



Inga Schei    Lokman Slim

# Five Years of Syrian Asylum in Lebanon



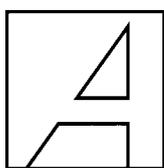
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Pictures featured on the cover of this booklet were taken by Rasha el-Ameen during Hayya Bina's field visits to Syrian settlements around the country.



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To facilitate sharing the documentation associated with the Syrian refugee issue in Lebanon, the KAS-funded program *Keeping Pace with Lebanon's Challenging Syrian Refugee Issues* included a documentation element. The Arabic language documentation material may be accessed via the UMAM Documentation and Research online database Memory At Work ([www.memoryatwork.org](http://www.memoryatwork.org)) in the section titled *muwatinoon ma' wakf at-tanfiz*. Preliminary research for this report was done by Joseph Norman, and the English text editing was done by John McLean.

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## Lebanon's Founding Myth Tested Once Again

One of Lebanon's "founding myths" is that as an "entity," the country is the default destination for members of various oppressed groups seeking shelter. At the same time, however, those words convey a message that some Lebanese prefer not to hear; specifically, that citizens of the country —*the Lebanese people*— are themselves little more than a collection of refugees and asylum seekers. Regardless of the veracity of the narratives that spawned this myth, the message it conveys is always present in the Lebanese consciousness. And while it has been mute at times, its presence has been expressed vehemently at other times.

Another Lebanese myth—one the various groups in Lebanon have inherited from each other over time—is that the principal (almost sole) source of danger to the country's existence, whether in terms of the state, the cause or Lebanon per se, is the arrival of newcomers seeking work or refuge. That perception of danger increases when these new arrivals

are perceived as viable competitors to other Lebanese groups and when they seem likely to build a separate mansion (physical or virtual) for themselves within the larger Lebanese house. From the extant Lebanese perspective, that tendency toward separation is almost certainly being achieved at the expense of other Lebanese and other mansions within their house.<sup>1</sup> Characteristically, this myth typically ignores the reasons these newcomers flock to Lebanon and gives them false hope regarding their capacity to determine their own fate.

This Lebanese reaction does not result from a genetic predisposition. Instead, it stems from a litany of complex factors that culminated in the mid-1970s and were (at least in part) responsible for the "civil war." As an aside, it is interesting to note that in the early stages of that war, the fight was not one between Lebanese. Rather, it involved Palestinian fighters backed by Lebanese supporters who were intent on engaging other Lebanese!

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<sup>1</sup> An obvious reference to Kamal Salibi's history of Lebanon titled: "A House of Many Mansions."

Several decades after the civil war, the calamity that has all but decimated Syria has driven a million or more people to abandon their homes and a million or more to seek refuge in Lebanon. Similar to the Palestinian refugee issue that shaped decades of Lebanon's history, this new refugee crisis is quickly influencing Lebanon's political, demographic and social landscape. Similar to other conflicts raging in the region, we might also assert that the issue is likely to worsen before it improves. That dismal outlook relates in part to the mounting confessional and sectarian tensions from which Lebanon (different from its regional neighbors) has suffered since the country was conceived.

In Lebanon, the citizens of which are still searching for national cohesion, the refugee experience is certainly not incidental. Rather, the very identity of the Lebanese makes their soul-searching a fundamental process. But where will Lebanon's ongoing, refugee-inspired trauma lead the country from a conceptual perspective? Unfortunately, not as far as the reflection effort, which introduces the existential dilemma associated with approaching things from both a realistic, and periodically, a leisurely *idealistic* perspective. But that effort can also get complicated when those who preach the *realistic* approach that prioritizes the need for an "urgent response" to the ongoing refugee issue (which typically evolves into a discrete bureaucratic system) seem reluctant to address the roots of the refugee problem.

This brief overview of "Lebanese myths" may seem tangential when the discussion is intended to center on the issue of Syrian refugees. After all, the Lebanese—and others worldwide—still prefer to consider that issue as a crisis to be managed, a problem to be solved. In reality, however, quantitative and political factors have already proven that the issue of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is a massive *ordeal*, a tremendous hardship that affects the balance of the intra-Lebanese community as much, if not more than it affects the million or so Syrians who have been forced to quit their country and seek refuge in Lebanon and elsewhere. Now that this exceptionally challenging issue is into its fifth year, the number of Syrian refugees has already reached (if not surpassed) a level disproportionate to Lebanon's size and demographic makeup. Moreover, the presence of this new refugee population will likely persist for an indeterminate period. In addition to those factors, and considering Lebanon's increasingly tenuous circumstances (which encompasses and is affected by a host of variables, predictable and otherwise), we believe the time has come to revisit these myths. But that action must be undertaken with confidence and a sense of urgency for two reasons:

- 1) the origins of these myths are typically questioned only in times of emergency and
- 2) the Lebanese must acknowledge that these myths play a significant role in shaping the State's response to the Syrian refugee issue.

To be sure, conducting this detailed assessment was anything but enjoyable. Nevertheless, Lebanon has already fought a philosophical battle that pitted State (and later, non-state) actors against a swelling and enduring Palestinian refugee population. Importantly, the characteristics of that conflict, which included a predilection for security oriented rather than politically motivated solutions, are once again present in Lebanon. As was the case during the first battle, that same propensity is apparently impeding the formulation and implementation of effective “public policies” that could help Lebanon manage the hardship being imposed on it by this newest flood of refugees.



In the wake of earlier projects that focused on citizen engagement, Hayya Bina, in partnership with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), launched a program in late 2014 known as “Citizens on Hold – The Syrian Refugee Issue vs. Lebanese Concerns.” As evidenced by that title, the program sought to address the Syrian refugee issue first from the Lebanese perspective and then from the Syrian angle. By adopting that approach, the program does not regard the matter simply as a problem that spans humanitarian considerations, relief efforts, security concerns, etc. Instead, it is viewed as a complex hardship that involves Lebanon, the Lebanese and the Syrian refugees.

From a programmatic standpoint, the *Citizens on Hold* endeavor involved coordinating a series of

focus groups held in three different Lebanese regions (south, north and east) that were attended by Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees. During those conferences, refugees considered the most representative were asked to provide narratives on their daily life to include the challenges they face, their relationship with the Lebanese in their respective areas of temporary domicile, their expectations and other considerations, both subjective and objective. The meetings also provided some basic training in communication and advocacy. In parallel with those meetings, a series of encounters was held in which Lebanese citizens involved in public matters engaged in open discussions about the Syrian refugee issue. Those talks exceeded both the boundaries imposed by repetitive and routine media reports and the political sympathies or affiliations that prompt such individuals to advocate their respective positions. The aim of the meetings was to initiate a citizen debate over “smart” (and undeveloped) public policies that offer the potential to

- (a) contain the negative aspects associated with the “status” of being a Syrian refugee
- (b) help preserve the refugees’ sense of citizenship
- (c) lay the groundwork necessary to revise Lebanese-Syrian relations and
- (d) help the Lebanese reconsider the enduring issue of Palestinian refugees

While the finite number of meetings

held clearly fell short of addressing all of the topics mentioned above, we believe strongly that they were opportunities for those involved (Lebanese and Syrians alike) to contemplate the Syrian refugee "issue" from a new and enlightened perspective. Hayya Bina prepared this draft in an effort to enrich the debate, attract greater involvement and contribute further to initiating the sorely needed and frequently postponed inter-Lebanese debate on this vital matter.

Beyond those meetings and the suggestions they yielded, our "Citizens on Hold" project also included a final conference. That event not only attracted a variety of stakeholders, but it also included the production of a short documentary that addresses the experiences expressed firsthand by the Syrian refugees who attended those meetings.

In autumn 2015, Hayya Bina once again partnered with KAS in order to follow up on, and utilize the knowledge gained in the initial project. This second version of Citizens on Hold (titled "Keeping Pace with Lebanon's Challenging Syrian Refugee Issues") also included several focus groups with Syrian refugees. The purpose of these engagements was to obtain firsthand accounts of the conditions they were experiencing and assess the effects of Lebanese policy. Overall, six of those encounters were held in three regional areas (north, south and the Bekaa). The concluding activity of this second

version was a capstone conference titled "From Denial to De Facto Admission – Lebanon's Syrian Refugee Crisis as a Political Issue."

One of the most important outcomes of the first edition was the understanding that informed discussion of the refugee issue demands the availability of evidentiary documentation related to the issue. Moreover, archives tailored specifically to address that need should be readily available to debate participants. This understanding is particularly important since the refugee crisis is unlikely to be resolved in the near future, and because the impact that crisis continues to exert on intra-Lebanese relations cannot be arbitrarily resolved once the crisis ends.

Accordingly, Hayya Bina added an important section to its Memory At Work database.<sup>2</sup> This new area, "Keeping Pace with Lebanon's Challenging Syrian Refugee Issues – Documentation on the Refugee Issue in Lebanon," is not intended as an exhaustive and authoritative resource. Nevertheless, its content benefits from the same types of updates and enhancements given frequently to other sections of the database. Reflective of the practical goal of this documentation effort (encouraging informed discussion of the Syrian refugee issue in Lebanon), this document seeks to summarize the primary stages of Syrians seeking asylum in Lebanon from 2011 to 2015.

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<sup>2</sup> Available online at [www.memoryatwork.org](http://www.memoryatwork.org).

