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73 Years Later

**What life is like for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon:
highlighting lived experiences and
sustainable policy-oriented solutions.**



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Appendix can be sent upon request.

About Mrs. Margrete Auken

Mrs. Margrete Auken has been a Danish member of the European Parliament (EP) since 2004. Her national party is Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF) and she is seated in the Greens/EFA group in the EP. Mrs. Auken is a true friend of the Palestinian people and has long been engaged in Palestine related questions, fighting for peace and the respect of international law. Last time she visited Palestine was in February 2020, together with the Delegation for relations with Palestine (DPAL) where she also serves as Vice-Chair.

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1. Introduction

Seventy-three years after Al-Nakba (The Catastrophe) and more than 6 million **Palestinians are either living exiled, in a global diaspora or displaced from their homeland**. As an attempt to understand the Palestinian refugee's diverse experience, the office of Mrs. Margrete Auken has conducted a research study that focuses on the reality of the Palestinians refugees living in Lebanese refugee camps. Indeed, their experiences differ from that of their fellow compatriots in Jordan or Syria, who have been either granted citizenship, or enjoy full civil rights without citizenship. However, their lived reality can only be compared to the situation in Gaza, a situation where the Palestinians are denied fundamental rights, living in poverty and other socio-economic problems that make life unbearable.

Palestinians in Gaza are broadly oppressed and affected by the Israeli occupation and siege, as well as by the internal division of the Palestinian political parties. At the same time in Lebanon, the political, demographic and religious conflicts have created an extremely hostile environment for Palestinian refugees. The interplay of these factors has led to the marginalization of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, prohibiting them access to fundamental civil rights such as the right to work, education or property ownership. **The denial of these civil rights violates several international treaties and conventions.**¹

Two years ago, the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee conducted their first-ever census² of Palestinian refugees from 12 Palestinian camps and 156 unregistered "gatherings" across the country, shedding light on the refugees poor living conditions. The census-results showed that around 174 422³ refugees are residing in Lebanon, while previous politicians have been suggesting that between 300 000 to 500 000 refugees are residing in Lebanon. Statistics from 2018 and before have been relying on United Nations Relief Work & Agency's (UNRWA) official registration records that do not have an update headcount of how many refugees are actually residing in Lebanon. However, it is important to stress that the previous mentioned figures of 174 422 do not represent the actual number of Palestinians residing in Lebanon, but only the ones covered by the consensus.

The approval from the main Lebanese political parties, Palestinian factions and the accomplishment of the census signaled a positive step towards finding durable solutions, as well as shedding light on **the cruel living conditions of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon**. Following the consensus results, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon (Saad Hariri) said, *"Over the past decades, the social and humanitarian problems faced by Palestinian refugees have accumulated, and the reality in the camps has become tragic on all levels."*⁴

Continuing, the statistics were presented without any tangible efforts or actions to address the Palestinian refugees' suffering in Lebanon. Instead, their primary focus was to, *"Put to rest fear-mongering estimates from politicians and uncertainty in policy for aid groups."*⁵ The results were later only used by the USA and Israel to attack and discredit UNRWA's figures and records. In the end, none of the parties focused on the socio-economic situation that the consensus showed, nor were any solutions presented. **Over the last decades**, the *Lebanese government* has been exercising serious institutional discrimination against the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The *international community* has primarily been focused on short-term humanitarian aid, rather than developing solutions in shape

1 Including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention Related to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1967), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966).

2 Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Central Administration of statistics, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2019). The Population and Housing Census in Palestinian Camps and Gatherings - 2017, Detailed Analytical Report, Beirut, Lebanon.

3 The census did not include Palestinians living in other communities or in other Lebanese cities and villages, as it did not have access to them. Neither did it include members of the household that were absent during the last 6 months prior to the census (according to the physical count questionnaire), estimated at around 11,000. - THE ONGOING UNRWA CRISIS: CONTEXT, DIMENSIONS, PROSPECTS AND RESPONSES – (Suleiman, 2018)

4 Cited in an article published by the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue committee, Zayyat 2017

5 Cited in an article published by the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue committee, Yan 2017

of financial assistance and aid. The *Palestinian Authority* has largely been inactive towards the Palestinian diaspora, living in a state of limbo until their right of return is established. *More than 115 international and local NGOs* have been operating in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. However, figures, statistics, surveys and consensus show no socio-economic improvement from year to year, amidst sharp deterioration of living conditions.⁶

They nonetheless maintain a remarkable level of resilience and endurance as they wait for their rights to be established.

“My mother told me I cannot be a doctor because I am Palestinian. However, I want to study medicine despite the Lebanese law... Even if I cannot be a doctor here, I could go to Palestine and help those in need, particularly the underprivileged children. I want to save lives, I want to be like Razan Al Najjar.”

(Sara Akram Abu Shaker, 14)⁷

Our study documents the voices of Palestinian refugees who speak on the often-ignored aspects of their lives. This report attempts to **translate the lived experiences** and opinions into concrete policy-oriented demands, actions and goals that can **contribute to substantially improving the living conditions of the Palestinian refugees.**

Our Study

Over the last months, the office of Mrs. Auken has reached out to various stakeholders in the Palestinian refugee camps, asking them about the issues they would like to see tackled in a survey. Following their recommendations, a quantitative and qualitative study has been developed including questions revolving around **representation, NGO’s work, immigration** and **durable solutions.**

The study sample consists of 60 participants from five different Lebanese districts, and eight Palestinian refugee camps. The respondents’ distribution regarding gender was almost equal, female participants comprised 51% of the sample. Moreover, our sample was able to target different age groups:

18-25 years old (29%)

26-37 years old (39%)

38-57 years old (27%)

57+ years old (5%)

Participants have given their opinion on the often-ignored aspects of refugees’ lives in Lebanon by answering the following questions:

- Who represents Palestinians in Lebanon and on the international community level?
- What is their vision of a proper representation?
- What are the problems currently facing the refugee camps population in Lebanon?
- How do Palestinians in Lebanon assess the work of NGO’s?
- What are Palestinians’ views on resettlement and integration?

Limitations

- A larger study sample is needed to generalize the finding among all Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon.
- The posed questions might have been perceived as sensitive, especially in light of the financial difficulties that

6 Chaaban, J., Salti, N., Ghattas, H., Irani, A., Ismail, T., Batlouni, L. (2016), “Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon 2015”, Report published by the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

7 In an interview for Amnesty International – Seventy + Years of Suffocation.

UNRWA is experiencing, and the wave of increasing normalizations between Israel and Arab governments.

