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COI QUERY RESPONSE – LEBANON

Information on readmission requirements and procedures for Palestinians from Lebanon with and without travel documents

1. Information on readmission requirements and procedures for Palestinians from Lebanon with and without travel documents

Background Information on Palestinians in Lebanon

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), there are four groups of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon:

‘1. Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (PRL) who are descended from those who lived in Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. 2. Those not registered with UNRWA who were displaced as a result of the 1967 and subsequent hostilities, and who are registered with the Lebanese Government (referred to as “Not-Registered” or “NR” by UNRWA). 3. Palestinian refugees who lack identity documents and are neither registered with UNRWA nor with the Lebanese authorities (referred to as “Non-IDs”). 4. Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), who have arrived in Lebanon since 2011 and who may or may not have regular status in Lebanon’.¹

Sources reported the following on these four groups of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon:

Concerning the first group of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (PRL), as of March 2023, 489,292 Palestinian refugees have been registered with UNRWA in Lebanon.² According to Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) report on Lebanon from June 2023, the exact number of PRLs residing in Lebanon is not clear³, whereas according to UNRWA’s estimations during 2023 the number of Palestinian refugees residing in the country as of October 2023 ranged from 250,000⁴ to 301 400 persons.⁵ The UN Human Rights Council noted that UNRWA registered PRLs have ‘an ambivalent legal status and live at the margins of society’⁶. The 2022 USDOS annual report on human rights practices in Lebanon noted that the Lebanese law considers them to be ‘foreigners’.⁷ Furthermore, sources

¹ UNRWA, Lebanon: UNRWA - Protection Monitoring Report - Q4 2022, 13 February 2023, [url](#), p. 1

² UNRWA, Lebanon Field Update: reporting period: 1 October 2022 to 1 May 2023, June 2023, [url](#), p. 1

³ Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report: Lebanon, 26 June 2023, [url](#), p. 15; According to the DFAT report: ‘The difference in numbers is attributed to large-scale emigration of Palestinians from Lebanon, chiefly to Europe and the Gulf States. UNRWA does not keep track of Palestinians who leave the country and does not conduct head counts of those within the camps’.

⁴ UNRWA, Lebanon Field Update: reporting period: 1 October 2022 to 1 May 2023, June 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵ UNRWA, Lebanon Field Update: reporting period: 1 May 2023 to 1 October 2023, November 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Visit to Lebanon: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, 11 April 2022, [url](#), para. 35

⁷ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 21

reported that PRLs faced restrictions of rights, including barriers on education, employment, and social services.⁸

Concerning Palestinian refugees that are neither registered with UNRWA nor with the Lebanese authorities (referred to as “Non-IDs”), according to sources this group refers to Palestinians who arrived in Lebanon without identity documentation after the 1960s,⁹ whereas their number in Lebanon is estimated between 3 000 to 5 000.¹⁰ It was reported that non-ID Palestinians are not recognized with legal status in Lebanon, and as a result they faced different impediments, including restrictions in movement, difficulties in completing civil registration procedures¹¹, and obstacles in accessing public services and formal employment.¹²

Furthermore, as of June 2023, UNRWA estimates that there were approximately 30 000 Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) residing in Lebanon.¹³ USDOS noted that PRSs ‘received limited basic support from UNRWA’, including education, food and cash assistance, and access to UNRWA health clinics.¹⁴

Sources also reported that approximately 45 % of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in one of the country’s 12 official refugee camps,¹⁵ which are described as overcrowded, of poor infrastructure¹⁶ and ‘unsanitary and unsafe conditions’.¹⁷

1.1. Information on readmission requirements and procedures for Palestinians from Lebanon with travel documents

According to Australia’s DFAT report on Lebanon from June 2023, ‘Palestinians registered with UNRWA are entitled to travel documents valid for either one or five years’, whereas

⁸ Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report: Lebanon, 26 June 2023, [url](#), p. 16; USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 21; UN Human Rights Council, Visit to Lebanon: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, 11 April 2022, [url](#), para. 35 – 36

