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**RESTRICTED EXISTENCE: A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND
LEGAL CHALLENGES FACED BY NON-CAMP PALESTINIAN
REFUGEES IN LEBANON**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper explores ways that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, specifically those not living inside refugee camps, have navigated various legal restrictions placed on them by the Lebanese government during their more than sixty-year displacement from their homeland. Available literature on non-camp Palestinians often notes a supposed ‘better-off’ living condition for this segment of the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon. To address this question, the authors coupled comprehensive literary research and interviews with non-camp Palestinians in the southern Lebanese city of Saida.

What is revealed below is how urban Palestinians refugees in Saida have found ways to reassert their human agency in their restricted environment and are thus able to achieve numerous successes in their lives, but are limited in obtaining their full potential by Lebanon’s laws. This reassertion of human agency backs scholars such as Malkki who contends the dehumanization and apoliticalization frequently seen in refugee-related discourse.

This paper further examines numerous exclusionary hurdles Palestinians refugees in Lebanon face in terms of access to basic services including education, health, and employment. The stories of the non-camp Palestinians individuals detailed below explain how they are able to live outside of refugee camps by owning property, but must have this registered in the name of a foreigner or Lebanese person. Furthermore, the various levels of education available to Palestinians are explored and tell the personal struggle Palestinian families must contend with in order to provide their children with the best available education. For all those interviewed, education was seen as a key to upward social mobility. However, the impact of higher education is problematic since employment for Palestinians in Lebanon is severely restricted, thus leading

even the most determined individuals to question if there is added value for their education that will likely not get them a qualified job given the job market discrimination.

Following the discussion of property ownership, educational attainment, and employment status, the paper shifts to examine the role of UNRWA in the lives of Palestinians and the importance this U.N. mandated humanitarian organization plays in providing critically needed medical services in addition to the provision of identity cards. While UNRWA often bears the brunt of criticism from numerous fronts, its defacto-role as government for the Palestinians in Lebanon cannot be understated since it covers most costs of basic medical problems and provides a sense of identity for a long-term refugee community.

Lastly, this paper looks at the hopeful nature of non-camp Palestinians who see hope in the new generation of Lebanese and Palestinian youth who seem to be striving to understand each other. Coupled with this personal angle are the recent successes and roadblocks in the political realm for Palestinians in Lebanon. By stringing together events over the past several years, a notable thaw in the hostile relations between Palestinians and Lebanese officials is evident. However, with each progressive step to a better condition for Palestinians, Lebanese politicians must contend with their constituents who do not always support these efforts, especially in such a complex political system.

This paper concludes that all Palestinians in Lebanon face the same barriers to upper socio-economic mobility regardless of class, age, or location. Non-camp and in-camp Palestinians can only go so far in either their education or job before they hit a legal restriction in Lebanon preventing further advancement. Concluding this paper are several steps that relevant stakeholders can take to improve the situation for Palestinians in Lebanon.

“When we come into the airport, we don’t go to the Lebanese queue or the Arab queue. We go to the queue for foreigners.”

– Abu Latif

INTRODUCTION

For over sixty-three years Palestinians have existed in a state of limbo regarding their homeland. From the fateful days of *an-nakba* (*the Catastrophe* as it is known amongst Palestinians) in 1948, millions of Palestinians have been forced to seek refuge in other countries, and with each new generation residing outside of Palestine, the cycle continues of individuals calling a land they have never set foot in their home. Such is the predicament faced by long-term refugee communities including not only Palestinians, but also other diaspora populations such as Armenians, Afghans, and Somalis. Refugee crises have grown in number especially in recent decades¹, partly due to the post-colonial era that has witnessed the fractionalization of parts of Africa, proxy warfare during the Cold War, post-Cold War nationalism, and the so-called ‘war on terror’ which has impacted not only extremist organizations globally, but has also displaced vast numbers of civilians.

The purpose of this paper is to examine ways that long-term refugee communities navigate their status as a ‘refugee’ in a host-country. In particular, this report investigates the case of Palestinian refugees in the southern Lebanese city of Saida who no longer live within the refugee camp, but have instead relocated outside of those camps. Research is bountiful on living conditions within the UNRWA refugee camps in Lebanon. This focus in the literature can be due to several factors. Firstly, conditions within camps are horrendous and rightfully deserve widespread attention for the miserable conditions of these spaces. Secondly, for researchers and

¹ Hein, Jeremy. “Refugees, Immigrants, and the State.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 9.

aid organizations, refugee camps give definitive boundaries within which ‘research-subjects’ are known to reside and exist on a daily basis—simply put, it is easy to locate individuals to survey and study. This paper, conversely, seeks to explore a lesser-researched aspect of the Palestinian population in Lebanon—those individuals living outside of refugee camps. Scholars Sari Hanafi and Åge Tiltnes assert that, “Conventional wisdom has it that [non-camp] Palestinians residing elsewhere are better off, on the average, including superior education.”² Furthermore, UNRWA and the American University of Beirut’s joint 2010 socio-economic survey of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon highlighted that, “While differences between camp dwellers and refugee urban dwellers (off-camp dwellers) in Syria and to a lesser extent in Jordan are relatively minimal, the gap between camp (and gathering) and city refugees in Lebanon and in the occupied Palestinian territories is enormous.”³ This study seeks explore whether this suggested difference in living standards exists, and if so, why that is the case. Moreover, this paper will examine the impact that discriminatory legal restrictions the Lebanese government places on Palestinians has on this supposedly ‘better off’ community of non-camp refugees.

This paper will begin by discussing the initial years of the Palestinian displacement into Lebanon from the late 1940s until 1975, continuing through the dramatic and bloody years of the civil war, up to the current time. Next, we will contextualize our discussion in the greater refugee discourse and theory. Coupling this history and theory, the next section will draw on field research with non-camp Palestinian refugees in the southern Lebanese city of Saida to analyze several aspects of their lives relevant to this study, including how Palestinians living outside of UNRWA camps have managed to navigate their lives despite the institutional restrictions placed on them as refugees in regard to housing, employment, and education. After

² Hanafi, Sari & Age A. Tiltnes. “The Employability of Palestinian Professionals in Lebanon: Constraints and Transgression.” *Knowledge, Work and Society* 5.1 (2008): 3.