- The research was conducted at a time of economic crisis caused by a pandemic, which might have affected people's response to some of the questions concerning the work of NGOs. Some participants might have been feeling frustrated.

2. Lack of representation

Who represents Palestinians in Lebanon and on the international community level?

What is their vision of a proper representation?

To tackle the topic of representation participants have been asked five questions related to their ability to express their political views freely within the camp, and whether they feel they are well represented. Following the questions, participants have expressed their vision on proper representation.

Most participants seemed to express their political views freely⁸ (41%), but at the same time they considered that they are not well represented, while 31% preferred not to answer. A large majority of participants (91%) considered that their voice is usually not heard and that they do not feel represented⁹ in Lebanon (59%) or in the international community (36%). However, an equally significant majority of participants considered UNRWA to be the entity representing the Palestinian refugees in the international community (37%).

Although when approaching the issue of representation, there seems to be various bodies working specifically with ensuring that a human, social and livelihood dimensions is met (**Popular committees, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the Palestinian Embassy in Lebanon, UNRWA and the Lebanese Authority**). The current reality in Lebanon is subjected to various limitations that might explain the results above.

Palestinian Authority and Liberation Organization

The Palestinian political leadership is currently **more divided than ever before**. This issue has delayed the Palestinian elections and severely affected the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza and to some extent in the diaspora as well. As electoral accountability has become absent, there has consequently been a **growing disconnect between the Palestinian leadership and the general population in the occupied territories and diaspora**. Palestinian leaders are seen as lacking the incentive to take people's grievances into consideration since they cannot be held to account by them. All the while, the public is growing weary and mistrusting of the leadership.¹⁰

Intra Palestinian divisions have spilled over in the refugee camps in Lebanon and have been manifested through various political factions¹¹ controlling or demanding control and representation within the camps, which reflect the same division happening inside the occupied territories of Palestine.

On paper, the PA and PLO are represented in the camps by the Popular Committees and nongovernmental organizations such as the Mahmoud Abbas Foundation – named after the current PA president and PLO chairman, and the PLO's Department of Education and Higher Education. Additionally, the PA embassy in Lebanon is the entity that deals with diplomatic affairs, representing the Palestinian people. This representation is sup-

8 Although Knudsen (2007) previous report suggested that despite the hardships faced by refugees, protests from the refugee community were muted by the fact that Palestinian refugees are not accorded freedom of expression

9 They don't feel represented by the Lebanese Authority, Popular committees, UNRWA, Palestinian Embassy/Authority

10 <https://www.disorient.de/magazin/palestinian-reconciliation-requires-genuine-international-dialogue-both-sides>

11 Recent reports suggest more than thirty political factions in the camps, see for example: The neglected: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the Syrian refugee crisis Andersen, Lars Erslev (2016)

posed to entail diaspora Palestinians after the PA Foreign Ministry was renamed to the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs in 2017. In practice, however, the role the PA and PLO play in Lebanon is much different.

Popular committees

The Popular Committees¹² are the representative entity of the refugee camps. They were formed by the PLO as a political framework operating under the higher political committee's¹³ direction, and not as a service authority. However, after the PLO's departure from Lebanon, the role of the Popular Committees changed into a community framework providing and managing services in the camps, affiliated with the PLO Department of Refugee Affairs. According to Article 8 of the amended Rules of Procedure amended by the department, the Popular Committees have the following tasks¹⁴:

- Cooperate with national institutions, non-governmental institutions, and donors in respect to the development of the camp's services and infrastructure.
- Provide services, improve the quality of the service projects performed in the camps and ensure their continuity.
- Daily follow-up of UNRWA services in the camps and urging them to improve and develop, in line with the steady increase in the number of refugees.
- Raise the level of interest in youth and women's activities in coordination with the relevant authorities.

Only 5% of the participants in our survey considered the Popular Committees to be representing them or fulfilling their tasks. We find that their concerns corresponds with previous findings by Suleiman¹⁵ in his report 'LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS: A POLITICAL, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY PERSPECTIVE' that has been approaching the limitations of the Popular Committees in the camp.

- **Lack of coordination between the Popular Committees and the absence of a unified authority.**

*"At present, I do not think there is a way to agree on the proper representation of the Palestinian people, as the gap between the factions is large."*¹⁶

- **Weak representational legitimacy, not done through legitimate elections but through political quotas and family considerations.**

"Nobody represents the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Everyone serves the interest of his people."

- **Lack of representation of youth, women and members of adequate professional competence.**

"A proper representation shall be legitimate by elections and by representing the Palestinian youth."

The participants considered that an adequate representation of the refugees living in the camps could be achieved through *"legitimate elections"*, *"elected representatives"*, *"elections in all camps and Palestinian gatherings"* and *"more focus on youth and the exclusivity of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon."* They expressed the **importance of unity among the different political factions** to be able to change the Palestinian refugees' situation in Lebanon.

12 "The Popular Committee is the unified Palestinian action base within the camp, which is subordinate to the Higher Political Committee, acting under its guidance and implementing its decision in accordance with the exigencies of action that serves the Palestinian revolution throughout the Arab arena"

13 The Higher Political Committee for Palestinian Affairs in Lebanon was established following the signing of the Cairo Agreement in 1969.

14 Jaber Suleiman - LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS: A POLITICAL, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY PERSPECTIVE (2017)

15 Suleiman, Ibid

16 All the data and samples were processed without name, ID number or other directly recognizable type of information. Therefore they are coded with numbers.

The Palestinian political leadership is aware¹⁷ of these demands and the possible positive impact they might have on the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In 2015, the Palestinian leadership came to accept that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon could not wait for a national reconciliation to take place to unify the Popular Committees. However, after the last meeting in 2015¹⁸ in the Mar Elias camp together with all political factions, the various efforts and meetings yielded **no change for the refugees**.

“The aim of these efforts is to open a new page, to end division, achieve national reconciliation and build a national partnership between all factions.”

(Ahmad Majdalani, member of the executive committee of the PLO)

Palestinian Embassy

Following the Lebanese civil war 1975-1990, the office of the PLO was reopened in 2006, and in 2011 it was upgraded to the level of Embassy represented by Ambassador Achraf Dabour. However, until today the Embassy’s role has remained ambiguous toward the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon¹⁹. The issue of representation and recognition, as well as the effects this might have on the right of return, remains a heavy dilemma. Therefore, the Embassy’s role in Lebanon is solely diplomatic and to offer services to Palestinian holders of the PA passport only.

