Tahaluf factions, despite the perception that the ISF is a pro-March 14 security branch – would be receptive to the idea of community policing if it entailed a degree of Palestinian participation, to date, the government has rejected the notion of such partnerships, insisting that security will be exclusively in its hands.[96]

Also missing from the government's view of community policing is the idea that it would include greater respect for Palestinian rights. As Nadim Shehadi, a former consultant for the LPDC, put it:

> Community policing is just a slogan; it could mean anything, but the bottom line is that security is not just tanks and borders and arms; security is human rights, social integration, economic employment, rule of law, that sort of thing. So community policing and human security, the two buzz words used by the government as guiding principles for creating a new model for the camp, are vague and the people who use these terms don't exactly know what they mean.[97]

[90] The U.S. provided $4-5 million to train ISF officers for deployment in Nahr al-Bared, around $1 million of which was spent on the construction of the police station. Indeed, some argue that "community policing" is less a defined concept than a slogan created for the purpose of mobilising international support, including and especially financial assistance, for the idea of establishing an ISF presence inside the camp. *Journal for Palestine Studies* researcher Amr Saadedine said: "I think they don't have a definition so much as they want to market the police presence with a nice word: "community". It seems like Nahr al-Bared is a laboratory for experiments. They have general policies mainly driven by a security mentality and they control the place. So they say, 'let's experiment with it; let's see how we can come up with something accepted by the international community more than by the people themselves'". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 16 May 2011.

[91] A camp resident lamented: "Does an area of 200,000 square meters need two police stations? I don't know how the government can think it's a good idea to make Nahr al-Bared a militarised place, especially with the suggestion of also building a naval base in the camp. Life won't go back to normal. A population that is continuously under pressure is going to explode". Crisis Group interview, Nahr al-Bared, 12 April 2011.

[92] Crisis Group interview, Beddawi camp, 28 March 2011.

[93] A PFLP representative opposed community policing on grounds it would justify an increased police presence, in particular in private and civilian areas, such as homes and businesses. Crisis Group interview, Imad Odeh, Beddawi camp, 14 April 2011

[94] Crisis Group interview, Abou Yasir, Beddawi camp, 2 May 2011.

[95] Crisis Group interview, Abou Jihad, Beddawi camp, 28 March 2011.

[96] As soon as the LAF took control of Nahr al-Bared in September 2007, then-LAF Chief of Staff Chawki Masri declared: "Of course it will not be allowed for Nahr al-Bared to return to the way it was. The responsibility of security will only be that of the Lebanese security forces". See Reuters, 5 September 2007.

[97] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 2 August 2011.

V. UNRWA'S ROLE

A. A DISPUTED MANDATE

In the 2008 Vienna Document, the government proposed a memorandum of understanding with UNRWA to assign responsibilities for Nahr al-Bared's reconstruction process and issues related to infrastructure, security as well as the development and management of records of the displaced in the post-reconstruction phase. According to the document, UNRWA was to be responsible for managing reconstruction – design, procurement and award of construction and engineering contracts as well as the operation and maintenance of infrastructure – and, in the post-reconstruction phase, developing and implementing a program for the operation and maintenance of both on-site and off-site Nahr al-Bared infrastructure.[98] Such a memorandum would formalise UNRWA's relationship with the government for the first time and thus could form the basis for similar arrangements in other camps.

To date, no memorandum of understanding has been made public though several draft MOUs reportedly have been passed back and forth between UNRWA and the government.[99] The latter officially requested that the UN agency take responsibility for camp reconstruction on property that the government has expropriated. What is unclear, however, is the delineation of camp management responsibilities after reconstruction. Sateh Arnaout, who was chief technical adviser to then-Prime Minister Hariri and the official responsible for overseeing camp reconstruction, put the problem as follows:

> Nahr al-Bared is a unique case in that the buildings are being built from scratch on government-expropriated land with donor money, and then being handed over to the refugees to live in. It is clear that utilities like water and electricity will be managed by the national authorities, but what is unclear is how the building assets will be managed because these assets are owned by the government now. For example, how do you manage the maintenance of the buildings? The handover from one occupant to another? If one family leaves to Canada, who comes to replace them and how is that process managed?[100]