³ UNRWA & The American University of Beirut. *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*. (2010): 5.

that we will touch on the ‘love-hate’ relationship that Palestinians seemingly have with UNRWA. Subsequently, this paper will then move on to explore relations between Lebanese and Palestinians outside of the camps and also investigate access to health services. Lastly, we will present our conclusions and recommendations for addressing some of the challenges discussed in this study.

Setting the Scene

Since the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the creation of the Geneva Conventions in the late 1940s followed by the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention⁴, the focus given to refugee populations on the world-stage has increased the attention paid to these individuals.⁵ Once legally declared and registered as a refugee with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) a person is entitled to certain benefits from both international humanitarian actors involved in assuring their well-being while in a position of statelessness and also from the host-nation of the refugee. Defining a refugee is a fairly simple process legally speaking, but when actually applying this term, the ramifications of refugee discourse can have a profound affect on a person’s individualism.

The 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, and the document used by the UNHCR to prescribe who is eligible for its services, defines a refugee as a person:

*...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.*⁶

⁴ The 1951 UN Convention on Refugees originally only focused on refugees within Europe. Not until 1967 was this provision within the 1951 Convention reconfigured to include all refugees worldwide, except those refugees already receiving aid from another UN agency—a notable exception since Palestinian refugees are under the onus of UNRWA and not directly under UNHCR. From Hein’s “Refugees, Immigrants, and the State.” Pg. 44.

⁵ Crisp, Jeff. “New Issues in Refugee Research: The local integration and local settlement of refugees: a conceptual and historical analysis.” Report from the UNHCR. Working Paper (2004): 2.

⁶ United Nations General Assembly. *Convention and Protocol Relating to Status of Refugees*. New York: United Nations, 1951, Pg. 16.

When the first wave of Palestinians, around 750,000 individuals, fled from the violence in their homeland around 1948, the greatest numbers sought haven in the states neighboring Palestine, namely Transjordan (modern-day Jordan which also absorbed the West Bank from 1948-1967), Syria, and Lebanon.⁷ Of the refugees that went to Lebanon, many originated from villages and towns in and around the regions of Haifa, Acre, and the Sea of Galilee in what is now northern Israel.⁸ For the older Palestinians fleeing the violence between Israeli army and Palestinian militias armed groups, crossing the border into Lebanon must have been an odd experience since just thirty years earlier, Palestine and Lebanon were not even states, but rather part of a borderless region within the Ottoman Empire.⁹ Nonetheless, with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1917 and the subsequent division of the Middle East between the French and British, both of which were jostling for an expansion of their spheres of influence in the region, the mountainous and then predominantly Christian region along the Mediterranean Sea north of Acre was carved out for the French in what became Lebanon, while the British claimed a mandate over the populous cities of Jerusalem, Yaffa, Haifa, Nablus, and Gaza in what became Palestine. The modern Middle East's system of nation-states was thus born in the early 1920s by the European victors of the First World War.¹⁰ However, following the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945 that witnessed the horrific genocide of Jews within Europe during the Holocaust, the United Nations General Assembly approved in November 1947 a report from the Special Committee on Palestine that recommended the partition of the British Mandate over

⁷ Allan, Diana. "Mythologising Al-Nakba: Narratives, Collective Identity and Cultural Practice among Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon." *Oral History* 33.1 (2005): 47.

⁸ Knudsen, Are. "Widening the Protection Gap: The 'Politics of Citizenship' for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 1948-2008." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22.1 (2009): 54.

⁹ Hudson, Michael C. "Palestinians and Lebanon: The Common Story." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10.3 (1997): 243-244.

¹⁰ Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East.* (New York, NY: Holt Paperbacks, 2001).

Palestine creating an Arab state alongside a Jewish state, with an international zone encompassing Jerusalem.¹¹ In the months and weeks leading up to the expiration of the British Mandate, deadly clashes occurred between Palestinian and Zionist armed groups. These initial clashes occurred in mixed towns, especially Haifa and Yaffa, and along the seams between the two communities. In April and June of 1948 armed groups Zionist launched a series of offensives and counteroffensives that decimated the Palestinian armed factions. Corresponding with these offensives was the drastic increase in the flight of Palestinians from their towns and villages. Many fled to Jordan, Syria, Gaza and Lebanon.¹²

Upon their arrival in Lebanon, few Palestinians could have expected their imminent long-term displacement that has since lasted over 63 years; hence they brought only the bare essentials with them during their flight from violence. Recounting years later as an elderly man, the then-38-year-old Abdul Rahim Saieddine said that he had left his home in Acre and crossed into Lebanon carrying with him only the clothing of his wife and children. Abdul Rahim and his family eventually came to settle in Tilal Sayroub, a suburb of Saida in southern Lebanon.¹³ Like Abdul Rahim, most Palestinian refugees took shelter in newly established camps in southern and central Lebanon; fewer went to the north or into the Beqa'a Valley along the Syrian border.

From 1948 until 1950, the Red Cross organization and the Lebanese government provided the primary relief aid to Palestinian refugees crossing into Lebanon. Due to array of social ties between southern Lebanese and northern Palestinians, there were also significant relief efforts conducted by local individuals.¹⁴ In 1950, however, the U.N. created a special

¹¹ Meisler, Stanley. *United Nations: The First Fifty Years*. (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), p. 41.

¹² Morris, Benny. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.590-591.

¹³ Saieddine, Abdul Raham. Interview from the Nakba Archives project. Directed by Diana Allan & Mahmoud Zeidan. Available online at <http://nakba-archive.org>.