This explains the result in our study in which only 15% of the participants considered the Palestinian Authority – represented by the Embassy – to be the entity expressing the interests of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. They stressed the fact that **they have been living in the same difficult circumstances for years with no change**.

Lastly, a majority of the participants demanded an effective embassy that makes no compromises with their fundamental rights. They reaffirmed the importance of unity among the factions, ensuring **a proper representation that enjoys transparency and credibility**.

“An embassy that represents the Palestinian people and not just specific individuals.”

“An embassy that belongs to the Palestinian people and not to a specific political faction.”

“An effective embassy that looks for solutions to the problems the Palestinians in Lebanon are facing.”

Lebanese Authority and UNRWA

Until today, the Lebanese government shows no will in setting up a specific legal status for the Palestinian refugees, either distinguishing them from foreigners or **including them in the state’s welfare system**. Lebanon considers UNRWA as the agency responsible for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon²⁰.

However, UNRWA’s mandate does not include the provision of legal protection of Palestinian refugees. UNRWA is solely established to carry relief and works programs (health, education and social services), which is different from UNHCR that includes legal and political protection.

Due to the specific international and state policies, determining the legal and political status of refugees in Lebanon, **Palestinians seem to be aware that UNRWA plays a humanitarian and not political or protective**

17 On 30 April 2005 the Department called for a workshop on Palestinian refugees’ civil and social rights, a summary four working days the meeting can be found in the following report for Jaber Suleiman 2006; Marginalised Community: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon.

18 This meeting was initiated by the Centre for Refugee Rights/Aidoun (Beirut) and the Palestinian Centre for Policy Research and Strategic Studies (Ramallah)

19 The embassy offers consular services for Palestinian passport holders - <http://www.palembassy-lb.net/>.

20 According to Decree no. 927 of 1959, the Department of Palestinian Refugee Affairs (DPRA) is responsible for the designation of areas as camps; the registration of the inhabitants of the camps; the registration of births, marriages, deaths and changes of residence; the right to accept or refuse the transfer of financial aid for the refugees from abroad. However, neither the DPRA nor the wider Government of Lebanon promise to provide any social services. This is left entirely to UNRWA.

role. This statement is in line with our survey results where only 12% considered UNRWA as a representative of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

“The Palestinians in Lebanon shall understand that the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Embassy are two political references, and UNRWA is a social and welfare reference.”

However, **more than 36% considered UNRWA as their representative** when they were asked about political representation on **the international level.** This comes even though UNRWA continuously tries to maintain politically neutral, and to cling to their mandate of providing assistance. The constant political attacks that UNRWA is subject to, and the diminishing of their funds, has pushed their boundaries into a heavily **politically loaded arena.** For example, the US Trump administration’s recent slashing of funds to UNRWA and the ensuing instability within UNRWA’s budget have been perceived by the Palestinian refugees as an attempt to liquefy the refugee issue.

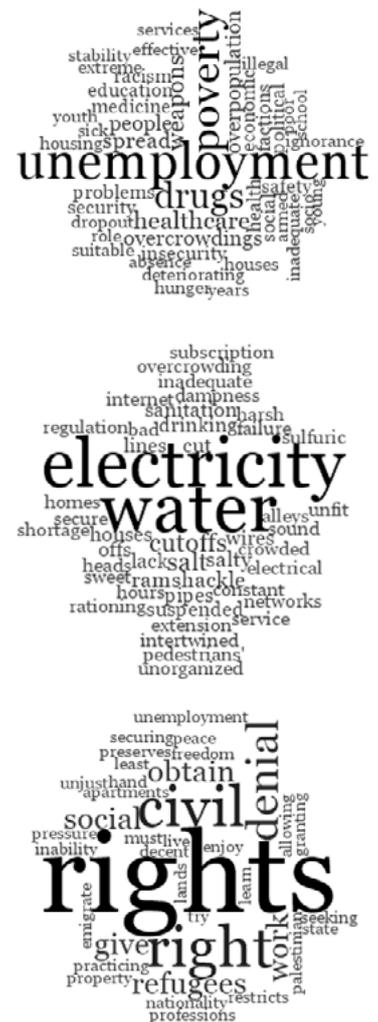
3. Lack of social and civil rights

What are the problems currently facing the refugee camps in Lebanon?

“The camp has all kinds of problems. The camp itself is a problem to live in and the most prominent problems have become a part of our daily life. We were forced to coexist with these problems such as the electricity cut-offs, bad infrastructure, escaping from weapons, drugs, salty water, unemployment and overpopulation, overcrowding and school dropouts under the age of 10.”

The participants were asked an open-ended question to reflect on the most prominent problems the refugees in the camps are suffering from. The thematic analysis of more than 50 responses revealed the following categories:

- **Socio-economic problems:** The most prominent socio-economic problems mentioned were related to **unemployment, safety, instability, poor health services, the spread of drugs and weapons²¹,** and poverty in general with **overcrowded houses** and **overpopulated camps.**
- **Infrastructure:** The most prominent infrastructure problems revolved around the issue of **unorganized electricity wires and water pipes.** This issue has been raised by multiple participants, pointing out the **death of more than 89 individuals** who were electrocuted due to the poor organization of the wires, often hanging exposed in the air. Other issues that were mentioned were **salty water, shortage and cut offs of water and electricity, and ramshackle houses.**
- **Denial of rights:** The third category of problems revolve around the issue of civil and social rights. The participants mentioned frequently their wish to obtain their basic rights, namely the **right to work and owning a property.** These findings are in line with our previous categories and the repeating pattern of **unemployment and inadequate housing.**



21 According to UNHCR (2016) “Palestinian factions, including Leftist groups, Islamist factions, or Fatah, have weaponry and militiamen at their disposal, and have their own security apparatus compete for influence within refugee camps and sometimes fight each other for control, and refugees might be may be caught in the cross-fire of factional disputes.”

Testimonies

“The camp suffers from a shortage of salty water, electricity and drinking water. Even the absence of sun in the houses due to overcrowding (50 000 people and more, in a geographical area equal to 1 square kilometer).”

“There is great suffering inside the camps, but the worst camps in Lebanon are Burj Al-Barajneh and Shatila. In our camps, you expect that if you leave your home, you might return dead.”