Within the government, some believe UNRWA should bear at least some responsibility for day-to-day camp management in the post-reconstruction phase. A lawyer who was contracted by the government to outline a vision for the camp argued:

> UNRWA's role is to be in charge. No matter how widely or narrowly you define administration, its responsibility has to lie with UNRWA in the post-reconstruction phase, not only during reconstruction; indeed, we know how to rebuild and don't need their help. UNRWA should organise the refugees' return to their homes and assume the camp's day-to-day management. This is UNRWA's mission – to provide for refugee needs. Security issues in the narrow sense will be a Lebanese responsibility.[101]

However, UNRWA rejects any responsibility for running Nahr al-Bared on a day-to-day level; rather, its position is that in the post-reconstruction phase it should operate within its strictly defined mandate of service provision. An UNRWA official explained:

> The Lebanese government has always taken the erroneous view that we have responsibility for the camp. UNRWA provides services but we are not responsible for the camp. No doubt we are responsible for organising the return of displaced refugees, but Lebanese law says very clearly that the responsibility for the camps lies with the Lebanese government. There is no provision of law that says UNRWA is responsible for managing the camps or for acting as a municipality for the camps. We are a service agency that provides health, relief, shelter and rehabilitation. We do this with the support of the state. We are willing to do in Nahr al-Bared what we do in other camps. Regarding who is in charge, that discussion is between the Lebanese and Palestinians.[102]

Significantly, the government's vision outlined in the Vienna Document does not allocate any decision-making role to the Palestinian community or its governance structures. An UNRWA official said:

> The government has been pretty consistent in its attempt to make UNRWA its interlocutor on Palestinian issues – in other words, to make us sell its line to the Palestinians. In negotiations over practical issues, such as convincing residents to accept one thing or another, a consistent government tactic has been to manoeuvre UNRWA into being the Palestinians' sole representative. We tell them we are not their representative; we are a service agency, and in the case of Nahr al-Bared

[98] Vienna Document, p. 50.
[99] Sateh Arnaout, former chief technical adviser to then-Prime Minister Saad Hariri, explained: "There are a set of ideas that are being debated, but no official drafts have gone through a government validation process yet". Crisis Group telephone interview, 24 January 2012.
[100] Crisis Group telephone interview, 24 January 2012.
[101] Crisis Group interview, Lebanese lawyer, Beirut, May 2011.
[102] Crisis Group interview, UNRWA official, December 2011.

> we are the government's agent in rebuilding the camp in partnership with the international community.[103]

As UNRWA sees it, to act as both the Palestinians' representative and interlocutor risks politicising its mandate and turning it from a technical service agency to a lobbying group simultaneously voicing government decisions and Palestinian grievances. This in turn could expose the agency to take the blame for unpopular government decisions while further disempowering camp residents.

B. Reconstruction Delays

Nahr al-Bared's rehabilitation, if and when completed, would be highly symbolic and could improve Lebanese-Palestinian relations by helping to dispel longstanding Palestinian fears that the government is merely waiting for the opportunity to expel its refugee population. Palestinians across the country therefore interpret each reconstruction delay as a lack of government commitment or, worse, part of a conspiratorial design to punish and perhaps eventually expel them. Unsurprisingly, many of those waiting to return to their homes believe that the government is deliberately trying to delay reconstruction.[104] A displaced woman from Nahr al-Bared living in Beddawi camp lamented:

> The government is responsible for this slow reconstruction. We're sure a lot of people in the government don't want us to return to Nahr al-Bared.[105] It's remarkable that we're still sane. Once we see people returning to their homes in the camp with our own eyes, only then will we have hope that we will be allowed to return.[106]

Although the main reason cited for delays is lack of funding,[107] political and security complications also have an effect. Because Nahr al-Bared has been declared a military zone, the LAF has played a disproportionate role in decision-making regarding the rebuilding effort. For instance, it has insisted on building wide roads largely for "security reasons"[108] – possibly implying the need to accommodate large army vehicles – and on a maximum of four floors per dwelling to increase visibility in the camp, leaving UNRWA architects to work out how to fit the same number of people into the same size camp with shorter and narrower buildings. One of them, Loai Tannous, explained that the refugee agency often takes the blame for the smaller living spaces and the delays these cause:

> Unfortunately, in order to comply with all the army and government guidelines, we have to make major deductions in space. This creates a different kind of conflict between UNRWA and residents, because they will then say, 'look, UNRWA, you are building us very small rooms that can't accommodate the entire family', and

[103] Crisis Group interview, UNRWA official, February 2011.