¹⁴ Peteet, Julia. *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p.55-56

agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), to provide basic humanitarian services for Palestinians in a more systemic and effective manner. UNRWA became the main organization assisting refugees in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

With assistance from the newly formed UNRWA, primitive refugee camps were

Table 1	
Location	Refugee Camp
Southern Lebanon, in and around Tyre and Saida	Rashidieh
	Burj ash-Shemali
	El-Buss
	Nabataeah
	Ein el-Hilweh
	Mieh Mieh
Beirut	Tell az-Zataar
	Shatila/Sabra
	Burj el-Barajneh
	Mar Elias
	Dbayeh
	Jisr el-Basha
Beqa'a Valley	Wavel
Northern Lebanon, near Tripoli	Nahr el-Bared
	Beddawi

eventually established in Lebanon in unused fields and on former military bases abandoned by the long-since departed French army.¹⁵ In the early years, a total of fifteen camps were established (see Table 1). Hudson notes that during the early years of displacement to Lebanon, “A little more than half of the Palestinians...remained permanently in...camps operated by UNRWA around the country; of the Palestinian community in Lebanon, their conditions were the worst, their future the bleakest, and their attitudes the most negative toward Lebanon and Lebanese.”¹⁶

Initial statistics on refugees applying for humanitarian relief was roughly 300,000 in January 1949, a huge figure for the small, then predominantly Christian state of Lebanon. This figure excluded those refugees who did not register

¹⁵ Sirhan, Bassem. “Palestinian Refugee Camp Life in Lebanon.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4.2 (1975): 91.

¹⁶ Hudson, 249.

(at the time with the League of Red Cross Societies (and later with UNRWA)); consequently the exact number of refugees in Lebanon at that time is unknown.¹⁷

Despite the Lebanese government's early welcoming attitude toward Palestinian refugees, hospitality was replaced by hostility from various Lebanese sects, especially Maronite Christian communities, once Lebanese citizens began to realize the unlikely success of the Palestinian resistance against Israel and the failed political attempts at negotiations, the inevitability of a long-term displacement became apparent.¹⁸ The relocation of the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to southern Lebanon after its expulsion from Jordan after the Black September incident in 1970-71 in Jordan, further exasperated tensions between the Lebanese and Palestinians. Under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, the PLO found southern Lebanon, with its large population of Palestinians, to be an ideal landing spot to continue its resistance against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. While Palestinians welcomed the PLO, the Lebanese state viewed the PLO with growing suspicion, and Lebanese communities unfriendly to Palestinians saw the PLO as a direct threat to their power in Lebanon.¹⁹

By 1975, tensions between the Lebanese and Palestinians populations reached a boiling point that ultimately ignited violence clashes between the various communities' militias that included bloody civilian massacres eventually marking the initiation of the Lebanese Civil War. A reading of the classic book *Pity the Nation* by famed British foreign correspondent Robert Fisk elicits how hostile the environment in Lebanon was for Palestinians during this time period. When Israel invaded and occupied Lebanon in 1978 and then again in 1982, and finally expelled the PLO from Lebanon in 1982, it was largely hailed as liberators by Lebanese Christians.

¹⁷ Weighill, Marie-Louise. "Palestinians in Lebanon: The Politics of Assistance." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10.3 (1997): 295.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 295-296.

¹⁹ Hudson, 253.

Heavy fighting between Palestinians, Lebanese, Israelis, and Syrians led to extensive damage of most of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, thus forcing many Palestinians to flee their homes in the camps—thereby creating a sort of blended legal definition between a refugee and an internally displaced person (IDP)—an *internally displaced refugee*. Ein el-Hilweh camp in Saida was one of the main targets of Israeli sorties. In June 1982 the camp was reportedly “flattened” during battles between Israeli and Palestinian forces.²⁰ News reports in October and November detailed Palestinians families squatting throughout Saida in garages and abandoned buildings.²¹ During this time, UNRWA reported that nearly half of the homes in all of the southern refugee camps (those in and the areas of Saida and Tyre) had been destroyed and 40% of the camp populations had fled.²²

By the end of the civil war in 1990, the refugee camps of Nabataeah in south Lebanon and Jisr el-Basha and Tell az-Zataar camps in largely Christian east Beirut had been completely destroyed and were not rebuilt after their destruction. Those camps’ surviving populations were forced to relocate to other camps or find shelter outside of the bounds of UNRWA’s defined camps. Furthermore, Ein el-Hilweh camp in Saida was destroyed, but it was rebuilt several times during the course of the war and its population continued to swell after the civil war.

Present Situation

As years have passed and the likelihood and hope for a reasonable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to be elusive, the quandary of Palestine refugees in Lebanon has further worsened. At present, a total of 425,640 Palestinians are registered as refugees with UNRWA’s Lebanon office. Notably however, UNRWA released a comprehensive study in 2010

²⁰ Collins, Carole. “Chronology of the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon June-August 1982.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11 (1982): 147.

²¹ MERIP Reports. “September/October 1982.” pg. 34.

²² Collins, 156.

showing that up to 200,000 registered Palestinians have emigrated from Lebanon, with the majority heading for European countries. Currently, an estimated 260,000 to 280,000 registered and non-registered refugees are thus still in Lebanon.²³ Of this number, around two-thirds are believed to reside in UNRWA designated camps, with the other one-third living outside of camps in either gatherings of Palestinians families or in urban settings.²⁴ Nonetheless, the restrictive nature of Lebanon's policies toward Palestinians has created an ominous situation regardless of location.