“The problems that the camp suffers from are many and multiple, there is weakness in all levels such as health and medicine, the economic and living conditions are deteriorating and the phenomenon of unemployment is widely spread inside the camp, in addition to poverty and hunger...”

“The infrastructure in the camps is unfit for living - we feel unsafe and insecure in the camps due to the spread of weapons from the political factions.”

“We lack basic human rights for a normal life.”

Exclusion era

In 2015, a large-scale socioeconomic survey, conducted by UNRWA and the American University of Beirut, indicated that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face one of the worst socioeconomic situations in the region - only second to the Gaza Strip²². This can be seen as a direct result of the **systematic discrimination and neglect that Palestinians in Lebanon** face, embedded in Lebanon’s **violation of international laws and conventions**.

Since 1951, Lebanon and other Arab hosting states have pushed to exclude Palestinian refugees from the 1951 Refugee Convention and have failed to introduce specific legal terms in compliance with their situation²³. Palestinian refugees in a state like Lebanon receive only assistance in the form of relief, but **no protection**. Until today, the **Palestinian refugees are considered stateless** and they remain without any civil, social or political rights. They fall into a “protection gap” with no systematic and adequate international protection that ensures that their fundamental rights are protected²⁴.

Although Lebanon is a signatory the **Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States**, known as the **Casablanca protocol 1965**²⁵ which state that:

“(1) Whilst retaining their Palestinian nationality, Palestinians currently residing in the land of have the right of employment on par with its citizens.

(2) Palestinians residing at the moment in in accordance with the dictates of their interests, have the right to leave and return to this state.

(3) Palestinians residing in other Arab states have the right to enter the land of and to depart from it, in accordance with their interests. Their right of entry only gives them the right to stay for the permitted period and for the purpose they entered for, so long as the authorities do not agree to the contrary.

22 “Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon 2015”, Report published by the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

23 Marginalised Community: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, Suleiman (2006)

24 Palestinian Refugees and Their Legal Status: Rights, Politics, and Implications for a Just Solution, Akram (2002).

25 League of Arab States, Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States (“Casablanca Protocol”), 11 September 1965

(4) Palestinians who are at the moment in, as well as those who were residing and left to the Diaspora, are given, upon request, valid travel documents. The concerned authorities must, wherever they be, issue these documents or renew them without delay.

(5) Bearers of these travel documents residing in LAS states receive the same treatment as all other LAS state citizens, regarding visa, and residency applications.”

Lebanon has ratified the Protocol on 3 August 1966, but has placed the following reservations:

Article 1: Palestinians residing at the moment in Lebanon are granted the right of employment, while keeping their Palestinian nationality and to the extent the social and economic conditions in Lebanon allow for this. Palestinians presently residing there are accorded the right to do business (work) and be employed as if they are nationals.

Article 2: that the phrase: “on equal terms with the Lebanese citizens and in accordance with the laws and regulations in operation” to be added.

Article 3: that the phrases “(whenever their interests demand it)” and “allowing Palestinians into Lebanon is conditional upon their obtaining an entry visa issued by the concerned Lebanese authorities” to be added.

No Reservations on the 4th and 5th Articles

Lebanon has not complied with any of the conventions after the departure of the PLO and the end of the Lebanese civil war. After the civil war, Palestinians came to be primarily blamed for igniting it, and they were excluded from all reconstruction and recovery plans that boomed afterwards²⁶. Even though the Lebanese government in the late 90s acknowledged that the refugee’s situation was atrocious, they considered the proclamation of fundamental Palestinian rights to be a threat to the principle behind the “right of return”. Indeed, the refugee’s unstable status in Lebanon allows the Lebanese government to avoid taking accountability for their welfare:

“Lebanon will never, ever integrate Palestinians. They will not receive civic or economic rights or even work permits. Integration would take the Palestinians off the shoulder of the international agency [UNRWA] that has supported them since 1948.”²⁷
(Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, 1998)

The late 90s marked an era of strict measures that deprived the Palestinians in Lebanon from all civil and social rights. For decades, the Lebanese government has used the argument of the **“right of return”** to justify their various discriminatory laws. Until today, they reject all plans concerning their settlement in Lebanon, and **they oppose any permanent or temporary integration solutions.**²⁸

Right to work

Palestinian refugees’ employment was restricted due to Ministerial Decree 17561/64 that organized the participation of ‘foreigners’ in the labor market. The Decree included three rules: 1. The requirement to obtain a work permit prior to employment, 2. The national preference, and 3. The principle of reciprocity of treatment in Lebanon.

Lebanese legislation fails in giving Palestinian refugees a special legal status and distinguishing them from other foreigners in the country. In 2010, the Lebanese Parliament amended under Law 129, Article 59 of the Labor

²⁶ The Law, the Loss and the Lives of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, Knudsen (2007)

²⁷ Palestinian refugees: Mythology, identity, and the search for peace. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Bowker (2003)

²⁸ US Committee for Refugees (USCR) (1999) Trapped on All Sides: The Marginalization of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon. Washington DC: Immigration and Refugee Service of America.

Law, an exception from the reciprocity of treatment condition and work permit fees for Palestinian refugees. However, the amendments did not lift the ban on the syndicated professions. The syndicated (20 Syndicates) professions such as law, engineering and medicine specify that the principle of reciprocity is fulfilled *“a condition impossible to meet for Palestinians given the inexistence of a Palestinian State in the legal sense”*²⁹.

Even though **2010 signaled a positive step towards integrating Palestinian refugees** in the labor market, the amended law did not follow specific implementation criteria and follow up. For example, in 2019 the minister of labor, Kamil Abo Suleiman, started a campaign to organize “foreign labor” where he included the Palestinian workforce as “foreigners” and **did not adhere to the amended law approved by the Parliament in 2010**. Consequently, this decision provoked widespread protests among Palestinian refugees in the camps.

Today, **more than 39 professions within healthcare, transport and fishing, the public sector and law, engineering, services and daycare remain prohibited for the refugees**. The Palestinian labor force consists of 90 000 people where half of them are highly dependent on employment within UNRWA or other Palestinian organizations³⁰, in addition to informal low wage jobs in shops and enterprises within refugee camps, and support from relatives living abroad. The other half work for Lebanese employers. Bearing this in mind, it is clear that the Palestinian labor force is not a threat to the Lebanese labor force market, and that the concern of competing with the Lebanese for jobs is unfounded.