⁹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 24; UN Human Rights Council, Visit to Lebanon: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, 11 April 2022, [url](#), para. 38

¹⁰ Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report: Lebanon, 26 June 2023, [url](#), p. 15; UN Human Rights Council, Visit to Lebanon: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, 11 April 2022, [url](#), para. 38

¹¹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 24; UN Human Rights Council, Visit to Lebanon: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, 11 April 2022, [url](#), para. 38

¹² UN Human Rights Council, Visit to Lebanon: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, 11 April 2022, [url](#), para. 38

¹³ UNRWA, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan Emergency Appeal 2023: Progress Report for the Reporting Period 1 January – 30 June 2023, 16 December 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁴ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Lebanon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Visit to Lebanon: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, 11 April 2022, [url](#), para. 37; UNRWA, Where we work, Last updated July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶ Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report: Lebanon, 26 June 2023, [url](#), p. 15; UNRWA, Palestine refugees in Lebanon: struggling to survive, 18 January 2022, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Visit to Lebanon: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, 11 April 2022, [url](#), para. 36

‘Palestinians who are not registered with UNRWA can obtain travel documents valid for either one or three years’.¹⁸ According to sources cited in a 2021 Thematic COI Report on Palestinians in Lebanon by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Palestinians who are not registered with UNRWA ‘may be able to receive a laissez-passer’ that has a one-year validity period.¹⁹ According to the 2023 DFAT report fees for the issuance of travel documents are ‘similar to those paid by Lebanese’, while passports can be renewed ‘in diplomatic missions abroad’.²⁰ Furthermore, in a protection brief, published in September 2020, UNRWA noted that non-ID Palestinians in Lebanon ‘are also denied the possibility to travel abroad’.²¹ However, corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

According to an undated entry on the website of the General Directorate of General Security of Lebanon (GDGS), since 1 November 2016, Palestinian refugees have been issued a biometric passport ‘registered in the refugees’ category in Lebanon’.²² Australia’s DFAT report on Lebanon from June 2023, also confirmed that since 2016 ‘biometric passports replaced handwritten travel documents’ for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.²³

On its website, the GDGS includes undated information on the essential requirements for Palestinian refugees to obtain travel documents and transit passes. More specifically:

‘If the Palestinian refugee is a registered member at the UNRWA, as well as the Palestinian refugee’s bureau, and has an authorization issued by the general security, he is granted a travel document.

If the Palestinian refugee is a registered member at the Palestinian refugee’s bureau, but not at the UNRWA, he is granted a travel document.

If the Palestinian refugee is a minor not registered as a member at the UNRWA, nor at the Palestinian refugee’s bureau, while his father is a member in both: his registration is a must. he [sic] is then granted a travel document, or included in his father’s travel document.

If the involved party is the wife of a Palestinian refugee a travel document is issued in her name, she must however have a marriage certificate in hand, conform to current regulations.

If the involved party is the wife of a Palestinian refugee residing in Lebanon while she isn’t, a travel document is issued in her name, she must however register her marriage at the Palestinian refugee’s bureau, as well as the UNRWA.

If the Palestinian refugee is not registered as a member at the UNRWA, nor at the Palestinian refugee’s bureau, while he has a file at the general security: his application is treated as a case that’s ‘under consideration’.