## **Lebanon's Syrian Refugee Crisis 2011-2015 From Denial to De Facto Admission**

In the everyday vernacular of the Lebanese media, its politicians and even ordinary citizens, the Syrians who have sought refuge in Lebanon (legally or otherwise) are referred to collectively as “refugees.” As 2015 began, Lebanese authorities not only began enforcing measures intended to restrict the influx of Syrian nationals, but they also redefined the requirements that govern Syrians seeking residency in the country. These actions prompted some Lebanese to view the Syrians seeking shelter in Lebanon as something other than refugees. In fact, despite unrelenting reference to the issue in the media, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other refugee-oriented international organizations, many of the Syrians who now call Lebanon their “home away from home” are at best “de facto refugees!”

Of course, this important issue is not one that should be viewed according to the choice of words used to describe it or the denominations involved. Rather, the issue boils down to effective policies (in Lebanon's case, the lack thereof) with which to manage this situation. To invoke a startling comparison, the

legal “gamesmanship” being shown today by Lebanese authorities seeking a Band-Aid solution to the Syrian refugee issue differs very little from the approach they used to “solve” the Palestinian refugee issue.

The sheer magnitude of the Syrian refugee issue is not a matter for debate, and the response taken thus far by the Lebanese authorities is not simply a result of that extraordinary magnitude. In reality, it is due in large part to a Lebanese *defect*. And whether the Lebanese recognize it or not, that flaw stems from the country's lack of institutional memory, which might otherwise provide guidance where the Syrian refugee issue (or others) is concerned. This absence of institutional memory is neither an accident that can be repaired overnight nor one that can be rectified in the short term thanks to the efforts of some “heroic” political official. In fact, the lack of institutional memory points to an even greater defect within Lebanon: the country's lack of any national memory. Such national recall could easily serve as the political bible to which the Lebanese might refer each time their country must respond to an emergency

or hardship. As things stand today, however, it is very apparent that no such compass exists to help guide Lebanese decision-making efforts, and the effects of that shortcoming have never been more wide ranging.

A particularly significant difference exists between the Palestinian and Syrian refugee experiences, however, and it must remain forefront in our minds. Today, Syrian refugees are “former citizens,” regardless of the nature of the political regime that has ruled over Syria during the last several decades, and that nuance highlights the elemental distinction that separates Syrians who fled to Lebanon under extreme conditions from the country's complement of Palestinian refugees. Before they arrived in Lebanon, the Palestinians were never granted “citizenship” in even the lowliest of nation-states. In contrast, the Syrians arrived in Lebanon as full-fledged citizens of a nation-state—irrespective of the political regime in power and the profuse disrespect it demonstrates relative to the rights of its citizens. That difference, which certainly deserves further examination, becomes an integral part of unraveling the confusion that obscures most attempts to assess and address the current crisis.

One of the primary reasons behind the massive Syrian exodus into Lebanon (and other countries) is, simply put, the steady decline of the situation in Syria. Among other effects, that uprising cracked the massive dam of repression that prevented Syrian citizens from being able to exert their right to participate actively in the country's political system. In that sense, the Syrian

migration might also be seen as a side effect of Syria's booming political upheaval. And like any “boom,” no one should be surprised by the diffusion that naturally ensues.



Despite a multitude of complex factors, it appears the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon has been reduced to two primary aspects: the cost of ensuring that most Syrian refugees enjoy at least minimal living standards and the security concerns associated with their presence in the country. Assuming these considerations have indeed become the lowest common denominators in the crisis, then it should be underscored that this debacle did not result from any lapse in Lebanese-Syrian relations. On the contrary, the conditions Lebanon faces today are a direct result of the exceptionally convoluted relations that exist between the two countries. For the sake of clarity, it must also be highlighted that when Lebanon is mentioned, it is not being referred to simply as Syria's geographic neighbor or as a government. Rather, Lebanon exists within a particularly distinctive context, as it strives continuously and frantically to preserve its appearance as a “country” despite the myriad political, economic and security factors that drag it inexorably toward the global heap of failed nations. As the intersection between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese Republic is both troublesome and confusing, a few well-chosen snapshots will help elucidate general developments in Lebanese-Syrian relations and explain the general background of the Syrian refugee crisis,

itself a byproduct of the post-Arab Spring Syrian uprising that began in March 2011.

The first snapshot, dated February 25, 2010, focuses on Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Syria. During that trip, a summit (of sorts) was held, which attracted attendees including Ahmadinejad, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and, curiously, pro-Iranian Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah. Interestingly, the event demonstrated that a non-state entity (Hezbollah) was accorded "peer" status by its patron state. The eminence accreted by Nasrallah would eventually prove relevant, as Hezbollah emerged as a pivotal element that helped deliver the Syrian regime from the existential challenge it faced due to the hostilities.

The second snapshot, from January 12, 2011, captures pro-Saudi Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri being ousted from office just as he was preparing to meet with U.S. President Obama. Hezbollah acted carefully and decisively when it withdrew its ministers from the Hariri government, thus forcing its collapse. Yet while that development may seem uniquely indicative of politics *à la libanaise*, it was far more comprehensive. In fact, Hezbollah's decision to end Hariri's government also marked the end of regional entente, a situation blessed by the international community, which prompted the formation of a "national unity" government following the 2009 parliamentary elections (held according to the

Doha Agreement enacted to end the armed Sunni-Shia conflict of May 2008).

The third snapshot, from March 14, 2012, is closely related to the foregoing picture. In this case, however, the date coincided with the annual commemoration of the 2005 emergence of the anti-Assad regime/ anti-Hezbollah March 14 Alliance. To underscore how developments in Syria were being mirrored in Lebanon, the Syrian National Council, (the predecessor of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces) was invited by March 14 to deliver a key speech during that tribute. Notably, while this was intended to demonstrate that the Lebanese and Syrians were fighting for the same cause in each country, no such invitation was issued in the annual commemorations that followed.

The last (but certainly not least important) snapshot was taken on January 5, 2015, as Lebanese authorities began enforcing the zero Syrian refugee policy. The process commenced with the closure of the Lebanese-Syrian border, an action taken to halt the influx of Syrian refugees. Interestingly, that decision was not made by a partisan government; rather, it originated within Tammam Salam's pro-Saudi national interest government, which includes representatives from across Lebanon's political spectrum.

These four examples, of course, are representative of many other very telling snapshots. For carefully

considered reasons, however, we believe they dovetail with the conditions that have exacerbated the Syrian refugee asylum situation in Lebanon:

(1) Lebanon—like several other countries—is a full stakeholder in the Syrian conflict.

(2) The Syrian conflict and its numerous effects, including the refugee issue, is an exceedingly contentious issue among Lebanese actors.

(3) While it is fantasy to believe that the members of Lebanon's government could actually sit together and achieve resolution on all (or at least some) of Lebanon's problems, the precedent set by that government vis-à-vis the matter of Syrian asylum in Lebanon is perhaps the most striking illustration of the State's collective failure to resolve pressing domestic issues.

Among the many salient points in the text that follows, particular attention is drawn to Lebanon's relationship to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugee Rights (and its 1967 Optional Protocol). Lebanon makes no "exception" to recognize Syrian "refugees" as such, as it did for the country's Palestinian refugee population. Unfortunately, that decision undermined the already frail legal status of Syrians seeking refuge in Lebanon. As will be discussed later, the conditions Syrians must meet to "confirm" their situation—*despite any previous UNHCR registration*—are exceptionally stringent and difficult to achieve. Accordingly, many Syrians who already reside in Lebanon are doing so illegally.

Regardless of recognition by "official" Lebanese authorities and/or the international community, Lebanon, via Hezbollah's extensive intervention in Syria (and to a lesser extent the growing tendency among young Lebanese Islamists to "volunteer" their assistance to radical Islamist networks) is itself deeply involved in the Syrian conflict. As a result, some areas in Lebanon have become little more than rear-area targets ripe for attack by opposition forces, as underscored decisively by the bombings and related violence that have rocked Dahiyeh and other Hezbollah-dominated areas. Therefore, the question of whether the restrictions placed by Lebanon on the legal status of Syrian refugees are part of a carefully considered plan can be answered by considering the overwhelming use of security forces by a Lebanese government (and its non-state, State partner) that considers Syrian "refugees" an immediate source of danger. By extension, the marginalized legal status of Syrians in Lebanon has given the State's security agencies license to arrest, interrogate and intimidate displaced Syrian citizens "suspected" of "belonging to or having acquaintance with terrorist groups." Thus, as public statements increasingly refer to Syrian refugee settlements as terrorist hotbeds, the unrestrained use of security forces against those refugees is quickly gaining "official" blessing.

As this discussion indicates, the matter of Syrian asylum in Lebanon is far more than a straightforward humanitarian issue....