[104] In an article that subsequently led to his arrest, Ismail Sheikh Hassan, an urban planner involved in a grassroots reconstruction commission, argued that the government was refusing to give a "real green light for the reconstruction" of Nahr al-Bared. He wrote: "The residents of the camp are still *prevented* by the military from entering into the site of the camp and *prevented* from rebuilding their own homes or even from setting up tents on the lands where their houses used to be. They are also *prohibited*, by the Military and its security siege in and around the camp, from running their businesses and practicing their daily routines and normal social life". See http://albared.wordpress.com/2011/02/16/a-translation-of-the-article-that-got-sheikh-hassan-arrested/.

[105] Conspiracy theories range from believing that the camp was destroyed so that the refugees would leave Nahr al-Bared and either be assimilated into other camps (such as Beddawi, where the majority of those still displaced currently reside) or relocated outside Lebanon, the purported goal being to have one less camp in the country. These fears partly are fuelled by the views of some Lebanese. On the Lebanese Forces – a March 14 coalition party led by Samir Geagea – website, a contributor wrote an open letter to former Prime Minister Siniora in which he protested the decision to rebuild Nahr al-Bared: "Sir if you are so concerned with the Palestinians, I can advice [sic] you to go with them to whatever country that you want and to continue to care for them, but from there, far away from here little Lebanon ... I worry when they talk of returning back this camp to the Palestinians, it [the conflict] would start all over again and soon enough our boys will be dying again for nothing. One less camp is by far better". See www.lebanese-forces.org/forum/showthread.php/26919-An-open-letter-amp-advise-to-Siniora-on-Nahr-Al-Bared. Nahr al-Bared residents also point to a protest staged a month after the conflict ended by around 400 people from the families of soldiers who died in the conflict. The group protested the return of the refugees, burning tyres and placing stones at the entrance of the camp, forcing a bus of around 800 refugees destined for the new camp to turn back. See Agence France-Presse, 12 October 2007.

[106] Crisis Group interview, camp resident, Nahr al-Bared, 12 April 2011.

[107] According to UNRWA, it costs $15 million each year to sustain the relief and recovery assistance for the 5,500 displaced families. The agency estimates the total reconstruction cost to be $328 million; as of February 2012, the funding gap stood at a significant $181 million. Crisis Group email correspondence, UNRWA Operations Support member, 27 February 2012.

[108] An UNRWA architect explained: "It's not only for security reasons that we have to make these design accommodations. In my opinion it's also good for the Palestinians not to live in such a densely populated environment. Less density theoretically allows for better infrastructure. But the problem is that you don't have a proper amount of land for this. You have to do everything inside the limited space we have in the camp". Crisis Group interview, Loai Tannous, Beirut, 26 January 2011.

> so then we need to modify the design and pass it to the consultant, and the whole process has to be repeated.[109]

Because UNRWA is visible and enjoys close ties to camp residents, it is an easy scapegoat,[110] attacked for its own inefficiencies while also taking the blame for the mistakes and unpopular policies of governmental decision-makers. Moreover, while Palestinians feel safe to criticise an agency with which they are intimately familiar and that employs many of their own, they are more careful in criticising the LAF, whose militarised presence in the camp is intimidating.[111] This creates new tensions in the UN agency's already highly sensitive relationship with residents.