¹⁸ Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report: Lebanon, 26 June 2023, [url](#), p. 37

¹⁹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematisch ambtsbericht Palestijnen in Libanon [Thematic official report Palestinians in Lebanon], January 2021, [url](#), 23

²⁰ Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report: Lebanon, 26 June 2023, [url](#), p. 37

²¹ UNRWA, Protection brief: Palestine refugees living in Lebanon, updated September 2020, [url](#), p. 3

²² Lebanon, GDGS, The instructions related to biometric passports granted to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, n.d., [url](#)

²³ Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report: Lebanon, 26 June 2023, [url](#), p. 37

If the involved party is a Palestinian refugee holding a foreign nationality, his application is abdicated by a correspondence sent by the Palestinian refugee's bureau. He is no longer considered as a Palestinian refugee applicant. He shall henceforth respect procedures concerning foreign residents residing in Lebanon. If an application has been abdicated, if the applicant wishes to apply again, he should convey his request to do so'.²⁴

Concerning the requirements for issuing of travel documents and transit passes for Palestinians residing and registered as refugees in Lebanon, the GDGS notes in its website:

'Documents requested:

- A refugee ID card held by the Palestinian citizen residing in Lebanon as well as a certified photocopy of the latter
- An extract of individual civil status issued by the general security
- 4 ID photos certified by the mayor
- A travel approval delivered by the parents or the legal guardian
- A document issued by the competent mayor identifying the refugee and his residence: the attendance of 2 witnesses is required
- An attestation that proves he is not a member of the UNRWA, or on the contrary case an affiliation card

Fees:

- A travel document associated with the latter held by one of the parents
- A travel document for a Palestinian refugee – 1 year – LBP 60 000 [approximately EUR 3.5]
- A travel document for a Palestinian refugee – 3 years – LBP 180 000 [approximately EUR 11]

Time delay:

A week starting the date of conveying the request'.²⁵

In 2020, the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) published a report based on a fact-finding mission to Lebanon, addressing the readmission of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon. According to the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants (MFA), cited by the DIS report, all Palestinian refugees from Lebanon living abroad can apply for and obtain new travel documents or renew their expired travel documents at a Lebanese embassy, 'provided that they have a valid residence permit in their current country of residence'.²⁶ The same source also noted that, if a Palestinian refugee from Lebanon does not have the required documents for issuing a travel document, such as UNRWA registration and ID, his/her family in Lebanon 'can obtain the required documents by power of attorney which can be granted through the embassy'.²⁷

²⁴ Lebanon, GDGS, Essential requirements, n.d., [url](#)

²⁵ Lebanon, GDGS, Travel documents and transit passes, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 7

²⁷ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 7

Concerning the procedure for return, the MFA and diplomatic sources interviewed by DIS, noted that in cases that a PRL without residence permit in a foreign country (due to a revocation of his/her residence permit or rejection of an asylum case), a special permission issued by the MFA and the GDGS is needed to return to Lebanon.²⁸ Specifically, MFA noted that applications from third countries' authorities for return of PRLs are examined on a case by case basis, and that 'no airline will allow a PRL (who does not have a legal residence in his/her current country of residence) to board their flights to Lebanon without an explicit permission to return from the MFA and the GDGS', since the person will not be allowed to enter Lebanon.²⁹ As reported by a diplomatic source cited by DIS, this procedure applies independently of the nature of the return, namely whether it is taking place voluntarily or not.³⁰

A confidential source cited in a 2021 Thematic COI Report on Palestinians in Lebanon by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands stated that there is [informal translation] 'no clear policy on the return of mixed Palestinian families' and that there is no information on [informal translation] 'whether any distinction is made between Lebanese Palestinians and non-Lebanese Palestinian family members on admission to Lebanon', as returns are considered on a case by case basis by the Lebanese authorities.³¹

A report published by Asylos³² in March 2023 concerning Palestinians in Lebanon in general and referring to them as 'stateless Palestinians' in Lebanon included written communication with Dr. Jasmin Lilian Diab, Director of the Institute for Migration Studies at the Lebanese American University, in October 2022, who noted that although PRLs holding 'Lebanese government issued PRL document' are more likely to be permitted to re-enter the country, however there are cases that they were not granted permission.³³

1.2. Information on readmission requirements and procedures for Palestinians from Lebanon without travel documents

Concerning the requirements and requested documents for issuing of travel documents and transit passes for 'Palestinian refugees without papers', the GDGS notes in its website:

'Documents requested:

- The file of the refugee in question held by the Palestinian liberation organization in Lebanon
- A document issued by the competent mayor identifying the refugee and his place of residence: the attendance of 2 witnesses is required. This document

²⁸ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 8

²⁹ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 8

³⁰ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 8

³¹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematisch ambtsbericht Palestijnen in Libanon [Thematic official report Palestinians in Lebanon], January 2021, [url](#), 44

³² Asylos is a global network of volunteers providing Country of Origin Information (COI) research for lawyers assisting people seeking international protection with their claim. Asylos, About us, n.d., [url](#)

³³ Asylos, Lebanon: Stateless Palestinians, March 2023, [url](#), p. 54

could also be delivered by a representative of the Palestinian liberation organization in Lebanon

- A birth certificate
- A marriage certificate if the refugee in question is married
- If the refugee is a minor, then he has to have in hand the marriage certificate of his parents
- 3 ID photos that are recent, colored (4.3*3.5 cm), and certified by the mayor.
- A fiscal stamp of LBP 1000 [approximately EUR 0.05]

NB: No demand shall be approved, one month after his registration in the Palestinian liberation organization'.³⁴

Concerning the readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon without residence permit from a third country to Lebanon, the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants (MFA), cited by the 2020 DIS fact-finding mission report, provides information on the requirements and application for the issuing of new travel documents or a laissez-passer, which is 'processed through a special procedure'.³⁵ Specifically, according to MFA, following the submission of an application for a new travel document or laissez-passer with the required documents to a Lebanese embassy, the embassy sends the documents to the MFA's Foreigner Section in Lebanon, where a committee proceeds with the examination of the case and the decision on the application for issuing of new travel documents.³⁶ During the examination of a case, the MFA takes into consideration 'a series of issues such as whether the person entered his/her current country of residence illegally, which countries the individual stayed in on his/her way from Lebanon to the current country of residence etc.'. ³⁷

According to the MFA, in case of approval, the case is forwarded to the GDGS. The GDGS initiates investigation on the person applying, his/her identity and registration in Lebanon, and upon confirmation of the latter the GDGS issues the travel document.³⁸ According to the same source, 'it takes a couple of days for the MFA to process a case and make a decision, and it takes maximum one month for the GDGS to investigate the person'.³⁹ Upon rejection by the MFA, a PRL does not receive a document confirming that the application has been rejected, however, in case an application is rejected by the GDGS, following previous approval of MFA, then the GDGS issues document stating the reasons thereof.⁴⁰ However, a confidential source cited in the 2021 Report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, stated that in practice, the process of voluntary return [informal translation] 'can take a very long time' if no notice is issued by the MFA.⁴¹

³⁴ Lebanon, GDGS, Palestinian refugees without papers, n.d., [url](#)

³⁵ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 7

³⁶ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 7

³⁷ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 7

³⁸ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 7

³⁹ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), p. 7

⁴⁰ Denmark, DIS, Lebanon: Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, March 2020, [url](#), pp. 7 – 8

⁴¹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematisch ambtsbericht Palestijnen in Libanon [Thematic official report Palestinians in Lebanon], January 2021, [url](#), 44



According to the Director of the Institute for Migration Studies at the Lebanese American University, as cited by the Asylos report, published in March 2023, Palestinians who left the country ‘through irregular means, or following a rejected asylum application in a third country, are typically not permitted to re-enter Lebanon’.⁴²

Additional information on the readmission requirements and procedures, as well as information on returns of Palestinians from Lebanon with and without travel documents in Lebanon within the timeframe of this query response, could not be found among the sources consulted by the EUAA within time constraints.

Additional information on entry/exit requirements and procedure for Palestinians in Lebanon can be found in the EUAA query response on [entry/exit requirements and procedure for Palestinians with and without passports](#), published on 20 February 2020.

⁴² Asylos, Lebanon: Stateless Palestinians, March 2023, [url](#), p. 54

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