Lebanese restrictions make life for Palestinians difficult, particularly vis-à-vis access to employment. Of those Palestinians of working age, only 37% have a job (which does not say anything about the type of employment, salary, or job security). Employment in Lebanon is a struggle for a burgeoning youth population comprised of both Lebanese and Palestinians. Lebanese youth are facing increasing struggles locating a job in Lebanon due in part to the lack of new business development and few job opportunities at existing companies. Many Lebanese youth are leaving the country, similarly to Palestinians.²⁵ This could explain to some extent why, in spite of reforms to the legal codes regarding employment of Palestinians, these laws have not been enacted since Lebanese politicians could be seen as making it even more difficult for Lebanese citizens to locate a job. Nevertheless, the employment restrictions placed on Palestinians make the situation of joblessness and low earnings even more challenging for this displaced community. As a consequence of this high joblessness, 66% or approximately 160,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live below the U.N. poverty line; 6.6% or roughly 16,000 of this figure live below the extreme poverty line. Contextualizing these poverty rates from the

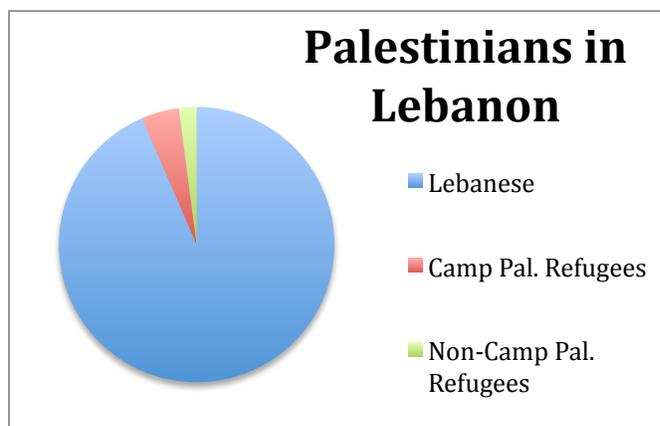
²³ UNRWA & The American University of Beirut. *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*. (2010): 23.

²⁴ Hanafi & Tiltne, 3.

²⁵ Alabaster, Olivia. "Leaders must invest in the youth: LAU President." *Daily Star*, December 19, 2011.

Palestinian community, 35% of the Lebanese population lives below the poverty line, and 1.7% of the Lebanese population lives below the extreme poverty line.²⁶

Given the precarious state of affairs for the majority of Palestinians in Lebanon, many are forced to rely heavily on NGOs and international organizations including UNRWA for basic services such as education, health, and poverty-alleviation programs, since the Lebanese government does not provide basic services to Palestinians. UNRWA's importance to the refugee community cannot be understated since it effectively acts as a type of defacto-government for Palestinian



refugees in Lebanon. UNRWA is also a major employer of Palestinian labor; nearly all of UNRWA's 17,000 employees throughout its five field of operation are Palestinian (approximately 130 employees are international expatriates).²⁷

Palestinian refugees' lives in Lebanon are fraught with numerous means of discrimination thrust upon them by the host government's unwillingness to truly help them in any meaningful way. In a 2008 interview Lebanese MP Ghassan Mokhayber said that, "Our [Lebanon's] official policy is to maintain Palestinians in a vulnerable, precarious situation to diminish prospects for their naturalization or permanent settlement. Our economic and security measures are guided by this. And yet, our real challenge today should be to reconcile rejection of

²⁶ *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*. (2010): 24.

²⁷ Garvey, Jack I. "Rethinking Refugee Aid: A Path to Middle East Peace." *Texas International Law Journal* 20.247 (1985): 253.

naturalization and acceptance of the need to grant Palestinians their rights and improve their living conditions.”²⁸

Palestinian refugees are not granted Lebanese citizenship unlike those refugees of Palestine living in Jordan, and are thus not afforded Lebanese passports or allowed to hold any sort of political office or position within the Lebanese government. These restrictions are understandable given that most other host-countries do not grant such privileges to refugee communities living within their borders and this paper is not advocating for the dreaded concept of *tawtin* (naturalization of Palestinians). Nevertheless, Lebanon goes much further in its discrimination against Palestinian refugees residing within its small national borders. It violates numerous basic human rights conventions and agreements in regards to its treatment of Palestinian refugees. Simply stated, Lebanon’s policies towards Palestinian refugees violates a whole host of international conventions and treaties including the following: 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1954 Convention Related to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1965 Casablanca Protocol for the Treatment of Palestine Refugees, 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.²⁹ Of these international conventions and protocols, however, Lebanon has only ratified the Casablanca Protocol (which it does not adhere to). Former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri acknowledged, “There are humanitarian, social and ethical duties...” and he added that Lebanon, “... should assume the responsibility of providing them to the Palestinian brothers, and Lebanon will not dodge these duties.”³⁰ Despite these frank words, the lack of desire within the Lebanese government to ratify these widely accepted norms likely deals with the balancing

²⁸ Mokhayber, Ghassan. Interview with International Crisis Group on August 1, 2008. “Nurturing Instability: Lebanon’s Palestinian Refugee Camps” *Crisis Group Middle East Report* 84.19 (2009): 16.

²⁹ Suleiman, Jaber. “Palestinians in Lebanon and the Role of Non-governmental Organizations.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10.3 (1997): 399.

³⁰ Al-Hariri, Saad. From his speech on June 29, 2010 at the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. Full text is available here: <http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/Media-Room/Speeches/الحريري-س-ع-د-الريسي-كلمة>

act the Lebanese government, with its complex confessional system, has to navigate when dealing with such sensitive issues. Lebanon's government is often stalemated on even the most basic of internal items, therefore it is perhaps little wonder why these international conventions do not receive any attention or desire from the inherently weak Lebanese government to implement.

CONSTRUCTING A REFUGEE

Whether displacement was caused by war or natural disaster, the past contains numerous examples of the movement large groups of people seeking safety and refuge. Yet, the experiences of forced migrants of an earlier era are significantly different than those of contemporary refugees. With the advent of modern nation-states, the refugee has come to occupy a unique, seemingly contradictory position in the international state system. To properly understand the lived experiences of refugees it is important to examine the larger concepts and strategies shaping the manner in which states and international organizations engage with them. Understanding the construction of the refugee concept sheds light on the unique ways in which Palestinians in Lebanon engage with and negotiate their status as refugees.

The modern refugee phenomenon is inherently connected to the rise of nation-states and the concept of sovereignty.³¹ Key to the nation-state system is the idea of sovereignty or authority over a demarcated territory. The principle of sovereignty rests on mutual recognition between states and on sovereign states refraining from interfering in the domestic affairs of other states. Within this system territory is rigidly defined and state power is projected to the edge of its territory.