Legal complexities also determine the pace of reconstruction. UNRWA is mandated only to design and build within the old camp, yet to design and construct buildings, roads and alleyways on the old camp's perimeter would require some modifications in the new camp. UNRWA's director in the north, Charlie Higgins, explained:

> Even more problematic than the lack of funding for the reconstruction of the adjacent area [new camp] is that we cannot build the old camp right up to the edge, as we would have to do if we are to fit all the people back inside. We would need to adapt the layout and some of the buildings located on the interface between the old camp and the adjacent area, but we do not have the authority to do this, and so far the government has not found a mechanism to tackle the problem.[112]

There also has been a fair degree of political wrangling in Beirut, hampering reconstruction. In August 2009, the highest administrative court, the Shura Council, ordered a two-month suspension of construction on an archaeological site following a petition by Michel Aoun, head of the Free Patriotic Movement. He had argued that it was the government's responsibility to buy "substitute lands" for the camp, a suggestion that many saw as akin to objecting to reconstruction in total;[113] and that backfilling the area would not suffice to protect it. The fact that the initiative came from Aoun, a Christian politician whose constituents have expressed strong opposition to the idea of *tawtin* (giving Palestinian refugees Lebanese citizenship or permanent residence),[114] led to charges that it was politically motivated, an effort to curry favour with his Christian constituents. Nahr al-Bared's displaced residents once more came to doubt the government's commitment to rebuilding their homes and to resent being the victims of the country's sectarian politics.[115]

Suspicions about poor practices by contractors have further damaged residents' confidence. Companies involved in the construction of dwellings in the camp have been accused of being slow, expensive and substandard in their work; as well, they are seen as being immune to penalties because of their political connections.[116] An UNRWA architect charged:

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[109] Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 26 January 2011.

[110] An UNRWA official said: "The Palestinians enjoy significant social cohesion, and every faction has some political or confessional connection to Lebanese groups. This leaves UNRWA as the most vulnerable to attacks by Palestinians and others. We are everybody's scapegoat for everything". Crisis Group interview, May 2011.

[111] In Beddawi, where the LAF is not officially present inside the camp, residents appear less reluctant than those in Nahr al-Bared to openly criticise the army. A displaced Nahr al-Bared mother living temporarily in Beddawi complained: "We're disappointed with the army. They have no respect when they search women at checkpoints. They even search dead people in their coffins. What kind of model is this? If Nahr al-Bared is going to continue under this model, tell them to stop building". Crisis Group interview, Nahr al-Bared, 14 April 2011.

[112] Crisis Group email correspondence, Charlie Higgins, February 2012.

[113] The Nahr al-Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC), an independent grassroots organisation that until its untimely demise in 2010 consulted with all local participants in the camp's reconstruction, called Aoun's intentions "theoretical and unworkable". See http://electronicintifada.net/content/nahr-al-bared-reconstruction-delays-protested/8469.

[114] For more information on debates surrounding *tawtin* in Lebanese politics, see Crisis Group Report, *Nurturing Instability*, op. cit., p. 13.

[115] The NBRC released a statement saying that "The residents are getting worried that archaeology is only being used as an excuse to halt/delay reconstruction or to score political gains, for since the start of the conflict, the camp has been used over and over again as a pressuring tactic by various internally competing Lebanese political actors at the expense of a marginalized, post-war refugee community". See http://albared.files.wordpress.com/2009/09/updates_on_nahr_el_bared-the_halting_of_the_reconstruction.pdf.

[116] According to a Palestinian engineer in Nahr al-Bared, "The contractors are not efficient and need to be monitored constantly. Contractors are supposed to pay a daily 'delay fee' of $16,000, but they're not doing it because UNRWA doesn't go after them, as this would cause problems for them with the government". Crisis Group interview, Nahr al-Bared camp, 12 April 2011. An UNRWA official said: "There's a problem with Lebanese contractors. They never finish their projects on time and we can only do one of two things: kick them out or impose penalties. Neither of these things solves the problem. We already have five contractors in the camp, but only one of them is good. The problem is that they are qualified by belonging to X sect or Y part of Lebanon. We choose from a pool of contractors who are classified by the government". Crisis Group interview, UNRWA official, January 2011. Camp residents claimed that specific reconstruction companies were tied to distinct political organisations and thus enjoyed their protection. Crisis Group interview, Beddawi camp, February 2011.