2011

The first wave of Syrian refugees arrived in Lebanon as early as April and May 2011 (after large-scale unrest in Syria began in March), when up to 6,000 refugees entered the northeastern

border region of Wadi Khaled. In early May, it was announced that UNHCR was assisting the Lebanese government in meeting the needs of those *displaced*. Many of those Syrians stayed initially with friends or relatives due to close cultural and familial ties that spanned the Lebanese-Syrian border areas. Others returned to Syria when it appeared the fighting there had waned. But by the end of May, the UN estimated that some 4,000 Syrians were living in Lebanon, primarily in its northern regions.<sup>1</sup> By December 2011, that number reportedly reached 5,000 after the arrival of more refugees from Tal Kalakh (a border town in the Homs district of northern Lebanon) and the city of Homs.<sup>2</sup>

During that early phase of the refugee crisis, Lebanon's Syria-friendly

border policy was unique. Unlike 148 other nations, Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugee Rights or its 1967 Optional Protocol, which provides the theoretical basis for the refugee policy of the signatory nations.<sup>3</sup> Numerous possible explanations can be offered for Lebanon's decision to eschew signing the conventions, one of which is concern over encouraging waves of asylum seekers from nearby countries. *The Daily Star* gave yet another plausible reason: it would pave the way for naturalization of Lebanon's Palestinian refugee population, which has long been one of the most sensitive political and social issues in the country.<sup>4</sup> Yet both of these reasons are fallible. First, Lebanon has experienced waves of refugees regardless of its stance on the UN refugee convention. Second (curiously), the convention does not apply to *Palestinian* refugees, who are administered under different legislation.<sup>5,6</sup>

In lieu of adhering to the 1951 convention, Lebanon essentially defaulted to its standard border

<sup>1</sup> For 6,000 figure and refugees returning to Syria, see UNHCR, "Situation in North Lebanon January 21 - January 27 2012," p.2. For government request for UNHCR aid, cross-border cultural ties and 4,000 figure, see 2011, "Psychosocial Assessment of Displaced Syrians at the Lebanese-Syrian Northern Border," International Medical Corps, p.3. For majority of refugees fleeing to Wadi Khaled, see for example: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2011/May-27/139669-social-affairs-ministry-defends-syrian-refugee-efforts.ashx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Mar-14/290755-the-timeline-of-lebanons-refugee-crisis.ashx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/3b73b0d63.html>. These conventions are intended to prevent refugees from being penalized as illegal immigrants and guarantee them certain basic rights, such as freedom to work and access to primary education.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2011/May-28/139723-refugees-aplenty-but-no-convention.ashx>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* (Daily Star)

<sup>6</sup> Although it is by no means the most exhaustive discussion of Lebanon's response to a refugee "situation," Nafez abou Hassna's introduction to the collection of Arabic-language articles published by az-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations (Beirut, 2008) provides some insight into how

policy toward Syrians. This approach seemed quite accommodating as it amounted to an "open door" policy, the origins of which stem from the frequently tangled histories of the two nations (particularly the period of Syrian "tutelage" over Lebanon).<sup>7</sup> Technically, the policy permitted any Syrian who entered at an official border crossing to obtain a rather cryptic "pass" that allowed them to live and work in Lebanon for up to six months. The simplest way to extend their stay was to "take a drive" across

the border and reenter Lebanon—whereupon these "travelers" would receive a renewed, six-month pass. The ease of this impromptu method is readily apparent when one considers that the driving distance between Beirut and Damascus is 134 kilometers, while the distance between Tripoli (north Lebanon) and Homs is just 87 kilometers. Obviously, Syrians could generally employ these procedures (i.e., providing the requested documents and paying the \$200 application fee) to seek residency,

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the country dealt with its Palestinian refugees. That work, "The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," describes some of the misinformed actions eventually taken by the government to manage the Palestinian situation: The series of laws and decrees released by the Lebanese authorities to regulate the [Palestinian] refugee situation did nothing to offer them any sense of security/safety [in Lebanon] until they could return home.... On some occasions, [the Lebanese authorities] considered them foreigners while at other times it categorized them as "special status" refugees. In the 1950s, regulations that pertained to non-resident foreigners were applied to Palestinians. In 1950, the "Central Committee for Refugee Issues" was created and on March 31, 1959, decree number 42 instituted the Refugee Issue Administration within the ministry of interior, which became responsible for delivering ID and passports. On April 26, 1960, another decree instituted the High Council for Palestinian Issues, [an organization that] had more of a political-security mandate [to ensure that it] did not conflict with the Refugee Issue Administration. On September 20, 1969, the minister of interior released a decision according to which [Palestinian] refugees were considered foreigners. That decision was [partially amended] by another, [released] by the same minister, which exonerated Palestinians residing in Lebanon [who received] ID cards issued by the Refugee Issue Administration [and permitted them to] renew their residency cards as is [typically] the case with foreigners. This category, however, does not include the unregistered [Palestinians], such as those who fled to Lebanon after 1967 and [after] September 1970.

<sup>7</sup> During a highbrow function held at the Grand Serail on December 15, 2014 (attended by the prime minister, members of his staff, the Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson), the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) was launched. Interestingly, while the full text of that document is only available in English, the United Nations Lebanon website ([www.un.org.lb](http://www.un.org.lb)) offers readers of Arabic a truncated abstract. Titled "Terminology in the LCRP," the following information is provided:

Lebanon is not a State Party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and has not signed its 1967 Protocol. Lebanon implements some provisions of the Convention on a voluntary basis and considers that granting the refugee status to individuals lies within its margin of discretion. The Government of Lebanon stresses on all occasions its longstanding position reaffirming that Lebanon is neither a country of asylum, nor a final destination for refugees, let alone a country of resettlement. Lebanon considers that it is being subject to a situation of mass influx and reserves the right to take measures aligning with international law and practice in such situations. The Government of Lebanon refers to individuals who fled from Syria to Lebanon after March 2011 as "displaced." The United Nations characterizes the flight of civilians from Syria as a refugee movement, and considers that most of these Syrians are seeking international protection and are likely to meet the refugee definition. Therefore, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan uses the following terminologies to refer to persons who have fled from Syria after March 2011:

1. "persons displaced from Syria,"
2. "persons registered with UNHCR as refugees," and
3. "de facto refugees."

[Number] 1. can, depending on context, include Palestine refugees from Syria and Lebanese returnees as well as registered and unregistered Syrian nationals. Both [numbers] 2. and 3. refer exclusively to Syrian nationals who are registered with UNHCR or seeking registration.

but most preferred not to do so. Indeed, owing to relations between Lebanon and Syria in the post-Taif “tutelage” era, one can only imagine how “informal” these administrative requirements had become—in terms of governance and transit! In contrast, the entry process was more complex for Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). These individuals had to obtain authorization from the Syrian authorities to leave the country and were required to (a) renew their residency permits every three months (as opposed to every half year for Syrians) and (b) pay the same \$200 fee after a year.<sup>8</sup>

Despite that apparent openness, entering Lebanon through official border crossings was anything but straightforward. Reports filtered in about difficulties with security checks, bribes and landmines near the Syrian border crossings, as well as regime soldiers who tried to prevent Syrians from fleeing the country.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, those who crossed into Lebanon through unofficial channels were confronted by a ponderous system of “regularization.” Some refugees who used those ad hoc crossings were returned to Syria by the Lebanese authorities *under pressure from the Syrian government* (which might not have happened had Lebanon signed the 1951 convention).<sup>10</sup>

Although the number of refugees

was still relatively small in 2011, developments that year in Lebanon did not help define a clear stand on the matter of inbound Syrians. While Najib Mikati was tasked on January 25, 2011 with forming a new cabinet to replace that of the ousted Saad Hariri, accomplishing that task eluded him until June 13, 2011. In the meantime, the country was hamstrung by a lack of decision-making capability and dramatic political escalation. Even when Mikati finally formed his cabinet (distinctly partisan since March 14 was not represented), opinions on the refugee issue within that government did not agree. And despite the Mikati government having been dissolved on March 22, 2013, the vacuum persisted. Although Tammam Salam was tasked with establishing a new cabinet on April 6, 2013, it was not seated until February 15, 2014.

Predictably, each “side” of the government held contradictory views on dealing with the arrival of Syrian refugees, and opponents of the Syrian government advocated a more welcoming approach. A *New York Times* article from October 2011 conveyed mixed sentiments about efforts being taken by the Lebanese government to provide aid. The article explains that the government was unwilling (perhaps understandably) to intervene at the security level on behalf of refugees

<sup>8</sup> 2014. “Denied Refuge: Palestinians from Syria seeking safety in Lebanon.” Amnesty International. P. 10.

<sup>9</sup> For security checks, bribes and landmines see: <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/09/18-syria-ferris-shaikh-kirisci/syrian-crisismassive-displacement-dire-needs-and-shortage-of-solutions-september-18-2013.pdf>, p10. For Syrian soldiers preventing crossings, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2011/May-23/139328-syrian-soldiers-fortify-border-positions.ashx>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/10/syrians-sent-back-assad-regime>

despite reports of incursions into Lebanese territory by Syrian troops and the abduction of refugees.<sup>11</sup>

A notable feature of the landscape at this stage was the wordplay employed when referring to the Syrian arrivals. The aforementioned *New York Times* article includes an anecdote that describes how a sign at a refugee center had been altered to read “displaced persons” (“*Nazih*” in Arabic) instead of “refugees” (“*Laji*” in Arabic). This is indicative of a broader trend, which is illustrated by the fact that joint Lebanese/UNHCR literature sought to avoid unqualified use of the word “refugee.”<sup>12</sup> This corresponds with the government’s refusal to sign the 1951 convention and is likely part of an attempt to absolve Lebanon of the legal responsibilities and expectations imposed by the presence of refugees—and avoid comparisons with the Palestinian refugee population. Another example of the lightning-rod potency of the term refugee dates to November 2011, when Syrian Ambassador Ali Abd al-Kareem claimed that Syrians in northern Lebanon were not refugees but “visitors” who were simply staying with their friends and families on the Lebanese side of the border.<sup>13</sup> Refusals by al-Kareem and the Lebanese government to use the

word refugee highlighted the lack of a coherent policy and political denial of the entire issue, which some analysts described as a “head in the sand” approach.<sup>14</sup>

2012

In January 2012, the UN reported that 6,290 Syrian refugees were registered in Lebanon. The slight increase was attributed to refugees who were already in Lebanon but had registered only recently. It also made available data regarding efforts to educate Syrian children and stated that the Ministry of Education was “facilitating the enrollment of displaced children in public schools,” with UNHCR footing the bill. The total number of Syrian children enrolled in Lebanese public schools was 465 (a trifling proportion of the 6,290 Syrians registered, even considering that not all 6,290 would have been children). It noted as well that remedial classes were being given to some Syrian children due to differences in the Lebanese and Syrian curricula, and that such classes would be offered in the future to Lebanese.<sup>15</sup> By March, 53% of primary school-age registered refugees were enrolled in schools, while that figure was 9% for secondary school-age pupils.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/20/world/middleeast/syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-still-face-peril.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/20/world/middleeast/syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-still-face-peril.html?_r=0)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. “Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-16,” under “Terminology in the LCRP.”