Considering Palestinians as a burden on the Lebanese economy is a narrative that is used by Lebanese political parties to deprive refugees of the right to work. It is important to note that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are direct contributors to the Lebanese GDP - they earn, save and spend in Lebanon, unlike foreign workers who send most of their earnings to their home country. In fact, **Palestinian refugees receive around 60 million USD a year from relatives living abroad**, which can be perceived as a direct and positive contributor to the Lebanese economy³¹. The Palestinian human capital has always been an essential part of the Lebanese economy, and various successful Palestinian businesses have contributed to the increase of employment of both Lebanese and Palestinians. **Integrating the Palestinian refugees to the Lebanese labor market** will only bring positive contributions, especially in a time of a widespread economic crisis.

Right to Adequate Housing

“The sun cannot access our houses due to overcrowding, there are more than 50 000 people living in a geographical area of 1 km square.”

*“Due to the high humidity and the lack of sunlight, most camp houses are ramshackle. Some of these houses already collapsed over their inhabitants. The camp’s soil has not been suitable for construction since the beginning of the camp’s establishment in 1948.”*³²

Most of the Palestinian refugee camps are built on the same land area since 1948, despite the increase in refugees from 1948 until today.³³ Since the late



29 See PALESTINIAN EMPLOYMENT IN LEBANON FACTS AND CHALLENGES Labour force survey among Palestinian refugees living in camps and gatherings In Lebanon by ILO and CEP (2012)

30 Most men (and women) are engaged in unskilled temporary work for which they are paid lower wages than Lebanese workers with similar educational qualifications” Marwan Khawaja, pers. com., 16 March 2007.

31 ILO policy brief

32 Image of a Ramshackle house - Nov 28 - Burj Barajneh camp

33 Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Amnesty (2007).

1990's, the Lebanese authorities have forbidden the construction and expansion of new camps, as well as renovation and reconstruction of existing camps - all this to prevent the consolidation of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.³⁴ Such restrictions³⁵ stand as an **obstacle in fulfilling the right to an adequate housing**, and forces the Palestinians to live in overcrowded ramshackle households.

In conclusion, these rights are inseparable and the denial of the right to work, housing and education is in fact a denial of the right to live in dignity. The discriminatory laws stand as a catalyst leading **to extreme poverty, poor infrastructure and other societal problems** (drugs, weapons, violence, school dropouts). Even when humanitarian assistance is made to combat the consequences, they fall short of finding an adequate long-term solution.

4. Permanent aid is ambiguous

How do Palestinians in Lebanon assess the work of NGO's?

Based on Wessels (2009) do no harm guidelines³⁶, participants have been asked 19 questions focusing on the following issues: **aid as a weapon, raised expectations, coordination, deficit and resilience, adding to that, transparency and trust, and prevention**. Before answering the questions, the participants were asked if they took part in any activity (psycho-social) done by a NGO before. We find that 53% of the participants have not taken part in any activity done before by NGOs, because they did not find it useful (63%). However, most of the participants have benefited from other services such as education (24%), health (17%), cash assistance (18%) and psycho-social support activities (30%). At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to specify to which NGO their assessment belongs, and the majority were assessing both Palestinian NGOs and International NGOs.

“There is not yet an association that is not directed in the interest of a particular party, nor is there an association whose aim is to improve the prevailing conditions. There are associations with paid agendas, and they want to polish their image and gain what they can in terms of financial and political returns.”

In our survey, the participant's **relationship with NGOs were characterized by mistrust and negative attributions** such as corruption, clientelism and short-term solutions. The answers we received reveal mistrust in the work of the NGOs and state that they have political agendas:

“They collect data and research to investigate and secure funding for projects that benefit their groups and those who support them, and they spend it on people who are loyal to them and save the rest of the money to achieve political goals for themselves”.

“They come under the name of humanity and we do not know what their goals and purposes are, they start with a project and don't complete it... they take lists of names and some photos, and we no longer see their faces.”

The issue of clientelism and corruption has repeatedly been raised by the participants. They mention that *“Organizations usually provide aid according to favors and employ incompetent employees most of the time because of favors”* and that *“Aid comes tremendously to the Palestinian refugee people, and they only get so little from it. Even the jobs, they usually recruit those they know for favors. Finally, the Palestinian people only*

34 Third periodic reports of States parties due in 2003 (CRC): Lebanon. UN Doc. CRC/C/129/Add.7, 25 October 2005, para 474

35 Palestinians are also forbidden the right to own property, since the law prohibits those who are not holding a nationality from a recognized state the right to ownership.

36 Do no harm: toward contextually appropriate psychosocial support in international emergencies.

get 5% of the aid, and the rest are misused.” Moreover, 57% of the participants agree that the aid might have been used as a political tool to increase the power of some groups over others.

The participants expressed the **need for a long-term developmental rather than humanitarian solutions**, including the establishment of their civil and social rights - mainly the right to work. In addition to that, participants stressed the importance of aid reaching the people directly, supporting grassroots initiatives *“meeting the needs of the people”* and *“not having it imposed by an already funded program”*. 64% of the participants agreed that the coordination between NGOs, the government and civil society actors is poor and based on a short-term vision characterized by inadequate interventions, distribution of aid and a non-holistic approach.

However, **71% find themselves dependent on NGOs** although they believe that most of the time their needs are not met due to the temporary-solutions that are offered.

These findings come as no surprise when looking at how the situation has been evolving over the years. For example, in 2007 UNRWA stated the following:

“Today, all 12 official refugee camps in [Lebanon] suffer from serious problems – no proper infrastructure, overcrowding, poverty and unemployment. [Lebanon] has the highest percentage of Palestine refugees who are living in abject poverty and who are registered with the Agency’s ‘special hardship’ programme.”

(UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 2007)

This statement can indeed be applied to the current situation in the refugee camps since it describes what the participants of our survey have pointed out. This can be explained by various interrelated factors that limit the fulfillment of a developmental approach. An approach that was only fulfilled during the PLO’s presence in Lebanon, in which Palestinian refugees enjoyed tremendous financial support. **The PLO was then perceived as a transparent and unified authority, and enjoyed political support from various Lebanese parties**, until they were called a state within a state, with a budget that may have been larger than the Lebanese state itself.³⁷

During that period, the PLO controlled everything in the camps, including water, sanitation and electricity. It funded income-generating projects and **invested in schools, hospitals and factories**.