> There have been problems with contractors who are not very serious about implementing a project. Sometimes you feel there is no trust between residents and the contractor who is rebuilding their homes, because they believe he is using very cheap material and cheating them in other ways. Unfortunately, no Palestinian contractor can be hired, because this is one of the professions from which Palestinians are barred in Lebanon. This is a real obstacle, because hiring people from the camp would facilitate communication between UNRWA and the population.[117]

One of the most important tools for overcoming the camp population's suspicion and maximising its participation in reconstruction decision-making is to ensure communication between the local community and those involved in reconstruction. This in principle has been a central tenet of Nahr al-Bared reconstruction plan as UNRWA architects regularly consult with residents in a back-and-forth process called "participatory design".[118] In the past, such consultation was facilitated through an independent grassroots organisation called the Nahr al-Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC) that worked with camp residents, UNRWA's Design Unit as well as construction companies to create blueprints that incorporate all sides' preferences. However, the NBRC collapsed in early 2010, largely due to internal problems and resistance from Palestinian factions that felt excluded; indeed, its singular advantage had been its inclusion of community members acting independently of the political interests of factions and other interest groups.

Although it was resuscitated in early 2011, this time it encompassed the factions; as a result, UNRWA architects no longer benefited from a politically independent body that could communicate residents' feedback.[119] A former architect explained: "Our back-and-forth consultation with the community was much stronger when the [earlier version of the] NBRC still existed. It was seen as something that was purely for the people of Nahr al-Bared, because it had camp residents working for them; people trusted the faces they recognised".[120]

[117] Crisis Group interview, Loai Tannous, Beirut, 26 January 2011. Some Palestinians work in fields related to camp construction but generally on an informal, subcontractor basis. As an engineer explained: "As Palestinians, we can't enter the unions (syndicates) so we can't be engineers. I can work in the camp on a subcontractor basis, but it's not very formal. The salaries they give to Palestinians are less than that they give to other engineers, and I don't get benefits". Crisis Group interview, Nahr al-Bared camp, 4 January 2012.

[118] This is a tool intended to reduce the trauma caused by the camp's destruction by allowing residents to play a role in its rehabilitation.

[119] An UNRWA official said: "The factions were involved in ending NBRC because they didn't accept the idea of an independent organisation that excluded them. We signed an MoU with the factions, so now NBRC is made up of popular committees and community members". Crisis Group interview, UNRWA official, Beirut, December 2011.

[120] Crisis Group telephone interview, Najwa Doughman, 22 June 2011.

VI. IMPACT ON OTHER CAMPS

The crisis in Nahr al-Bared and the army's intervention acted as a wake-up call for all factions. Fearing a similar fate if lawlessness or chaos prevailed, Palestinian leaders across the political spectrum in all refugee camps began cooperating on security matters in an unprecedented fashion.[121] That said, if the government's intention was to pressure the factions to disarm or risk the fate of Nahr al-Bared, its actions could well backfire. The Fatah-Intifada representative in Beddawi explained: "We have unified Palestinian factions and everyone has an interest in preserving the camp. After the Nahr al-Bared crisis, we are willing to do anything in the other camps – to be armed to the teeth to avoid replication of the Nahr al-Bared model".[122] As it were, rather than convince Palestinians in other camps that disarmament will further ensure safety,[123] the Nahr al-Bared precedent might well increase the factions' determination to hold on to their weapons.

Nor, despite genuine Palestinian attempts to prevent a recurrence of what happened in Nahr al-Bared, can one be sure that a similar crisis will not be repeated. The main object of concern in this regard is Ain al-Helweh, the largest and most lawless camp, which continues to regularly experience assassinations, bombings and other security incidents and one that possesses several of the features that made Nahr al-Bared a suitable environment for Fatah al-Islam: competing factions, armed groups of militants making up an uncoordinated security apparatus, and a large population of unemployed youth.