As the nation-state became the fundamental element of the international state system, it also became the system through which its population's human rights are protected. Human rights are conceived to be universal, available to all regardless of any characteristic or difference. Yet, as Hannah Arendt notes, there is an inherent contradiction when the nation-state serves as the protector of human rights because it makes what is universal contingent upon what is defined

³¹ Haddad, Emma. *The Refugee in International Society: Between Sovereigns*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.48.

and demarcated. Hence, in this system nativity becomes nationality and man becomes citizen.³² This dynamic has devastating consequences for refugees or those without nationality.

Deprived of the protection of their nation-states, refugees also are deprived of the rights guaranteed by other nation-states to their own populations. By leaving their demarcated territory and community of origin and imposing themselves on a separate nation-state, refugees occupy an ambiguous and contradictory place. Thus, refugees also defy the ordering of peoples upon which the international state system was built. Emma Haddad contends refugees to be anomalies within the very conception a state, since a state is created to protect its citizens. Therefore, when a refugee is cast out from his or her nation-state of origin, the nation-state has in fact failed to protect its population and is thus defunct because of its malfunction regarding its part in the citizen-sovereign relationship.³³ Following Arendt, Giorgio Agamben employs her ideas about the nation-state and human rights to explore further the concept of the refugee. Agamben argues the refugee calls into question the state-nation-territory trinity which serves as the foundation of the international state system. As Agamban notes “The paradox here is that precisely the figure that should have incarnated the rights of man *par excellence*, the refugee, constitutes instead the radical crisis of this concept.”³⁴ Refugees are deprived of their rights and their ability to exert political power at precisely the time when these are most needed.

Jeremy Hein builds on Agamben by adding that millions of people are increasingly stateless worldwide in the sense that they are not provided with services from their government, which it provides to its other citizens. Historic examples of this form of service-exclusion as a form of statelessness can be seen with Kurds in Saddamist Iraq or Bosniak Muslims in Bosnia.³⁵

³² Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1951), p. 297.

³³ Haddad, Emma. “The Refugee: Forging National Identities.” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 2.2 (2002): 23.

³⁴ Giorgio Agamben. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995): Giulio Einaudi ed. Pg. 114.

³⁵ Hein, 46.

Contemporary examples of a citizen's statelessness within a state can be seen inside the slums of India or within lawless Somalia.

Turning to the construct of refugees, these international displaced persons are routinely characterized as a passive group of people thrust out of their homelands and sent to live in a temporary resettlement camp (repeatedly imagined as a tented-camp) where they receive aid desperately needed aid and await a solution to the problems that forced their exile in their home country in hope of returning or resettling elsewhere to restart their lives. Regarding the provision of aid afforded to refugees by the UNHCR, UNRWA, or some other humanitarian NGO, Barry Stein offers a perspective that, "refugees are helped because they are helpless."³⁶ However, this simplistic rendering of 'the refugee' as helpless and verily dependent on the good-will of others severely reduces the human agency of an individual and thereby thrusts a refugee into a condition of *homo sacer*, as defined by Agamben.³⁷

The dual nature of the refugee, as one who is at great risk yet outside the political realm, has received significant attention from scholars. Liisa Malkki argues that this conceptual view depoliticizes refugees and constructs "in that depoliticized space an ahistorical, universal humanitarian subject."³⁸ Being denied a history, refugees are also denied the ability to speak about their condition and to make political claims. As Malkki notes, this has an even greater effect because "refugees stop being specific persons and become pure victims in general."³⁹ The depoliticized and ahistorical refugee allows the international community to claim political neutrality when acting in humanitarian situations. However, for refugees it denies them agency and a voice to generate change. Refugees become part of a greater mass of vulnerable, needy

³⁶ Stein, Barry N. "The Refugee Experience: Defining the Parameters of a Field of Study." *International Migration Review* 15 (1981): 327.

³⁷ Agamben (1995).

³⁸ Malkki, Liisa. "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization." *Cultural Anthropology* 11.3 (1996): 378.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

persons devoid of individual agency. The refugee camp is thus an ultimate means of depoliticizing, dehumanizing, and dehistoricizing individuals. Frequently located outside of populated areas, refugee camps stand apart from normal society, behind walls or fences of exclusion, delineating the difference between the outside and the inside. Camps are born out of a state of exception and are not natural, as noted by Agamben.⁴⁰

Humanitarian organizations, such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)⁴¹, have continuously pointed to the importance of preventing refugee communities from becoming dependent on ‘free handouts.’ Even though it is imperative to assure that refugees will be able to transition back into their native lands in the easiest, safest, and least stressful way possible, assuming that refugees receiving aid and associated services are exceedingly reliant on aid is yet another why in which dehumanization of the refugee occurs. As Harvey and Lind report in their critical analysis of aid’s ‘dependency syndrome’ and the perceived myth surrounding it, they assert, “All the evidence about how people survive during crises points to the fact that...relief does not undermine initiative or make people lazy. Recipients of aid are far from passive recipients, but remain engaged in a wide variety of activities, of which aid forms only a part.”⁴²

Clark reaffirms this assumption, claiming that refugees are some of the most innovative and resourceful individuals from their communities and have far greater capacity to help themselves as refugees than is granted to them by people who claim them to be suffering from ‘refugee dependency syndrome.’⁴³ Incidents in which refugees may appear dependent on aid in

⁴⁰ Agamben, 107.

⁴¹ The IFRC, one of the leading humanitarian organizations, includes in its mission the goal of avoiding aid dependency from their work with beneficiaries. See: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/vision-and-mission/aid-effectiveness/>

⁴² Harvey, Paul & Jeremy Lind. “Dependency and humanitarian relief: A critical analysis.” Published by the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute (2005): 4. Available at www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/265.pdf.