“The dwindling support from UNRWA and the disagreement over the PLO’s endorsement of the Oslo Accords hit the refugee community hard; it increased social problems in the camps and led to factional conflict and infighting.”³⁸

(Are Knudsen 2007)

Since the departure of the PLO, the factors that made up a perfect recipe for a sustainable, dignified life have changed and have been replaced by the following factors that stand as a barrier: **UNRWA budget deficit, NGOs lack of transparency and the exclusion laws in Lebanon**. This shows a need for the PLO and PA to return to the scene and play a more substantial role in improving the lives of Palestinian refugees.

UNRWA’s deficit

Since 1994, UNRWA’s quality and scope of services have been widely affected by budget shortages due to many political and apolitical reasons. UNRWA’s deficit went from 81 million dollars to 360 million dollars be-

37 Palestinians and Lebanon: The Common Story, Hudson (1997)

38 <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/2607-the-law-the-loss-and-the-lives-of-palestinian.pdf>

tween 2016 and 2020. Since then, Palestinian refugees have been following up regularly on UNRWA's statements and fiscal deficit with a lot of concern. Indeed, this deficit comes with dangerous implications on the refugee's lives, employment, or services they depend on. This year, the impact of UNRWA's budget deficit on Palestinian refugees was further compounded by the COVID-19 lockdowns and **the economic crisis** that hit the country. In an interview with *L'orient today*³⁹, UNRWA's director in Lebanon, Claudio Cordone said *"It is the first time that we have actually run out of money, UNRWA is not able to pay the staff salaries, and had to shut down the Learning support program which benefited 6000 children and 220 teachers."*

These cuts led to many protests and the closure of various UNRWA schools, offices, and facilities in Lebanon as a response to the deficit. In the same interview, UNRWA's director said *"Before, we always lived on the brink — it has always been, 'We've got a month, we've got two months to go,' and then some more donations come in."* It is clear that with a budget based on donations and uncertainty, UNRWA is incapable of meeting the needs of the Palestinian refugees on its own. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon depend heavily on UNRWA's services and other NGOs. However, **UNRWA remains the most significant provider**, explaining the participants' disappointment in not having their needs fulfilled by the NGOs they rely on.

Within the absence of any solution to the Palestine refugee problem, **UNRWA is expected to keep operating until June of 2023 with another possibility of extension.**

Transparency

With various organizations proclaiming to work to ensure that the fundamental needs of Palestinians are met, there is a question about whether the millions of dollars these organizations receive are being spent in the right place and fully reach their intended recipients. Palestinians believe that this money is not fulfilling any of its intended plans. **More than 70% of the participants called for more transparency in terms of budget spending** and recruitment procedure in our survey.

"When the money reaches the political factions or associations, it is gone. I mean, the largest evidence is the infrastructure project that was funded by the European Union in 2014, the money was stolen, and everyone knows what happened."

This issue has previously been raised to the European Commission by a member at the European Parliament in 2015⁴⁰ who inquired about the efficacy of such funds in terms of fulfilling their goal, in particular, in regards to the following project 'Remediation and Upgrading of Camp Water supply Networks in seven Palestinian Camps (USD 2.55 million)':

"...The failed water project should be explained, and the actions responsible for its poor implementation should be investigated. At the camp, the 'remains' of the water system are regarded as signs of the corruption of EU and UN officials and local operators. The impunity enjoyed by those responsible is undermining confidence in all EU cooperation and is increasing the feeling of desperation among the Palestinian population."

With the latter emphasizing the following with their response:

"...Improving a camp's water infrastructure system and ensuring that its components are increasingly integrated requires strong donor coordination for the different interlinked projects."

39 Palestinian children are facing uncertain education prospects as UNRWA's funding runs dry. Sewel (2020), *L'orient Le Jour*.

40 Merja Kyllönen (GUE/NGL), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2015-014412_EN.html

Coordination is always vital. However, the presence of various organizations and donors who lack coordination amongst themselves or an oversight entity often leads to a **lack of transparency, accountability and follow up**. Having a unified network of organizations with constant follow-up and building upon each other's work is a key element for long-term improvement and would ensure that the Palestinians are aware of the work and the entity responsible for what, when and how.

It is also important to note that this section's criticism of the work of NGOs and International Organizations in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon does not aim to discredit humanitarian and relief aid per se. To the contrary, such aid, despite its faults and shortcomings, is indispensable to the survival of Palestinian refugees given their worsening living conditions. This should instead be seen as a call for more constructive engagements that genuinely alleviate suffering rather than contain it.

The NGO structure also falls victim to financial deficits and political divisions. Most of the time, they are working in severe and harsh conditions to ensure that the situation improves. However, without proper analysis and critique, leading to durable reforms, they risk becoming perpetrators by upholding the status quo that leads to the inadequate conditions that they are supposed to treat.

Lebanese exclusivist law

The sustainability of international relief entails local organizations' capacity building, particularly for those working with their community members – the most vulnerable. In the case of Lebanon, it would be the Palestinian NGOs. However, Lebanese law⁴¹ prohibits Palestinian NGOs' operation. They must be registered as a Lebanese NGO, serving both Lebanese and Palestinians people, as well as have a Lebanese majority of employees. This contradicts the concept of a developmental approach that leaves people self-reliant and capable of serving their community.

Even though NGOs have been operating widely in the refugee camps, building on local civil society's capacity and supporting grassroots initiatives have not been adequately prioritized as stated by the participants. The Lebanese law and the incoherent non-holistic work of NGOs to combat these exclusivist policies made those durable solutions and sustainability more pronounced among the Palestinian refugee community.

5. Integrate or migrate

An overwhelming majority of Palestinians want to leave

To assess the participants' willingness to migrate, six closed questions and one open-ended question were asked

Most participants are planning to migrate in the next one or two years (81%), and most of them choose Europe as their destination. The majority's intention to migrate is not backed up by any preparative measures to emigrate (62%). However, more than 42% of the participants spend more than 2 hours on average per day looking for a migration option, which shows their persistence in finding ways to migrate. Results also show that this intention to migrate is also shared among friends and family. We find that 39% of the participant's friends and family often wish to migrate, adding another 57% that always talk about the same wish. Our results show that these intentions and desires are often transferred into real actions; **more than 94% of the participants know more than two people that have emigrated within the past year.**

In the open-ended question, people talked about two main topics, the reasons behind their wish to migrate, and expressing with their own words their wish to migrate:

41 US Committee for Refugees (USCR) (1999) Trapped on All Sides: The Marginalization of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon. Washington DC: Immigration and Refugee Service of America.