Palestinian factions, aware of the risks, took some important steps. Cooperation between jihadi factions and the state preceded the Nahr al-Bared conflict,[124] but was enhanced when faction leaders in Ain al-Hilweh witnessed the consequences of that confrontation. Soon after the conflict ended, leaders of Usbat al-Ansar, a jihadi-leaning group in Ain al-Helweh, agreed to meet with then-deputy chief of army intelligence, Abbas Ibrahim, to map out a strategy to end the activities of Jund al-Sham, a violent Salafi breakaway faction of Usbat al-Ansar and the only Islamist group in Lebanon to support Fatah al-Islam during the fighting in Nahr al-Bared. A year after the conflict, the leader of Usbat al-Ansar took the unprecedented step of issuing a fatwa declaring that it was "against our religion to fight the Lebanese Army".[125] The fatwa was a clear response to the events in Nahr al-Bared and demonstrated the jihadi faction leader's resolve to prevent his camp from experiencing a similar fate. Likewise, after several security incidents, Ali Baraka, former Hamas representative in Ain al-Helweh and now Hamas representative in Lebanon, announced in 2010 that he would meet with the government to discuss the camp's security situation, saying: "We won't allow Ain al-Helweh to become another Nahr al-Bared".[126]

Usbat al-Ansar offered to take in Jund al-Sham members in an attempt, largely unsuccessful, to reduce the latter's numbers. In response, Jund al-Sham accused Usbat al-Ansar of compromising its Salafi principles by cooperating with the army. Most significantly, all Palestinian factions now see Usbat al-Ansar as a legitimate part of Ain al-Helweh's security structure.[127] Nicholas Blanford, a Lebanon-based journalist explained:

> Nahr al-Bared was a big wake-up call for [the jihadi factions]. They saw what was happening in Nahr al-Bared and thought, "we don't want this in Ain al-Helweh", and so they agreed with Fatah that their main priority would be to maintain security in the camps.[128]

Whether this will suffice is unclear. Blanford warns: "Ain al-Helweh is the camp to watch, because it's the largest camp with the most diverse array of factions. It is the riskiest place. That said, for now I think the situation is under

[121] According to Kamel Dorai, a researcher, "The consequences of the Nahr al-Bared conflict in terms of security are broader than the issue of cooperation between certain factions and the Lebanese authorities. One could see a significant strengthening of security in the camps around Tyre, Rashadiyeh and Borj Shemali after 2007". Crisis Group email correspondence, 26 February 2012.

[122] Crisis Group interview, Abou Yasir, Beddawi camp, 2 May 2011.

[123] Head of ISF Achraf Rifi said: "What we want to do is establish a model in Nahr al-Bared and then have the other camps look to Nahr al-Bared and want to adopt that model". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 14 May 2011.

[124] The LAF managed to enter and establish checkpoints in al-Taamir, the Lebanese neighbourhood bordering the camp, in January 2007, despite resistance from Jund al-Sham militants controlling the area. Usbat al-Ansar played a crucial role in negotiating with Jund al-Sham militants and paving the way for the LAF's entry into al-Taamir. Bahia Hariri, a parliamentarian from Sidon and sister of the assassinated Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, said: "In the post-war period, the al-Taamir area was known as an 'outlaw area', controlled mainly by Usbat al-Ansar. The group trusted neither the Palestinian factions nor the army. I pushed for the formation of a Palestinian-Palestinian committee, of which Usbat al-Ansar would be a member; this committee paved the way for the army to enter al-Taamir. In fact, the first visit by a delegation of the army and army intelligence was to Usbat al-Ansar, and this helped rebuild trust between them". Crisis Group interview, Beirut, 13 May 2011.

[125] See "Osbat al-Ansar issues fatwa outlawing fighting with LAF", *The Daily Star*, 6 December 2008.

[126] See "Abbas concerned that tensions in Ain al-Helweh could trigger more clashes", *The Daily Star*, 24 February 2010.

[127] See Crisis Group Report, *Nurturing Instability*, p. 27.

[128] Crisis Group interview, Nicholas Blanford, Beirut, 6 January 2011.

control because everyone realises that a conflict there would make Nahr al-Bared look like a picnic".[129]

In response to an early 2012 string of protests staged by camp residents calling for an end to the presence of weapons in the camp, Islamist and Fatah faction leaders in Ain al-Helweh held a meeting to discuss security coordination, the first such meeting between these forces in years.[130] Lessons from Nahr al-Bared could be useful in this regard: in particular, empowering residents, notably by reforming the popular committees to include civil society members, could help put pressure on faction leaders to reinforce security coordination and follow through on earlier promises to ban the ostensible display of weapons in the camp.[131] More broadly, were the LAF to find a way to operate effectively in Nahr al-Bared while respecting the refugee population, it could serve as a precedent for Palestinians in other camps – including Ain al-Helweh – to work with security forces.