⁴³ Clark, Lance. “The Refugee Dependency Syndrome: Physician, Heal Thyself!” Published by the Refugee Policy Group

fact shows, according to Antwi, that refugees possess strong resolve and determination to help themselves while displaced.⁴⁴ Harvey and Lind further assert that efforts to curtail refugee dependency by humanitarian actors is a way in which they can reduce services to refugee communities, even though these populations are still in need of the services being provided.⁴⁵ In this vein, dependency can thus be seen as another way through which humanitarian actors inadvertently underestimate the capacity of refugee communities.

While the conceptual discussion of refugees tends to focus on the attributes they are denied, it is equally important to think of the type of person being produced. Malkki's work is particularly insightful in this regard. In her fieldwork on Hutu refugees residing in Tanzania she explores how refugees interpret and negotiate their refugee status. Some of the refugees Malkki interviewed saw their refugee status "as a positive productive status and as a profoundly meaningful historical identity."⁴⁶ By thinking of refugee status as a productive identity, Malkki charts a similar pattern described by Michel Foucault as 'disciplinary power'. Foucault argued for an end to describing "the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production."⁴⁷ Our paper engages in a similar process. We examine the restrictions and challenges faced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who live outside of camps. In doing so we seek to understand how they negotiate the numerous restrictions imposed on them. By focusing on access to basic services like education, medical care, and housing, we explore how these restrictions affect the daily lives of non-camp Palestinians. Additionally, we

(1985): 2-3. Available at http://repository.forcedmigration.org/show_metadata.jsp?pid=fmo:204.

⁴⁴ Antwi, Ernest. "The Truth about Dependency Syndrome: A Study of Somali and Liberian Refugees." Published by Refugee Aware (2007): 18.

⁴⁵ Harvey & Lind, 6.

⁴⁶ Malkki, 381.

⁴⁷ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York, NY: Vintage, 1995), p. 194.

argue these restrictions cannot be viewed solely by what they prohibit but also by what they produce. In this case, by the way non-camp Palestinians negotiate their identity.

METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the lives of Palestinians in Lebanon residing outside of UNRWA camps, and how these individuals navigate access to basic humanitarian services and daily lives outside of camps, the two authors of this study conducted field research in Lebanon over a period of ten days in March 2012. Moreover, the authors conducted a comprehensive review of relevant literature including books, news articles, academic journals, media, and official documents from organizations such as the U.N. and UNRWA.

The geographical focus of the investigation centered on the southern Lebanese city of Saida, the location of Ein el-Hilweh camp, the largest refugee camp in Lebanon, and another small camp, Mieh Mieh. Given the sheer size of Ein el-Hilweh, the population from this camp is around 70,000 and is revered to be one of the most dangerous for its inhabitants, there is a large number of Palestinians living outside of Ein el-Hilweh in the city of Saida and in its suburbs.

Using pre-established relationships within the Palestinians community from previous experiences in Lebanon, the first few interviews were relatively easy to arrange. However, the authors relied on the classic *snowball* sampling to obtain additional interviews with other members of the Palestinian community in Saida. Using this method, the authors asked the initial interviewees if they would be willing to ask friends or family members also living outside of camps if they would be like to speak with the authors. Several families were willing to speak with the authors and provided substantial information on their lives and challenges faced in Lebanon. All of the Palestinians interviewed in this study are registered refugees with UNRWA. These in-depth interviews provide much of the evidence for the following sections.

Interviews were mostly conducted in English and lasted typically at least one to two hours. The authors relied on a series of pre-established questions that were used to facilitate the

discussion (see Annex A). The names of key interviewees within this study have been changed to maintain their privacy. In some cases, interviewee's *kunya*, or traditional Arabic combination of the name of the first born with either 'Abu' (father of) or 'Umm' (mother of), for example Umm Zeina, meaning mother of Zeina, has been used in lieu of their actual name.

I. NAVIGATING RESTRICTIONS IN LEBANON

Life within the twelve official UNRWA assisted refugee camps in Lebanon is difficult. In these closed spaces of exclusion, electrical lines dangle precariously in cramped alleyways between drafty homes that suffer from overcrowding and poor access to clean water and proper sewage facilities. The Ein el-Hilweh camp is the most populated camp in all of Lebanon and it is home to around 70,000 people living on just one-square kilometer of land; the problems faced by the community inside it are enormous.⁴⁸ However, just five kilometers from this camp is downtown Saida, the hometown to former Lebanese Prime Ministers Rafiq and Said al-Hariri; it is the third largest city in Lebanon. Located about forty kilometers south of Beirut, this predominantly Sunni city is a conservative town with a well-preserved old city reminiscent of Damascus' fabled souks. Tourists to this city are drawn to this part of Saida for these souks and also for the seaside Crusader castle. As alluring to visitors as the old-city of Saida is to tourists, Saida attracts not only these foreigners seeking a glimpse into yesteryear, but also Palestinian refugees, many of whom have relocated to old-city Saida and the surrounding neighborhoods. In fact, many of the posters hanging on the walls of the old stone souks are of Palestinian, not Lebanese, politicians and martyrs. In the center square of the old-city, the walls of two UNRWA elementary schools, Akka School and Salamia School, help form the main part of the square where it is not uncommon to find children playing soccer under images of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian flag.

⁴⁸ Fakhry, Ghida. "Shooting Hope." A segment from Al-Jazeera's *Witness* program. Aired May 22, 2010. <http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2010/05/2010522112644502482.html>

Ownership Restrictions

Abu Karim⁴⁹ is a thirty-eight year old Palestinian refugee who lives in an apartment building along one of the main roads connecting Saida to Beirut and Tyre. Around thirty percent of the tenants in this apartment building are Palestinian, the rest are Lebanese. Abu Karim and his wife purchased his apartment in 2005 for \$37,000 and have since started a family with two young children. He describes his relations with his Lebanese neighbors as friendly and he even notes that seventy percent of his friends are Lebanese. Although Abu Karim has created a stable home for his family and has good relations with his Lebanese neighbors, the restrictions placed on Palestinians by the Lebanese government have made certain aspects of owning a house or apartment in Lebanon particularly challenging. First, Abu Karim must pay an annual tax of \$2,000, an amount that his Lebanese neighbors do not. Secondly, in order to purchase an apartment in 2005, Abu Karim had to register his apartment in the name of his uncle who has Qatari citizenship.