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.lebanese-forces.com/2011/11/09/176189/>, might be better to get original al-Liwa article

<sup>14</sup> <https://lb.boell.org/en/2014/12/30/most-important-features-lebanese-policy-toward-issue-syrian-refugees-hiding-its-head>

<sup>15</sup> “Situation in North Lebanon January 21 – 27, 2012.” UNHCR.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Mar-03/165379-registered-syrian-refugees-top-7000-un.ashx>

The number of refugees began to increase sharply in 2012. On March 4, the siege of Homs drove some 2,000 Syrians into Lebanon in a single day, while by the end of April, the UN estimated that 24,000 registered and unregistered refugees were living in Lebanon (although charities estimated that number to be at least 39,000).<sup>17</sup> Between July 18 and 20, some 30,000 Syrians fled to Lebanon to escape the fighting in Damascus (although one report suggested that many of these were middle class and therefore unlikely to register as refugees with the UN).<sup>18</sup> At the end of October, UN figures indicated that more than 100,000 refugees were in Lebanon, while by the end of December, the number jumped to 170,000 (including some 3,000 Palestinians who fled that month from the Yarmouk camp in Damascus). The UN also disclosed that while most refugees were using designated crossings, many others used Lebanon's eastern borders due to fears about "bribes, harassment and targeted shootings" on the Syrian side of the northern Lebanese border.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the UN reported that 32,000 Syrian children were in

Lebanese public schools, 10,000 of whom were attending remedial classes, a presence, it concluded, that strains "public sector resources and capacities significantly."<sup>20</sup>

In January, one of the first official references was made to Lebanon's "dissociation policy," by which it sought to remain officially neutral toward the conflict in Syria. The policy was formalized between rival Lebanese political parties in the June Baabda Declaration.<sup>21</sup> In March, President Michel Suleiman echoed the November 2011 sentiments of Syrian Ambassador al-Kareem when he stated that Syrian arrivals in Lebanon (by that time numbering at least 12,000) would be treated "as families, as relatives and not as refugees."<sup>22</sup> While Suleiman's statement may be considered accommodating to Syrians in the country, it also avoided credentialing those individuals as "refugees." Concurrently, UNHCR was preparing to issue its own refugee certificates in an attempt to improve refugees' freedom of movement and their ability to find work (which had reportedly been promised by the government in July 2011).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For wave from Homs, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Mar-05/165512-homs-siege-drives-2000-syrians-to-lebanon.ashx>. For April figures, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Article.aspx?id=171710>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Jul-21/181425-lebanese-border-regains-sense-of-normalcy.ashx>

<sup>19</sup> For 100,000 figure in October, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Oct-24/192529-unhcr-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-exceed-100000.ashx>. For December figures and border crossing information, see: "UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees Beirut, December 2012." UNHCR (monthly update).

<sup>20</sup> "UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees Beirut, December 14-21 2012." UNHCR (weekly update).

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/100656>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Mar-13/166423-response-to-syrian-refugee-crisis-in-flux.ashx>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Also in March, the first exchanges occurred in what became a long-running debate over building “official” refugee camps for Syrians. Specifically, Hezbollah stated that it could not endorse the construction of official camps due to concerns that they could be used as bases from which to stage attacks against Syria and Lebanon.<sup>24</sup> In April, a coalition of Islamic charities threatened to commence construction unilaterally if the government refused to do so. The debate rose to prominence again in July when (just before the enormous refugee surge between July 18 and 20) Walid Jumblatt advocated the establishment of refugee camps like those in Turkey and Jordan.<sup>25</sup> Concerns over the construction of official refugee camps evoked memories of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, particularly the militarization of Palestinian camps and the impotence their presence connoted to the Lebanese State. Palestinian refugees already in Lebanon also hoped that improving accommodations for Syrians would bestow an additional degree of permanency to their presence in the country, just as the Palestinian camps seem to have done for their residents.

Other notable events in 2012 included one of the most significant reports to

date of Hezbollah involvement in the Syrian fighting. Despite Hezbollah's denial in 2011 that it was involved in the conflict, a former senior Syrian politician who defected claimed that the Assad regime was capitalizing on the expertise of Iranian and Hezbollah snipers to quell dissent.<sup>26</sup> This accusation surfaced during the January and February assaults on Zabadani, a border town in which large anti-regime protests took place. According to an Iranian official quoted by *al-Arabiya*, Hezbollah fighters were involved in those assaults.<sup>27</sup> The battles, which ended in a stalemate, also represented the initial exchanges in what would become a series of clashes between regime and opposition forces for control of the Lebanese-Syrian border regions (more below).

In an October 11 speech, Hassan Nasrallah reiterated that Hezbollah was not involved in Syria despite reports that Hezbollah fighters had battled opposition members in villages along the Lebanese-Syrian border.<sup>28</sup> However, historian and journalist David Hirst commented shortly afterward that Nasrallah's speech amounted to a cryptic admission of the group's involvement, as he acknowledged that Hezbollah members *had been fighting*, but explained that they were doing so

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Jul-19/181105-lebanon-pressed-to-set-up-syrian-refugee-camps.ashx>

<sup>25</sup> For Islamic charities statement, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Apr-03/168979-charities-to-establish-refugee-camps-if-state-wont-act.ashx>. For Jumblatt quotes see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Jul-17/180864-jumblatt-calls-for-syrian-refugee-camps-in-lebanon-slams-stances-of-russia-and-iran.ashx>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/syrian-regime-importing-snipers-for-protests/story-e6frg6so-1226254330519>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Oct-11/191066-nasrallah-denies-hezbollah-members-fighting-with-syrian-regime.ashx>

of their own accord (i.e., they were not fighting on behalf of the organization). Nasrallah also stated that the fighters were merely defending their villages (many of which have Lebanese Shia residents and are situated in poorly defined sections of the Lebanese-Syrian border) from attacks by opposition militants. According to Hirst, such involvement, while extremely risky, was the best of a host of bad options for Hezbollah. While those actions deviate from Hezbollah's previous support of Arab uprisings and its stated aim of resistance against Israel (thus inviting accusations of hypocrisy and damaging its pan-Arab appeal), its involvement represented the practical, albeit extraordinary step it had to take to sustain a vital ally and protect its supply routes through Syria.<sup>29</sup>

2013

On January 4, 2013, UN registration lists placed the number of refugees in Lebanon at 180,000.<sup>30</sup>

In June, the International Rescue Committee reported that 2,000 refugees were entering

Lebanon daily, and by the end of that month, the UN's number had jumped

to 580,000.<sup>31</sup> When the year ended, the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon had more than quadrupled to 860,000.<sup>32</sup>

In 2013, Lebanon sought to tighten its border policies as the crisis wore on. According to *Amnesty International*, such actions appeared in the form of "unofficial" restrictions being placed on PRS seeking to enter the country, who were subjected to visa-like requirements that made it difficult for them to enter Lebanon on a humanitarian basis alone.<sup>33</sup> *Amnesty International* also noted "a degree of arbitrariness" in the enforcement of those restrictions, as some Palestinians were denied entry despite having the correct paperwork.

Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict reached new levels in 2013. Having continued to deny any institutional participation in the fighting, Hezbollah was accused that May of being involved in a major conflict near Qusayr, a border town northeast of Lebanon.<sup>34</sup> After assaulting the surrounding villages in the weeks before, Hezbollah and the Syrian army launched a major attack on the town in mid-May, and regime forces finally gained control in June.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2012/Oct-23/192380-hezbollah-uses-its-military-power-in-a-contradictory-manner.ashx#axzz2AJrVn2lk>

<sup>30</sup> "UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees Beirut, December 31, 2012 – January 4, 2013." (weekly update)

<sup>31</sup> For IRC report, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Mar-14/290755-the-timeline-of-lebanons-refugee-crisis.ashx>. For figures at the end of June, see: "Inter-Agency Regional Response for Syrian Refugees—Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey 27 June - 3 July 2013," UNHCR.

<sup>32</sup> "UNHCR Monthly Update—Protection—December 2013," UNHCR.

<sup>33</sup> 2014. "Denied Refugee: Palestinians from Syria seeking safety in Lebanon." *Amnesty International*. P. 11.