“We hope that a neutral press would come one day and ask people about their opinion on migration. Certainly, 90% want to leave these difficult circumstances. The biggest evidence is that when the Canadian embassy asked refugees to submit a request to study their case, most of the political factions asked their members not to submit requests, or they would be dismissed from the faction. We went and held a sit-in in front of the Canadian embassy several times.”

Participants also mentioned the danger of illegal migration and how expensive it is to pay for smugglers and seek illegal ways. They mentioned that **only young people are willing to take risks**; family and elders would be waiting for legal ways to immigrate. The reasons behind people’s wish to migrate revolves around the denial and deprivation of their social and civil rights in Lebanon, poverty, and the uncertain future. These results are also in line with our previous findings.

“When you cannot live with dignity and secure your basic needs, you think of immigration.”

“At all times, I am looking for a way to emigrate to secure a healthy life for my children. I have traveled to Europe and experienced their way of life. They live with psychological comfort, protection, and a healthy life. Education is an obligation there, and it is the solution. Lebanon is a country in which there is more racism than the occupation itself. As a Palestinian living in Lebanon, I see that it is better to live under the occupation in Palestine than to live here in Lebanon.”

“The suffering that we live in the camps of misery and deprivation is what drives us to think of immigration. We see our children deprived of everything - from their childhood to their future. There is no future in this country for Palestinian refugees at all.”

“I hear about countries that respect human beings, such as Canada and others. I seek to search for a better life to build the future of my children in a country that respects people and does not deprive them of their human, civil and social rights. A country where their biggest dream is not about securing these rights. I do not want my children to live what I lived; in the death camps. No one can blame me for my wish to migrate. Immigration is my right and living in dignity is my right because I am a human being, and I deserve to live on this earth.”

These findings are seldom reported, in part because such open-ended questions are rarely asked to Palestinians living in Lebanon. The **questions related to resettlement and integration are considered to be sensitive as they contravene the right of return**. Looking at the last statement from a Palestinian faction leader’s visit to Lebanon, we can see the contradiction.

“Our Palestinian people who live in Lebanon are guests here and reject any form of settlement or displacement,” Haniyeh said, stressing that ***“camps will always be a symbol of stability.”***⁴²

As an illegitimate representative of the Palestinian refugees, Haniyeh decided with his fellow Lebanese counterparts that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon reject any form of settlement or displacement. Neither Haniyeh nor the Palestinian factions that met in Lebanon tackled any critical topics related to the denial of social or civil rights, nor visited the camps or listened to the people’s demands. This highlights our earlier argument regarding the **growing disconnect between the leadership and general populace**, and the increasing invisibility Palestinians – especially in the diaspora – to their leaders.

42 <https://thearabweekly.com/haniyeh-lebanon-keep-palestinian-factions-away-local-tensions>

However, in our survey, the participants were asked about the UNHCR durable solutions (integration, resettlement, repatriation, or no change to the current situation - marginalization). They answered four closed questions that corresponded to statements implying marginalization, integration, resettlement, or repatriation. The participants were also given one open-ended question where could express, in their own words; how the situation of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon's camps could be improved.

A majority of participants strongly disagree with the premise that Palestinians should stay in the camps until the right of return is established, which is currently the case in Lebanon. Maintaining the camps is the option most advocated for by the Palestinian factions, whether it is the PLO or Hamas.

Instead, a majority of participants (92%) agree that integration or, in other words, giving the Palestinians access to their civil and social rights is one of the first durable solutions that should be addressed. However, In Lebanon the enjoyment of basic human rights comes only at the expense of naturalization and the abolishment of the right of return. Unlike western countries, the establishment of social and civil rights comes from acquiring nationality, and not permanent residency. A narrative that has been polarized and used against Palestinians. Being treated as foreigners, or a special group of foreigners, thus denying them even from those rights granted to foreigners, Lebanese citizens, and refugees according to international conventions.

Resettlement and repatriation come next on the list of durable solutions, with 76% agreeing that it is a durable solution and with 68% for the repatriation solution, which is far from being reached currently.

The open-ended question also explored two main topics in line with our results above:

Resettlement

Only 25% of the participants mentioned resettlement as a durable solution in the open-ended question. The participants repeatedly mentioned the reason behind this decision being poverty, discrimination, and their right to be respected and treated with dignity, which they do not experience in Lebanon.

“I never see a glimmer of hope in Lebanon for Palestinian refugees. Lebanon is a weak country in all respects. How could it be a strong host country towards the refugees living in it? The Palestinian's best solution is to be resettled to a third country until their return to Palestine. These camps get worse and more dangerous for their residents with every year passing. How will our children build their future in overpopulated camps? Therefore, I prefer emigrating to Canada or any other country to see my children and grandchildren living a better life than ours. A better future. We lived a life of misery, poverty, deprivation, and oppression, and our children lived a large part of this life with us, so I do not want them to have a dark future like ours.”

“Lebanon is a country that has suffered from economic, political, social, and psychological crises over the years. Even Lebanese people themselves suffer from these crises, so what do you expect from the refugees? The best solution is for the Lebanese state to allow us to live outside its territory and this large prison (camps of misery and deprivation) so that the pressure on this country is relieved and we could finally live in dignity.”

Integration

The rest of the participants (75%) tackled the denial of social and civil rights, mainly the right to work. The participants repeatedly mentioned the importance of creating sustainable job opportunities and accessing the job market as durable solutions.

“Give them the rights that are taken from them, especially the right to work and own property - Stop treating them with hatred and racism.”

“Provide jobs and work for youth and graduates, give Palestinians the right to own property and allow them to work in all Lebanese institutions.”

“By listening to the demand and the priorities of the Palestinians in the camp, by working to fulfil them- give them their civil and political rights in Lebanon.”

6. Conclusion

International level advocacy

What has been done and what is there to be done?

These are questions that deserve considerable attention and space. While this section briefly focuses on the international level, any discussion should center Palestinian refugees’ views, demands, and agency. In line with the research findings in this report, **there is an urgent need to go beyond treating Palestinian refugees as a humanitarian issue that can be solved with tentative foreign funding and short-term solutions.** Instead, the focus should be placed on considering refugees’ political demands, whether they seek a better life in another country, full rights in Lebanon, or return to Palestine. Dealing with the issue of Palestinian refugees is frequently delayed as something that can be addressed after the ‘Israeli-Palestinian conflict’ has ended. Yet refugees’ rights ought instead to be the starting point for a reorganization of relations based on justice and equality and put an end to occupation and oppression.