Lebanese law strictly forbids Palestinians from registering homes or businesses they own in their own names. Instead, Lebanese law requires that either a Lebanese citizen or foreigner (non-Palestinian) place the property in their name. This was not always the case however. In 2001, the Lebanese Parliament voted to amend Law 11614 of 1969 that forbid foreigners from purchasing property in Lebanon without approval from the Council of Ministers. Before the amendment in 2001, Law 11614 included the caveat that persons simply deemed ‘Arab nationals’ could purchase real estate up to 5000 square meters without going through the approval process, hence Palestinians were allowed to purchase property, including houses, so long as they did not exceed the size limited by law. This sort of ‘loop-hole’ was closed in 2001 when Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri introduced the amendment to Law 11614 before Parliament,

⁴⁹ Karim, Abu. Personal interview conducted by the authors in Saida, Lebanon. 11 March 2012.

which the legislative body eventually adopted. The Ministry of Finance said the law was amended in order to, "...improvement of the investment climate in Lebanon. For this purpose, serious efforts were deployed to modernize the regulatory framework of investment in order to offer the most suitable climate to foreigners and nationals desiring to invest in Lebanon."⁵⁰ While this amendment to Law 11614 made it easier for foreign investment in Lebanon, a country still struggling to rebuild while also being occupied by both Syrian and Israeli armies, the change in Law 11614 clearly and deliberately targeted Palestinians since the law stipulated that only legally defined foreigners as those non-Lebanese individuals holding passports from a country recognized by Lebanon—hence Palestinians did not fit this definition given the restrictions already in place under the Law of Reciprocity.⁵¹ Abdul-Majid Kassir, President of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, has called this amendment to the property law, "...unjustified and unjust, and a violation of human rights...there is no benefit to it, for Lebanese or Palestinians. It also harms the image of Lebanon."⁵²

Abu Karim is not alone in his struggles to hold on to his property. Ibrahim⁵³ is a sixty-seven year old Palestinian refugee who has accomplished much in his lifetime in spite of the institutional restrictions of Lebanon. Born in Acre, Palestine in 1945, Ibrahim's mother was Palestinian and his father was half-Palestinian and half-Lebanese. Intermarriage between Lebanese and Palestinians was common at this time and little thought was given to the impact this marriage would have on descendents, and if anything it united two families from different regions of the former Ottoman Empire.⁵⁴ When he was three years old, Ibrahim and his family

⁵⁰ Lebanese Ministry of Finance. *Investment Climate in Lebanon: An update of legislative reforms* (2001): 1.

⁵¹ Talhami, Ghada Hashem. *Palestinian Refugees: Pawns to Political Actors*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003: 100.

⁵² Abdul-Majid Kassir's interview with the *Daily Star*. By Annie Slemrod. February 17, 2012.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Feb-17/163594-palestinian-property-ownership-law-unjust-says-lpdc-head.ashx#ixzz1tm4zlbFW>

⁵³ Ibrahim. Personal interview conducted by the authors in Saida, Lebanon. 15 March 2012.

⁵⁴ Hudson, 244.

went to Lebanon to escape the violence in Acre. Given his Lebanese familial links, Ibrahim's family did not move into a refugee camp like many of those fleeing to Lebanon, but instead he and his family moved in with his Lebanese aunt who owned a house in Saida.

Fortunately, Ibrahim never lived in a refugee camp and enjoyed a good education from Lebanese private schools. After completing his studies, he married a Lebanese woman from a prominent Lebanese family. Using his connections within the Lebanese community, Ibrahim was able to establish a successful bookshop that served as a key source of income for him early in his life. Ibrahim's bookshop was not registered in his name since he was a Palestinian, but rather it was registered in the name of his wife. Later, Ibrahim went on to become an English teacher in Saida at the Rafiq al-Hariri University and he eventually established a large language institution in Saida (registered in his wife's name). Now he assists several NGOs working in the camps addressing Palestinians rights. Through his various accomplishments, Ibrahim has gained a great deal of prominence in the both the Lebanese and Palestinian communities. His accomplishments are reflected in his home—a stunning two-story penthouse apartment with a magnificent view of Saida's castle and the Mediterranean Sea.

In spite of Ibrahim successes and connections within the Lebanese community, which he proudly declares, Ibrahim is afraid for his children's future in Lebanon. While his three children have grown up to be highly accomplished university students both at Lebanese universities and American universities abroad, Ibrahim is concerned that he cannot pass on his home to his children because of the laws on Palestinians forbidding ownership of property in Lebanon. Ibrahim states that, "Registration of the house is not allowed. Sooner or later, I will die and my wife will die and my children cannot inherit the house." While Ibrahim's wife is Lebanese, their children are seen by the Lebanese state as Palestinians since a Lebanese woman who marries a

Palestinian man cannot pass on her nationality to her children, as stipulated in by Lebanon's nationality laws. Thus, the property that Ibrahim and his wife have worked so hard to acquire in Saida will fall into the hands of the Lebanese state, not to Ibrahim's children simply because they are Palestinian. In this sense, the stories of Abu Karim and Ibrahim blend together. Regardless of their socio-economic differences, both face impossible obstacles in overcoming their status as Palestinians in Lebanon regarding property and inheritance rights. At this moment, both Abu Karim and Ibrahim are lucky to have the ability to register their homes in the names of a non-Palestinian. However, this balancing act of using personal connections to register a property is a tightrope act that can go sour at any moment. The case of Abdullah and Bilal provide different perspectives on this topic.