<sup>34</sup> For February accusations, see: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-21496735>

<sup>35</sup> For mention of preceding assaults and May assault, see: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/20/world/middleeast/syrian-army-moves-to-rebel-held-qusayr.html?pagewanted=all>. For government June control, see: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22595767>

The battle was significant because of Qusayr's strategic importance to both sides. From the regime's perspective, the town lies near a road that connects Damascus with Homs and with the northwestern Alawite heartlands. From the opposition's perspective, Qusayr is a key asset for smuggling weapons and supplies not only because of its close proximity to Lebanon, but also because it is situated along the road from north Lebanon to opposition-held Homs.<sup>36</sup> Shortly after the first major assault, Nasrallah gave a speech on May 25 that was widely interpreted as official confirmation of Hezbollah's military alliance with the Assad regime. Nasrallah characterized the fight as being emblematic of his organization's "resistance" philosophy and said that the Syrian government was the "backbone" of that overall resistance effort.<sup>37</sup> Further Hezbollah involvement became evident in November when clashes escalated in the Qalamoun (Anti-Lebanon) Mountains, and Hezbollah and the Syrian army seized control of Qara.<sup>38</sup> This represented one of the engagements in a wider regime campaign to control every town in the Qalamoun region which, due

to its close proximity to Lebanon's eastern border, is similar to Qusayr in terms of strategic importance.<sup>39</sup>

While this series of conflicts is notable, its relevance to this report stems in part from the effect the confrontations had on the local populations involved. Numerous reports mention an influx of refugees into Orsal and Hermel in north Lebanon due to the fighting in Qusayr. A UN assessment team that arrived in Qusayr after the fighting reported that from a pre-conflict population of 30,000 – 40,000, only 10 – 12 civilian families remained, and they returned only to salvage their possessions before moving elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> While the report states that not all who left the area will have crossed into Lebanon, Qusayr's proximity to the Lebanese border would make it a very likely choice. Tremendous numbers of refugees also fled to Lebanon when the initial battles for Qalamoun began. For instance, Orsal's deputy mayor estimated that 90% of Qara's population fled when the Syrian army announced its imminent assault. But perhaps the clearest indication of the impact the fighting had on refugee

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22595767>

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/hezbollah-chief-admits-and-defends-groups-involvement-in-syrian-war/2013/05/25/3748965a-c55e-11e2-9fe2-6ee52d0eb7c1\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/hezbollah-chief-admits-and-defends-groups-involvement-in-syrian-war/2013/05/25/3748965a-c55e-11e2-9fe2-6ee52d0eb7c1_story.html)

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/19/us-syria-crisis-town-idUSBRE9A10FX20131119#W6JXjbzDJ1BKJYO.97>

<sup>39</sup> Despite significant pro-regime gains, the Qalamoun conflict continued well into 2015. For Qalamoun's strategic importance, see: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/18/lebanon-syrian-refugees-flee-fighting-control-qalamoun>. For regime gains, see: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/04/syria-rebels-surrender-border-town-2014426152724543924.html>; for an example of the continuation of the conflict, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/May-22/298964-the-battle-for-qalamoun.ashx>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/07/10-syria-lebanon-jordan-ferris>. For another mention of the exodus from Qusayr, see for example: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324904004578537413177464872>

numbers came via UN statistics, which demonstrated that during the last two weeks in November (the period leading up to and during the Qalamoun offensive), some 18,000 refugees arrived in Orsal from the Qalamoun area, mostly through unofficial border crossings.<sup>41</sup> The new arrivals represented the town's largest refugee influx since the Syrian crisis began.<sup>42</sup>

Such numbers may suggest that Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict has exacerbated the refugee crisis in Lebanon. Absent that participation, however, it is uncertain whether fighting in the border regions would have occurred on the same scale. Hezbollah's importance to the Qusayr and Qalamoun assaults should not be underestimated. The group reportedly took the lead in both battles, and some observers asserted that Assad's army was militarily incapable of sustaining an assault on Qusayr, while others highlighted Hezbollah's expertise in mountainous border areas such as Qalamoun.<sup>43</sup> If such analysis is correct, it seems unlikely that Assad's forces could have mounted those attacks—which drove thousands of refugees into Lebanon—without Hezbollah's involvement. Therefore, while

enormous numbers of refugees would certainly have crossed into Lebanon regardless of Hezbollah's actions, the overall influx may have been significantly smaller had Nasrallah not committed his organization to the effort. Moreover, the strategic value of these victories, which came as the regime was experiencing costly setbacks, helped introduce a stalemate that prolonged the conflict and likely created more refugees.

2014

The exponential increases in the number of refugees that took place in 2013 did not occur in 2014. As the year began, the UN predicted the number would nearly double, from 860,000 to 1,500,000, and by April, with 2,500 new registrations daily, the number finally exceeded 1 million.<sup>44</sup> However, while that high rate of registration persisted until August, the numbers dropped precipitously afterward. By December 2014, UN records placed the number at around 1,160,000, which was considerably lower than its original estimate for the year.<sup>45</sup> That decrease in registrations can be attributed primarily to the increased restrictions placed on Syrian refugees and PRS in 2014 (see below).

<sup>41</sup> "UNHCR Monthly Update—Protection—November 2013," UNHCR.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/18/lebanon-syrian-refugees-flee-fighting-control-qalamoun>

<sup>43</sup> For Hezbollah's leading role in Qusayr and military incapability of Syrian army, see: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-conflict-clashes-between-rebels-and-army-edge-near-to-iconic-crusader-castle-krak-des-9105403.html#gallery>. For its role in Qalamoun and effectiveness in the mountains, see: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/18/lebanon-syrian-refugees-flee-fighting-control-qalamoun>

<sup>44</sup> For UN predictions for 2014, see "UN 2014 Regional Response Plan Lebanon," P. 2, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/syria-rrp6-lebanon-response-plan.pdf#A>. For April statistics, see: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26864485>.

<sup>45</sup> For all monthly figures, see the UN monthly updates throughout 2014, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Country%5B%5D=122&Sector%5B%5D=5>

After months of political deadlock in Lebanon, Tammam Salam was finally able to seat a new government on February 15, 2014.<sup>46</sup> Also during the first half of the year, Hezbollah and Syrian regime forces scored more victories (Qalamoun in March and April, and Qala'at al-Hosn (*Krak des Chevaliers*) in March). Like the aforementioned Qusayr and Qalamoun assaults, the Qala'at al-Hosn victory was of considerable strategic importance since it gave the regime control of the northern Lebanese-Syrian border and dramatically reduced the flow of Sunni militants from Tripoli into Syria via that border.<sup>47</sup>

In May, Lebanon's interior ministry issued a statement that appeared to formalize border restrictions instituted in August 2013 against PRS. According to *Amnesty International*, Lebanon's border was now effectively "closed" to PRS.<sup>48</sup> That same month, *Amnesty International* reported that within Lebanon, many PRS reported arbitrary refusals to their requests for visa renewal.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, this difficulty seems to have persisted beyond 2013, as the *Norwegian Refugee Council* reported that in practice, one of the only realistic opportunities for PRS to renew their

visas was between February and May 2015, and that other "opportunities" were "virtually impossible to benefit from." The situation was reportedly even worse for Palestinians who did not have legal residency (i.e., those who entered Lebanon via unofficial crossings or whose visas had expired), as they had "no possibilities" to regularize their presence.<sup>50</sup> Although *Amnesty International* noted that a one-month regularization amnesty for PRS was announced by General Security on May 21, 2014, it reported as well that many refugees who attempted to do so during that time were issued deportation orders.<sup>51</sup>

In early June, the government announced new measures applicable to all Syrians seeking refuge in Lebanon. These included a policy that limited entry to refugees arriving from areas of persistent armed conflict, and one which held that refugees who departed Lebanon would be stripped of their UNHCR refugee status (or "displaced" status according to the Lebanese government).<sup>52</sup> That announcement came shortly before voting was to commence in the Syrian presidential elections and after a previous round of voting had

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-government-idUSBREA1E07S20140215>

<sup>47</sup> For refugees created by Qala'at al-Hosn fighting, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Mar-21/250963-syrian-army-says-it-kills-93-rebels-fleeing-castle.ashx>. For regime border control/halting Tripoli militants, see <http://www.shiawatch.com/article/545>.

<sup>48</sup> For Ministry of Interior Statement, see: 2014, "Denied Refuge—Palestinians from Syria seeking safety in Lebanon," *Amnesty International*, p14. For border closure effect, see: 2014, "Left Out in the Cold—Syrian refugees abandoned by the international community," *Amnesty International*. P. 16.

<sup>49</sup> 2014, "Denied Refuge—Palestinians from Syria seeking safety in Lebanon," *Amnesty International*. P. 15.