VII. CONCLUSION

What becomes of Nahr al-Bared will be indicative of the Lebanese government's commitment to improving living conditions and security of Palestinian refugees. If the camp takes years to rebuild and suffers from an overbearing LAF and ISF presence, Palestinians across Lebanon will interpret this as yet another sign of Lebanese mistrust and resentment. In turn, this could damage security and political coordination between Palestinian and Lebanese officials as well as social and economic relations between the two communities. In contrast, if Nahr al-Bared is rebuilt roughly on schedule and Lebanese security forces can be seen as protecting the refugees – rather than be perceived as protecting Lebanon *from* them – the camp could serve as a model that might help put relations between the state and Palestinians political leaders, as well as between the Lebanese and the Palestinian refugee population, on sounder footing.

So far, this has not been the case. A faction leader in Beddawi said: "It's as if the government is using Nahr al-Bared to scare the other camps with the threat of this model. The residents of Nahr al-Bared don't like the Ain al-Helweh model, they don't want chaos – but they also don't want the current security model in their camp".[132] Developing a different, more appealing camp management model depends on concerted action by the government, the security forces, the Palestinian factions, UNRWA, and the international community on three issues:

Redefining and clarifying the model: Missing from the government's vision is a decision-making role for the Palestinians in camp management; by contrast, it gives too unrestrained a role to the security forces. As the Vienna Document acknowledges, "Building trust between the ISF and the NBC community would encourage camp residents to be more supportive and forthcoming in reporting community problems and security issues".[133] To achieve this goal, the roles of the security forces need to be adapted to the realities of the camp. In particular, the ISF should not enforce discriminatory property and employment laws inside the camps; it should ban the recruitment of residents as informants; and it should forego plans to build a second police station. Likewise, the LAF's presence ought to be restricted to the outside perimeters and entrance should be facilitated until the permit system is abolished. A reformed popular committee that comprises elected community members is necessary. Finally, the LPDC should revive its role to serve as a civilian face for the state and offer an alternative to the overwhelming security presence.

[129] Ibid.
[130] Hundreds of Palestinians protested in Ain al-Helweh in January and February of 2012, calling on the factions to sign an agreement not to use arms to resolve disputes. On 29 January 2012, the head of Usbat al-Ansar, Abou Tarek Saadi, and the leader of the Islamic Jihad Movement, Sheikh Jamal Khattab, headed a delegation of Islamist groups that met with Fatah leaders in the camp. They reportedly agreed to form a joint committee which would coordinate responses to security incidents. *The Daily Star*, 30 January 2012 and 4 February 2012.
[131] In 2009, a PLO official declared that the factions in Ain al-Helweh had "agreed to ban the ostensible display of weapons in the air, pointless firing in the air, steps that might provoke the Lebanese army, sale or rental of camp property to foreigners and monopoly control by specific armed groups of certain areas within Ain al-Helweh". Quoted in Crisis Group Report, *Nurturing Instability*, p. 8.
[132] Crisis Group interview, Imad Odeh, Beddawi camp, 14 April 2011.
[133] See Vienna Document, p. 51.