The main recommendation this section makes is to *listen* to the demands of Palestinian refugees as rights bearers and not as passive recipients of humanitarian assistance. In fact, a central issue may be that in the global centers of power there is little attention to the claims of Palestinian refugees. This is largely a result of the **lack of political representation.** Yet it is also about a lack of recognition of refugees’ history, which is one of the most protracted forced displacements from their homeland to make way for the creation of the Israeli state in 1948. In this regard, the continued Israeli refusal to fulfill UN Resolution 194 – that stipulated the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes or be compensated if they choose resettlement – is ideological: it is not based on legitimate security concerns, but that of a sole focus to maintain a Jewish majority within Israel’s state. **Palestinian refugees are not ‘a problem’ nor a ‘threat’, as they are often described.** They are a population that has suffered an unjust situation for over seventy years and deserve to be treated humanely. Not only should they be treated based on principles of equality, but they have legitimate claims to reparations and restitution for their ongoing dispossession.⁴³

It is through grassroots political mobilization that Palestinian refugees make their demands visible and tangible not only to their oppressors but also to a global audience. Historically refugees have often used petitions to claim their rights in international institutions⁴⁴. Meanwhile, in the 1950s and 1960s, the ‘Palestinian revolution’ was launched by refugees exiled from their country.⁴⁵ The anti-colonial mobilization centered around two key demands: return to Palestine; and liberation from an oppressive system. In this period, Palestinian refugees also expressed their rejection of any attempt to resettle them in their exile host countries permanently.⁴⁶ The

43 <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Hilal-Palestine.pdf>

44 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20581831.2020.1815408>

45 <http://learnpalestine.politics.ox.ac.uk/learn/part/6>

46 <http://learnpalestine.politics.ox.ac.uk/learn/part/4>

2018 Great March of Return in the besieged Gaza Strip is a recent case of refugee grassroots mobilization that succeeded in reigniting discussions on the question of the refugees' return. Israel violently repressed these peaceful protests, and two years since they began, the UN reported that the Israeli military injured over 36,000 Palestinians.⁴⁷ It is important to remember that Gaza Great March of Return was also inspired by the earlier March of Returns organized in 2011, in which Palestinian refugees from Lebanon and Syria took part, and some even managed to cross into Israel.⁴⁸

In 1993, Edward Said argued that the Palestinian leadership's signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords was disastrous for Palestinians, since it 'set aside numerous other UN resolutions ...that, since 1948, have given Palestinians refugee rights, including either compensation or repatriation.'⁴⁹ **The Oslo Accords' set-back allowed Israel to expand its colonial settlements in the West Bank and further marginalized Palestinian refugees from the political arena.** Given the resulting lack of political representation for Palestinian refugees, there have been some limited efforts by some civil society organizations trying to fill the void. At the UN Human Rights Council, there is some limited opportunity to foster international condemnation through passing resolutions, establishing a Commission of Inquiry on multiple occasions, and recently creating a database listing business companies complicit and profiting from Israel's settlement project in the West Bank.⁵⁰ However, UN bodies such as the Human Rights Council tend to confine their line of work to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, thus **ignoring the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.**

As the report's findings suggest, there is a lack of representation for refugees' political demands, which UNRWA does not seem capable of addressing on its own. UNRWA remains a crucial institution that supports Palestinian refugees. Yet, support for UNRWA does not necessarily provide refugees the emancipation they seek. Therefore, it is not enough for international governments to fund UNRWA – however vital that remains after the US withdrawal of funding to the agency - as their only policy towards Palestinian refugees. As the report clarifies, giving aid or funding international organizations is not a form of solidarity but can be used as a 'weapon.' Solidarity entails standing with and listening to the demands of an oppressed group.

Recommendations

To the Lebanese Authority

We re-emphasize the International Federation for Human Rights 2003 call that came after their investigative international mission and report entitled: *Palestinian refugees: systematic discrimination and complete lack of interest on the part of the international community.*

- Strive by all means to ensure the respect of the Palestinian refugees' rights in Lebanon.
- Put an end to any measure limiting the Palestinian refugees' access to work and prohibition from occupying of certain jobs, especially the medical, legal or academic professions.
- Proceed with a revision of the law on property in Lebanon, in order to grant Palestinian refugees the right to acquire real estate.
- Terminate the measures precluding the Palestinian refugees from receiving social security benefits.
- Recognize the legal existence of Palestinian nongovernmental organizations in Lebanon.

47 <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/two-years-on-people-injured-and-traumatized-during-the-great-march-of-return-are-still-struggling/>

48 <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2018/3/2/palestinian-refugees-pledge-to-return-home-with-non-violent-marches>

49 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v15/n20/edward-said/the-morning-after>

50 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057451>

To the Palestinian Authority

- With a view to the upcoming elections, the PA and PLO should tackle the issue of representation among those in the diaspora, knowing that they do not engage in any voting procedure. Emphasis here are placed on the PLO's Palestinian National Council (PNC) – as the legislative entity that includes representatives of the diaspora. Holding PNC elections with the participation of diaspora Palestinians and ensuring that the PNC is given its natural place in the leading of the Palestinian struggle is a gateway to restoring electoral accountability and making diaspora Palestinians visible to Palestinian decision makers.
- Engage in negotiation efforts with the Lebanese counterpart to ensure the social and civil rights of the Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon are achieved.
- Increase budget allocation for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in accordance with their growing needs and aspirations.

To the EU

- Revisit the 2003 European parliament resolution that urged the Lebanese authorities to end discrimination⁵¹.
- Ensure that the Palestinian refugees social and civil rights establishment becomes a priority in the upcoming ENEP agreement with Lebanon.⁵²
- Readdress the issue of social and civil rights that have been in a blind spot since 2012.⁵³

51 The European Parliament expressed-in a resolution about the conclusion of an agreement with the Lebanese Republic on January 16, 2003- "serious concern about the difficult situation of 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon". The Parliament invited the "Lebanese authorities to ratify the Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees, and to end the discriminations against the Palestinian refugees and asylum applicants, and to protect the persons threatened by expulsion and to facilitate the integration of those who wish for it"

52 The EU-Lebanon partnership priorities; The agreement was set for the period of 2016-2020 with the aim of supporting and strengthening Lebanon's resilience and stability while seeking to address the impact of the protracted conflict in Syria

53 Last MEP questions to the commission asking about the lack of social and civil rights of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon was in 2012;