<sup>50</sup> For NRC claims, see: [http://www.nrc.no/arch/\\_img/9202281.pdf](http://www.nrc.no/arch/_img/9202281.pdf), P. 6

<sup>51</sup> 2014, "Denied Refuge—Palestinians from Syria seeking safety in Lebanon," *Amnesty International*. P. 15

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/lebanon-revises-open-door-refugee-policy-201466744881995.html>

been permitted in Lebanon during which demonstrations by Assad supporters provoked ire among certain Lebanese politicians—although the government denied any association between the restrictions and the demonstrations.<sup>53</sup> There is little indication, however, that these measures were actually implemented. Although Social Affairs Minister Rashid Derbas claimed on June 1 that implementation of the new measures had begun, a January 2015 *Daily Star* article acknowledged the June announcement but quoted UNHCR's representative to Lebanon Ninette Kelley as having stated that significant restrictions took effect in August 2014.<sup>54</sup> This corresponds with UN data which shows that registrations did not decrease significantly in June or July, and with the July UN statement that its border monitoring teams had not observed any changes in border policy compared to the previous months.<sup>55</sup>

The August 2014 border policy changes appeared first as "significantly restricted" admissions at the northern border crossing in Arida, and the timing of those restrictions cannot be viewed apart from the clashes that were occurring near Orsal between the Lebanese

Armed Forces and Islamist militants (considered by many observers to have been associated with the Syrian camps in the area).<sup>56,57</sup> Notably, a number of Lebanese servicemen were captured during the clashes, an act likely to have convinced the Lebanese government to make meaningful changes. Reverberations from the soldiers' capture persisted into 2015, when the final set of restrictions against refugees was implemented (see below).

In September, entry policy became "increasingly restrictive" for Syrians, as information emerged that prospective entrants were being forced to comply with stringent, visa-like requirements such as intent for onward travel, an embassy appointment or the need for medical treatment unavailable in Syria.<sup>58</sup> Kelley identified the month of October as the point at which significant restrictions were implemented at the Masnaa crossing. On October 23, another round of official government announcements focused on enhanced restrictions culminated when the Lebanese cabinet decided to permit only "extreme humanitarian cases" to enter the country (although it did not publish any criteria for

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<sup>53</sup> For Syrian demonstrations, see: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-lebanon-idUSKBN0EC1AX20140601>. For government denial of relation, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jun-05/258922-lebanon-to-only-take-refugees-fleeing-towns-near-border.ashx>

<sup>54</sup> For Derbas statement, see: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/06/lebanon-adopts-policy-syria-displaced.html#>. For Kelley statement, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-21/284769-drop-in-syrian-registrant-numbers-due-to-entry-curbs.ashx>

<sup>55</sup> UNHCR Lebanon, "Protection Update—June 2014" and "Protection Monthly Update—July 2014"

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-21/284769-drop-in-syrian-registrant-numbers-due-to-entry-curbs.ashx> and UNHCR Lebanon, "Protection Update—August 2014"

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29370839>

<sup>58</sup> UNHCR Lebanon, "Protection Update September 2014."

those conditions).<sup>59</sup> According to refugees and aid workers, General Security officers at the border appeared to be interpreting the government's announcement individually.<sup>60</sup> New registrations thus continued to decline in November and December. To confirm the overall impact of these punitive restrictions, UN figures indicate that monthly registrations decreased from a 2013 average of 59,000 to an average of 14,000 in the last quarter of 2014.<sup>61</sup>

2015

New registrations decreased dramatically in 2015 due to further restrictions implemented in early January. By March, the UN reported an 80% drop in monthly registrations compared to

2014, followed by an unprecedented decrease in the total number of UN registrants because of the new measures.<sup>62</sup>

On December 31, 2014, it was announced that a new set of border controls would be instituted on January 5. Despite the government's refusal to characterize them as such, the new

requirements were described as being indicative of a visa policy for Syrian refugees, an administrative shift that represented an unprecedented and decidedly negative turn in Lebanese-Syrian relations. At its core, the action essentially helped formalize and implement the more comprehensive restrictions announced by the government in October 2014. As the new measures rejected prospective refugees who did not have sufficient wealth or prior interests in Lebanon (such as property), most Syrian refugees were summarily refused admission to the country.<sup>63</sup>

Along with the border restrictions announced at the end of 2014, the Lebanese government instituted new measures related to renewing the residency permits for refugees already in Lebanon. Among the most notable changes in this steadily emerging policy were 1) an annual \$200 residence charge per refugee, 2) the requirement to produce a tenancy agreement signed by a landlord along with confirmation by a *mukhtar* that the landlord owns the property and 3) a signed promise not to work.<sup>64,65</sup> A UN report estimated that the annual

<sup>59</sup> The criteria for an "extreme humanitarian case" was officially announced in April 2015 and includes: "unaccompanied and/or separated children with a parent already registered in Lebanon; persons living with disabilities with a relative already registered in Lebanon; persons with urgent medical needs for whom treatment in Syria is unavailable; persons who will be resettled to third countries" (UN, "Protection Sector Monthly Dashboard April 2015"). Evidently, this excludes most Syrians attempting to seek refuge in Lebanon.

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/lebanon>.

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-21/284769-drop-in-syrian-registrant-numbers-due-to-entry-curbs.ashx>

<sup>62</sup> For 80% drop, see: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/12/syrians-lebanon-border-controls-un-refugee>. For the decrease in total registrants, see: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Dec-08/326379-refugee-numbers-down-as-hardship-bites.ashx>.

<sup>63</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-refugees-become-less-welcome-in-lebanon-as-new-entry-rules-take-effect/2015/01/05/7e412f59-b357-4af4-95a4-5edf3df7af06\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-refugees-become-less-welcome-in-lebanon-as-new-entry-rules-take-effect/2015/01/05/7e412f59-b357-4af4-95a4-5edf3df7af06_story.html)

<sup>64</sup> A *mukhtar* is roughly equivalent to a local mayor.

cost of the new measures for a single refugee would be \$275, or \$1,375 for a family composed of two parents and three teenagers (\$200 for the residency permit and \$75 for documentation and copies").<sup>65</sup> To date, however, one of the most detrimental aspects of this constantly fluctuating policy is that it requires Syrians seeking to legalize their situation—regardless of whether they have registered with UNHCR—to have a signed declaration from a Lebanese citizen acknowledging and accepting responsibility for them.<sup>67</sup> In other words, they must have Lebanese sponsorship. As may be forecast immediately, and more than any of the other requirements enacted to regulate the entry of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, this condition places Syrian refugees at a distinct disadvantage, as it cedes their welfare to Lebanese citizens who may be untrustworthy or simply exhausted from the dilemma they face living amidst the lawlessness that now defines Lebanon. Moreover, the requirement establishes a pseudo-hierarchy in Lebanese citizenship and places newly arrived Syrians on the bottom rung of a frighteningly tall ladder.

These new measures have spawned considerable criticism. At least two UN officials have registered their displeasure, with Ninette Kelley calling them "highly problematic," and UN spokeswoman Dana Sleiman noting that they have "the potential to create abuse."<sup>68</sup> Refugees who cannot renew their permits are made exceptionally vulnerable by the constant threat of detention, which may be used against them in a variety of ways. For instance, unscrupulous employers can compel refugees to work for trifling wages, as they need all the money they can get to meet expensive residency renewal requirements. The firing of Lebanese employees has also become far less uncommon, as they can now be replaced by low-paid Syrians over whom employers have almost total control. The illegal status of many Syrians has also prompted Lebanese authorities to rely on security-based approaches to deal with the refugee crisis. This was evidenced by the wave of raids and detentions in Syrian camps during 2015, in which refugees were routinely detained for failing to have proper documentation.

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<sup>65</sup> "Syrian refugees in Lebanon Quarterly snapshot January - March 2015," UNHCR.

<sup>66</sup> "Monthly Dashboard February 2015," UNHCR. It should be noted that the \$200 fee is not technically a new condition. It had been in place since the conflict began, but a loophole allowed Syrians to leave the country when their permits were nearing expiration and then reenter—at which time they would receive fresh permits (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/lebanon-revises-open-door-refugee-policy-201466744881995.html>). See also <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Sep-18/271064-refugees-flock-to-general-security-%20centers-to-legalize-stay.ashx#axzz3K15c9dqh> for mention of this practice). The measures announced in June should have ended this practice by stripping Syrians who left Lebanon of their refugee status. As mentioned, however, the June measures were apparently not implemented in a particularly comprehensive fashion. Moreover, in September, General Security announced an amnesty on renewal fees (for legal and illegal refugees alike, although not PRS) that would last until December 31. Many Syrians took advantage of that amnesty. The end of this period thus marked the beginning of fee enforcement—such that if Syrians left Lebanon once their residency permit expired, it would be unlikely that they would gain readmission because of the newly enhanced border measures.

<sup>67</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=8416>

<sup>68</sup> For Kelley comments, see: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/12/syrians-lebanon-border-controls-un-refugee>. For Suleiman comments, see: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/17/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-refugees-idUSKBN0N819Z20150417>.

Many refugees find it virtually impossible to meet these new requirements, which appear to have been enacted specifically to force the departure of Syrians by making it extraordinarily difficult for them to retain any legal status. Even for the very few refugees who can meet the new measures, that ability may not be enough. As a result of its comprehensive fieldwork, Hayya Bina identified a number of cases in which, despite having all of the required documentation, refugees have been refused renewal. This outcome indicates that the specific requirements of these new measures may be subsidiary to the overarching goal of encouraging refugees to leave. In any case, the new measures have had a dramatic effect: UNHCR data indicates that the proportion of refugees without valid residency permits rose dramatically from 9% in January 2015 to 61% at the end of July. Whether this increase in illegal domicile will actually benefit Lebanon, however, is another matter entirely.