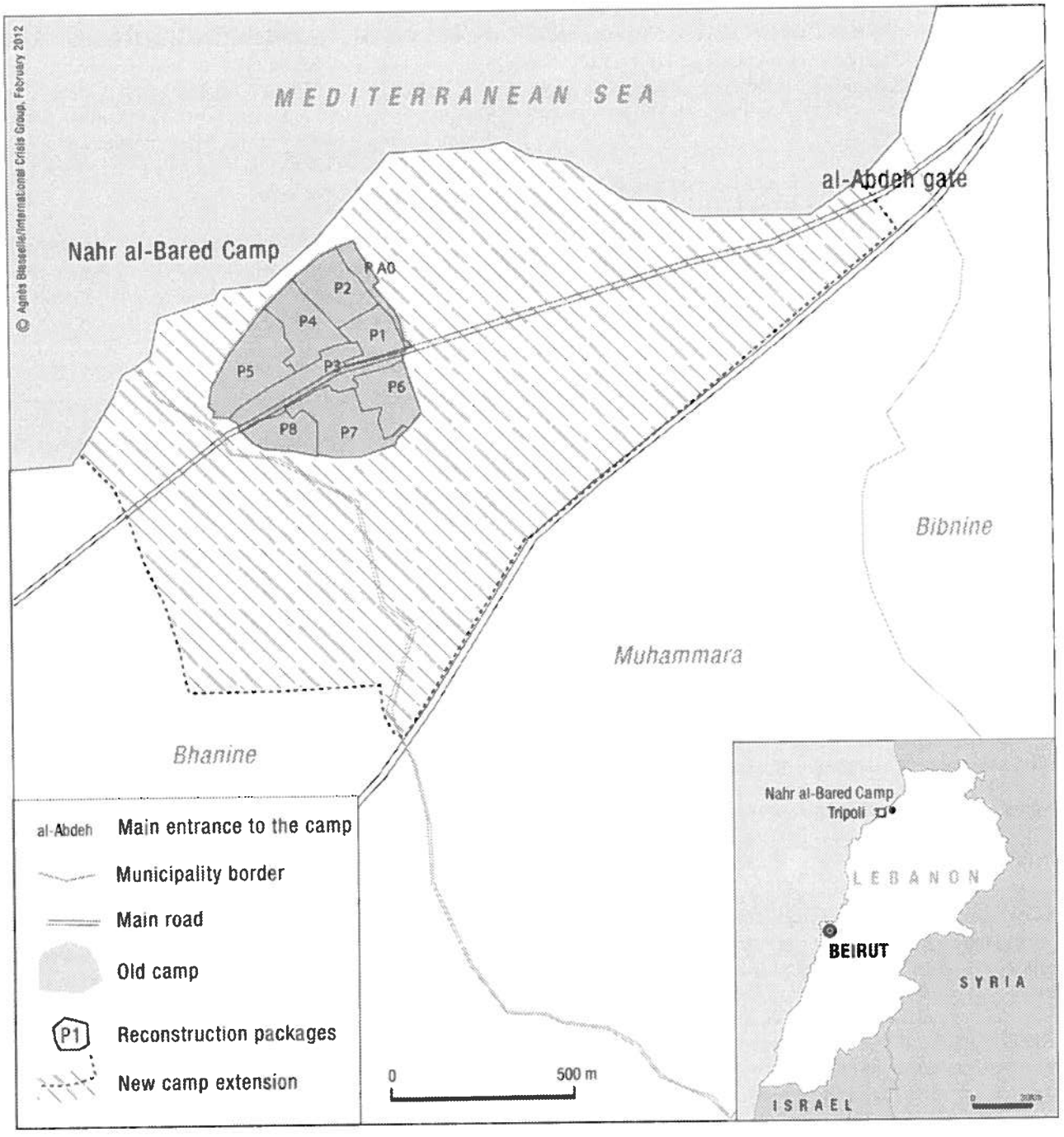
Reconstructing the camp: UNRWA, with the help of international donors and a commitment from the state to facilitate its work, should rebuild the camp in as timely a fashion as possible. This can be achieved by, inter alia, establishing a grassroots organisation to bolster consultations between camp residents and UNRWA architects; imposing penalties on construction companies for work delays; and coordinating with security forces so as to ensure security requirements affect camp layout as minimally as possible.

Applying the lessons of Nahr al-Bared to other camps: Palestinian factions across the country should look to Nahr al-Bared for lessons on new forms of coordination between them and the state inside the camps. In particular, Ain al-Helweh could benefit from increased cooperation between armed factions within the camp and the army stationed outside in order to prevent and punish inter-factional violence.

Beirut/Brussels, 1 March 2012

APPENDIX A

MAP OF NAHR AL-BARED CAMP



APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

CRISIS GROUP REPORTS AND BRIEFINGS ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA SINCE 2009

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