Actually closing the border with Syria cuts off what had been one of the major escape routes for Syrians fleeing the conflict in their homeland. Further, in the near term, doing so estranges families with members on both sides side of the border. To compound this situation, the Lebanese government requested in 2015 that UNHCR cease registering new Syrian refugees in Lebanon—which it did as of May 6, although

it calls the measure “temporary.”<sup>69</sup> This means that Syrians in Lebanon who have not yet registered can no longer do so, which cuts them off permanently from the most significant source of aid available to refugees. At the same time, it underscores Lebanon's initiative to halt the flow of refugees through its borders.

Two instances of seemingly “good news” arrived near the end of 2015. The first was the release of Lebanese soldiers and policemen captured during the August 2 battle for Orsal, while the second was a UN-sponsored deal regarding the besieged Syrian areas of Zabadani (Sunni) and Kefraya and Foua (Shia). In the first case, a prisoner swap was conducted on December 1 between Lebanese authorities and the militant Islamist group *Jabhat Al-Nusra*, which freed all of the Lebanese servicemen still being held by the group.<sup>70</sup> Beyond the exchange of prisoners, *Nusra* also demanded humanitarian aid for the town of Orsal as well as the refugee settlements on its outskirts. In some ways, the deal illustrates that Lebanese policy toward Syrian refugees has come full circle, as one of the catalysts for *Al-Nusra*'s rise to prominence in Lebanon was the refugee settlements near Orsal. Specifically, the absence of any coherent Lebanese policy and/or aid for these settlements created a vacuum filled immediately by the militant group. Its rise was also spurred unwittingly by Hezbollah, whose intervention in Syria gave such groups

<sup>69</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/lebanese-hostages-released-prisoner-swap-151201072408599.html>

license to operate in Lebanon. The UN-brokered negotiations represented implicit recognition of *Al-Nusra*'s presence on Lebanese territory, the net result of which is revealed in reactions to the deal by Lebanese politicians. In clear echoes of the Palestinian militancy on Lebanese soil, Nohad Machnouk stated shortly after the exchange that Orsal is an "occupied area," while Nabih Berri characterized the deal as "a sovereignty scandal."<sup>71</sup> In other words, the deal—which derives from Lebanon's policy toward refugees from Syria—represented exactly what the government had been so desperate to avoid.

The second development took place on December 28 and implemented an armistice that affected the Syrian cities of Zabadani and Kefraya/Foua. Under that deal, several hundred Shia from Kefraya and Foua (situated in the northern outskirts of Idlib) were evacuated to the Turkish border, from where they were flown to Beirut. Concurrently, 126 militants and their families traveled overland from Zabadani (some 45 kilometers northwest of Damascus and less than 10 kilometers from the Lebanese-Syrian border) to Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport, from where they were flown to Turkey.<sup>72</sup> Although conducted under humanitarian auspices (under UN sponsorship, in fact), the deal highlighted the incompetence of the Lebanese

State in matters related to the Syrian conflict. Those involved in brokering the deal appear to have bypassed the Lebanese governmental apparatus by negotiating directly with Hezbollah. The only Lebanese security agency officially associated with the deal was General Security, an organization that has a longstanding association with Hezbollah. Further, one of Hezbollah's own media outlets, *al-Manar* TV, live-streamed news of the evacuation. When two government ministers were questioned by *al-Jadeed* the day after the deal, each replied that neither they nor most of their colleagues had any inkling of the deal until media reports became available.<sup>73</sup> Other than providing proof that Lebanon is little more than a failed state, the episode illustrated a much more worrisome dimension. While hundreds of civilians enjoyed some relief allegedly because of this action, that particular "brand" of relief can also be seen as the sectarian separation being promoted by the international community. True, the end state provides short-term appeasement. At the same time, it drives the entire region ever farther down the road toward sectarian-based partitioning.

Critically, this most recent development must be viewed as a forerunner of additional long-term risks. After all, Hezbollah's involvement in Syria no longer seems to be a topic

<sup>71</sup> For Berri comments, see: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/566335-the-deal-of-shame>.

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Dec-29/329332-hundreds-from-syria-towns-evacuated-in-landmark-deal.ashx>

<sup>73</sup> January 2016 "The Zabadani-Kefraya/Foua Evacuations Linking the Capitals of Resistance," *ShiaWatch* Issue 41, Hayya Bina.

of particular concern in the domestic Lebanese debate. At the same time, we must not be so naïve as to believe that the international community has done anything other than turn a blind eye to Hezbollah's presence in Syria. Combined, the absence of debate and an acquiescent international community has certainly influenced the "official" Lebanese narrative about the arrival of Syrian refugees. From an official perspective, Lebanon is steadily more comfortable with ignoring that the Syrian refugee crisis stemmed from politico-military factors rather than some unforeseen natural catastrophe. Regardless of Hezbollah's degree of responsibility in this entire matter (actions it has taken at the behest of Iran), its involvement

in the Syrian conflict is decidedly at the heart of this complex matter.

The newly unfolding Lebanese narrative tends increasingly to preface the "story" of the Syrian refugees residing in the country with the lament that hundreds of thousands of them somehow arrived surreptitiously one night and instantly began consuming the already paltry resources being rationed to the Lebanese population. The Syrian perspective of this situation, however, is vastly different. At this stage in the ongoing debacle, it seems quite likely that we are on the cusp of an endless conflict among Lebanese-Syrian narratives, the dust from which will not settle anytime soon.

أَنَّ طَبِيعَةَ مُتْرَبَّاتِهِ عَلَى الْعَلَاقَاتِ اللَّبْنَانِيَّةِ /  
اللَّبْنَانِيَّةِ تَشِي بِأَنَّ هَذِهِ الْمُتْرَبَّاتِ لَنْ تَرْتَفَعَ  
يَوْمَ أَنْ يَنْتَهِيَ هُوَ - نَقُولُ: فِي الطَّبِيعَةِ مِنْ  
هَذِهِ الدَّرُوسِ أَنَّ الْحَدِيثَ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ عَنِ هَذَا  
اللَّجُوءِ بَاتَ يَفْتَرِضُ أَنْ تَتَوَفَّرَ لِلْمُتَّصِدِّينَ  
لِلْحَدِيثِ عَنْهُ مَحْفَظَةٌ مِنَ الْمُسْتَمْسَكَاتِ وَمِنْ  
الْوَثَائِقِ تُتَابَعُ الْمَرَا حِلَ الْتِي مَرَّ بِهَا وَيَمُرُّ،  
وَالسَّجَلَاتِ الْتِي تَرَا فِقَهُ، وَمَا إِلَى ذَلِكَ.

إِنْفَاذًا لِهَذَا الْبَنْدِ، وَفِي عِدَادِ نَشَاطَاتٍ أُخْرَى  
لَحَظْتَهَا تِلْكَ الشَّرَا كَةُ الْمُسْتَأْنَفَةُ، أَنْشَأَتْ  
هَيَّا بِنَا عَلَى قَاعِدَةِ الْبَيَانَاتِ الْمَفْتُوحَةِ الْتِي

تُشْرِفُ عَلَيْهَا مَوْسَسَةُ أَمَمٍ لِلتَّوْثِيقِ وَالْأَبْحَاثِ،  
«دِيَوَانِ الذَّاكِرَةِ اللَّبْنَانِيَّةِ»، بَابًا تَحْتَ عِنْوَانِ  
«مُوَاطِنُونَ مَعَ وَقْفِ التَّنْفِيزِ - صَفَحَاتٌ مِنْ  
سِيرَةِ اللَّجُوءِ إِلَى لُبْنَانَ».

وَرُغْمَ أَنَّ هَذَا الْبَابَ، عَلَى غَرَارِ سِوَاهُ مِنْ  
أَبْوَابِ «دِيَوَانِ الذَّاكِرَةِ اللَّبْنَانِيَّةِ»، لَا يَسْتَعْرِقُ  
مَوْضُوعَهُ، وَرُغْمَ أَنَّهُ فِي تَيُويِمٍ وَإِغْنَاءٍ  
مَتَوَاصِلِينَ، فَلَيْسَ بِكَثِيرٍ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يُحْمَلَ عَلَى  
مَحْمَلِ الرِّوَايَةِ الْوَثَائِقِيَّةِ مِنَ اللَّجُوءِ السُّورِيِّ  
إِلَى لُبْنَانَ - رِوَايَةٍ يُحَاوِلُ سَرْدَهَا بِالْإِنْكِلِيزِيَّةِ  
الْقِسْمُ الْمُقَابِلُ مِنْ هَذَا الْكُتَيْبِ.<sup>٦</sup>

مع مؤسسة كونراد أديناور، في تنفيذ مشروع تحت عنوان «عن "مواطنين" مع وقف التنفيذ – "اللجوء السوري" على محك الهواجس اللبنانية».

على ما يُفِيدُ هذا العنوانَ حاولَ المشروعُ مُقارَبةَ اللجوءِ السوريِّ مِنْ طَرَفِهِ اللبنانيِّ، واستطرادًا مِنْ طَرَفِهِ السوريِّ، لا العكس؛ وفي محاولتهِ هذه لَمْ يكتفِ بمساءلةِ هذا اللجوءِ باعتبارهِ «مشكلة»، (إنسانيةً، إغاثيةً، أمنيةً...)، بل باعتبارهِ محنةً مُركّبةً لبنانيةً، وسوريةً، ولبنانيةً/سوريةً.

عملياً قَضَى المشروعُ بعقدِ عددٍ من اللقاءاتِ الحواريةِ مع لاجئينِ سوريينَ في ثلاثِ مناطقٍ لبنانيةٍ، (الجنوب، الشمال والبقاع)، للوقوفِ مِنْهُمْ، في إطارِ برنامجٍ تدريبيٍّ على التواصِلِ والمدافعةِ، على سردياتهمِ لواقعِ اللجوءِ وآفاقِهِ، كما قضى بعقدِ عددٍ من اللقاءاتِ المُوازيةِ مع مجموعةٍ من اللبنانيينَ واللبنانياتِ المعنيينَ بالشأنِ العامِّ والمُنفتحينَ، في مَعزِلِ عَمَّا يَجْنَحُونَ إليه من مواقفَ سياسيةٍ، على نقاشِ مسألةِ اللجوءِ السوريِّ كـ«استحقاقٍ لبنانيٍّ» توصلًا الى صياغةِ أفكارٍ تصلحُ، ولو افتراضياً، أن

تنبني عليها سياساتٌ عامةٌ ذكيّةٌ تُساهم في احتواءِ هذا اللجوءِ، وفي التّخفيفِ من أعبائِهِ على لبنان وعلى اللاجئين، ولكن لا تكتفي بذلكَ فقط، بل تُحاولُ توظيفَ هذا اللجوءِ بما تستفيدُ منه سوريا يومَ أن يعودَ هؤلاءِ اللّاجئونَ إليها، وبما يُساهمُ في مُراجعةِ العلاقاتِ اللبنانية/السورية، وربّما، بما يُلهمُ اللبنانيينَ أفكارًا جديدةً في تعاطيهم مع مسألةِ اللجوءِ عامةً.

علاوةً على هذه اللقاءاتِ تشخّصتُ مُخرجاتُ هذا المشروعِ على هيئةِ وثائقيٍّ قصيرٍ يروي اللجوءَ السوريَّ كما عبّرَ عن نفسه خلالَ اللقاءاتِ الآنفَةِ الذّكر، ومؤتمرٍ عُقدَ في بيروت ربيعَ عام ٢٠١٤.

•

خريفَ عام ٢٠١٥، جدّدت هيا بنا ومؤسسة كونراد أديناور الشراكةَ بينهما في متابعةِ للمشروعِ السابقِ تَسْتَأْنِسُ بالدروسِ المُستفادةِ منه؛ وفي الطليعةِ من هذه الدروسِ أنّ الحديثَ على بيّنةٍ عن هذا اللجوءِ – وهو لجوءٌ ليسَ في الأفقِ ما يُشيرُ إلى أنّه مقبلٌ على أن يَضَعَ أوزارَهُ عَمَّا قريب، فضلًا عن

في تشرين الثاني (نوفمبر) ٢٠١١ – إنكار

اللجوء السوري إلى لبنان – وبينَ منطق

«التسليم بالأمر الواقع» الذي عبّرت عنه

صفقة كانون الأول (ديسمبر) ٢٠١٥، تارجحت

قضية اللجوء السوري إلى لبنان. وفي تارجحها

هذا تابعت ما يمكن وصفه بـ«المزاج»

اللبناني، فبرز، أحياناً، ميل إلى تقديم أعبائها

الاقتصادية، وبرز أحياناً أخرى توجه إلى

تقديم وطأتها الاجتماعية، وكان في أحيان

ثالثة أن علا صوت ما توظفه من هواجس

لبنانية، وهكذا، مع استحضار دائم – مشروع

في مبدآته، موضع مساءلة في أساليبه

وتوظيفاته – لما يترتب عليها من مخاطر

أمنية.

تفاوتت ردود فعل أولي الأمر والرأي

اللبنانيين في تقويم عملية التبادل

فذهب بعضهم إلى التخفيض من طبيعتها

كـ«صفقة»، وذهب آخرون إلى اعتبارها

«فضيحة سيادية»؛ ثم كان ما كان من

تطورات تراجع معها الاهتمام بعملية التبادل

تلك لمصلحة أمور أخرى شاءت الصدق، أو

مكر التاريخ، أن يكون أبرزها عملية تبادل

أخرى، (صفقة الزبداني - كفريا/القوقة)،

تؤذن، على رأي البعض، بالأسوأ...<sup>٥</sup>

•

بصرف النظر عما سبق من استطراد، ورغم أن

الاستمرار في تنفيذ بنود الصفقة المعقودة

بين السلطات اللبنانية وبين «جبهة النصرة»

يبقى في ظهر الغيب، يمكن القول بلا مبالغة

إن تاريخ اللجوء السوري إلى لبنان سوف

يذكر سنة ٢٠١٥ بأنها سنة الانتقال الصريح

من «الإنكار» إلى «التسليم بالأمر الواقع» –

من إنكار اللجوء إلى التسليم به – والسنة

التي ثبت فيها بكل الوجوه بأن المعظم من

السوريين والسوريات في لبنان ليسوا زواراً

بل طلاب أمن وأمان؛ (مع المسارعة إلى

التحفظ على أن تحمل لفظة «انتقال» على

محمل «النقلة النوعية» التي يتوقع المرء

معها أن يشهد، على الفور، مراجعة جوهرية

لـ«المقاربة» اللبنانية لهذا اللجوء).

•

خريف عام ٢٠١٤، باشرت هيا بنا، بالشراكة

<sup>٥</sup> «فضيحة سيادية» هي العبارة التي وصف بها رئيس مجلس النواب هذه الصفقة. النهار، ٣ كانون الأول ٢٠١٦.

<sup>٥</sup> <http://www.shiawatch.com/article/629>

## خمس سنوات على «اللجوء» السوري إلى لبنان من «الإنكار» إلى «التسليم بالأمر الواقع»...

المباشر لعملية التبادل هذه – وهي عملية تَوَسَّطت لإنجاحها دولة واحدة على الأقل، (قَطْر)، وباركتها دولٌ عديدة، أُفْرِجَ بِالْجُمْلَةِ، ببيانٍ مُقْتَضِبٍ، عن بنودِ الصَّفقةِ التي جاءَ التبادل في إطارها.<sup>٢</sup>

وكما لا يُفْتَرَضُ بالمرءِ أن يَتَوَقَّعَ من صَفقةٍ بين «دولةٍ» ذات سيادة، وبين «تنظيمٍ» مارِقٍ يُعاقب القانونُ اللبنانيُّ على الانتماءِ إليه، دارت بنودُ الصَّفقةِ على أمورٍ ذاتِ صِلَةٍ بمتطلباتِ الحياةِ اليوميَّةِ لآلافٍ من اللاجئين السوريين الذين تقطَّعتْ بِهِمُ السُّبُلُ بين عُرسالٍ وجُردِها.<sup>٣</sup>

بينَ منطقِ «الإنكار» الذي عبَّرَ عنه، في عدادِ تعبيراتٍ أُخرى، تصريحُ السفيرِ السوريِّ

في العاشرِ من تشرين الثاني (نوفمبر) ٢٠١١ نَقَلتِ الصُّحُفُ عن السفيرِ السوريِّ في بيروت تصريحًا نفى فيه وجودَ لاجئين سوريين في لبنان موضحًا أنَّ «العائلاتِ مُتواجدةً على طرفي الحدودِ اللبنانيَّةِ/السوريَّةِ، وهناك زياراتٌ مُتبادلةٌ بينها، فكيفَ يكونُ الزائرُ لاجئًا؟»<sup>١</sup>

في الأوَّلِ من كانون الأوَّلِ (ديسمبر) ٢٠١٥، تابعَ اللبنانيونَ على شاشاتِ التلفزةِ عمليةَ تبادلٍ بين السُّلطاتِ اللبنانيَّةِ وبين «جبهةِ النُصرة» موضوعها عددٌ من المُحتجزين لدى الطرفِ الأوَّلِ مقابلَ عسكريين لبنانيين كانَ الطرفُ الثاني قَدْ أَسْرَهُمُ مطالِحَ آبِ (أغسطس) من عامِ ٢٠١٤. وخلالَ البثِّ

<sup>١</sup> السفير، ١٠ تشرين الثاني ٢٠١١.

<sup>٢</sup> المستقبل، ٢ كانون الأوَّل ٢٠١٥.

<sup>٣</sup> المصدر نفسه.

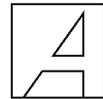
صفحة بيضاء

صُورَ الغلاف بعدسة رشاء الأمين وقد التُقِطت خلال الزيارات الميدانية التي قام بها فريق هيا بنا في إطار المشروع المُفصّل في الصفحات التالية إلى عدد من «المخيمات» و«العشوائيات» التي تؤاوي لاجئين سوريين. أما تصميم الغلاف وإخراج هذا الكتيب فبتوقيع هشام سلام.

هيا بنا  
لبنانيون في سبيل مواطنة جامعة  
آذار ٢٠١٦  
هاتف: ٠١/٢٧٤٠٠٤ | ص.ب.: ٥ - ٢٥ الغبيري - بيروت  
www.hayyabina.org | hayyabina@hayyabina.org



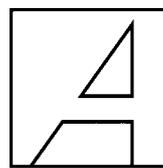
كان إنجازُ هذه المطبوعة بدعم من مؤسسة كونراد أديناور؛ على أنه، فإنَّ المسؤوليةَّ عمَّا تتضمَّنُه تقعُ، حصراً، على عاتق هيا بنا، ومن ثمَّ فإنَّ هذا المضمونَ لا يعكسُ، بأيِّ شكل من الأشكال، آراءَ المؤسسةِ المُشارِ إليها.



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