Abdullah⁵⁵ is an eighteen-year-old university student who lives in a thoughtfully decorated, yet cramped one-bedroom apartment in Saida with his mother and father. All are registered Palestinian refugees. Abdullah's father and mother had resided in Ein el-Hilweh camp all of their lives prior to the birth of Abdullah. However, around the time of Abdullah's birth, his father, Bilal, was offered a job as a security guard for an apartment building in Saida. In exchange for his services as security guard, Bilal was given a small salary and an apartment on the ground floor of the building. Bilal has worked tirelessly as guardian of this building for the past eighteen years because if he quits his job or is unable to perform the duties required of his position, Bilal and his family will be forced out of their home by his Lebanese employer in whose name the apartment is registered. In addition, when he must retire from his work, it is likely that the family will have to leave the building and their home.

⁵⁵ Abdullah, Bilal (Abu Abdullah), and Umm Abdullah. Personal interview conducted in unison by the authors in Saida, Lebanon. 15 March 2012.

Despite their socio-economic differences, Bilal, Ibrahim, and Abu Karim's stories as Palestinians within Saida merge together to form a synopsis of the challenges faced by those non-camp Palestinians in this city. Adding another story to this mix is Abu Latif⁵⁶, a sixty-two year old articulate English speaker who also lives in Saida perhaps sums up the collective worry of non-camp Palestinians when he professed that, "I have my apartment [in Saida] but I can't register it in my name, but in this lifetime hopefully it will change. I can't pass it on to my son, but I hope no one will come and take it. We count on goodwill."

The life stories of these individuals thus far have included some degree of luck in obtaining property outside of Ein el-Hilweh camp. But while this luck and hard work that has given these individuals the opportunity to provide noticeably different lives for themselves and their children, their situation is particularly precarious, for if a death or lack of good-will between Palestinians and the individual in whose name the property is registered changes for the negative, then these Palestinian individuals and their families may find their conditions changed dramatically and be forced to find illegal housing outside of the camps or simply relocate into the cramped and dangerous conditions within UNRWA camps (Abu Latif in fact has a second home within Ein el-Hilweh camp but he does not live there because he claims that the camp is too violent, a claim well founded as Ein el-Hilweh is often referred to as 'the wild west' and gun battles, assassinations, and RPG launches are common between the various Palestinian political factions in the camp).

Beyond the measure of trust and maneuvering needed to register an apartment or house in someone else's name, Palestinians also must contend with the skyrocketing prices of real estate in Lebanon. There are very few job opportunities for Palestinians in Lebanon that pay well, and coupled with discrimination for those who hold a job yet receive lower than average salaries

⁵⁶ Abu Latif. Personal interview conducted by the authors in Saida, Lebanon. 13 March 2012.

because they are Palestinian, the possibility of owning or renting an apartment in Saida is becoming virtually impossible especially for low-income Palestinian families. In some areas, such as the old-city of Saida, rent is lower thus there has been a larger influx of non-camp Palestinians here than in other areas of Saida where rent is much higher. As mentioned earlier, Abu Karim bought his apartment in Saida for an estimated \$37,000 in 2005 and he now claims that it is valued at \$150,000 because of the rise in housing prices in Lebanon, especially in Beirut where skyrocketing housing prices are pushing more families out of the capital into the suburbs and cities closed to Beirut, such as Saida. A 2011 report by the Lebanese Bank Audi noted that while demand for new houses and apartments has slipped recently in Lebanon due in large part to the global financial crisis, a decline in the prices of apartments and houses has not followed suit and this is likely due to the small amount of property available in a land-starved country like Lebanon, thus housing prices remain high, even for middle and upper class Lebanese, let alone Palestinian families.⁵⁷

Abu Karim's thirty-three year old friend Jawwad⁵⁸ had lived in an apartment in Saida with his wife and their three-year old daughter and infant son, but the rising cost of living coupled with the challenges of starting a family on a limited income forced Jawwad to move his family out of Saida. Jawwad is lucky to be employed by UNRWA's Sibliin Training Center, a vocational education school about five miles north of Saida. This UNRWA school offers its employees housing on its campus at a low monthly fee. Jawwad said that he will live with his family at Sibliin for a few years until he has saved enough money to find an apartment in Saida and his children are ready for elementary school. But will Jawwad be able to earn enough

⁵⁷ "Lebanon Economic Report—4th Quarter" Released by Bank Audi (2011): 4.

⁵⁸ Jawwad. Personal interview conducted by the authors in Saida, Lebanon. 13 March 2012.

money to rent an apartment in Saida (registered to a non-Palestinian) and afford to send his young children to a private school in Saida as he hopes?

Education Difficulties

Jawwad's friend Ayman⁵⁹ is married with three young boys, two of whom are just entering school. Ayman has sent his two oldest boys to a private school in Saida, which is considered one of the best schools in the city. The annual cost of attending this private school is \$2,000 per student and rises each year, thus Ayman pays \$4,000 a year to send his two boys there for their education this year, but will need to pay a little more each new school year. With the high cost of school, Ayman has been forced to move into his aunt's house in a suburb of Saida with his sons, wife, aunt, and Ayman's mother. Living in these cramped conditions, Ayman expressed noticeable dissatisfaction with the ways in which the Lebanese government restricts Palestinians rights particularly in regards to employment and the discrimination faced by Palestinians with lower than average salaries. Ayman is determined to give his sons the best educational opportunities he can in order to help them achieve a better way of life. However, once Ayman's infant son is old enough to attend school, Ayman and his family will be squeezed into finding ways to afford this education.

Education is one key way in which people can find both social and economic mobility. One common trait thus far about the persons interviewed for this report is their high education attainment levels and it can be extrapolated that education levels can have a serious influence on the ability of mobility both socially and economically. The individuals interviewed and whose stories have been profiled in this report have all obtained at least a university education or completed a vocational education two-year degree. Although this maybe a methodological issue given the small sample size, the importance of education is a cross-cutting theme that can open

⁵⁹ Ayman. Personal interview conducted by the authors in Saida, Lebanon. 13 March 2012.

doors widely, however no matter the education level of Palestinians in Lebanon, there are still limiting factors to the possible success that non-refugee populations do not necessarily face.

Throughout the interviews with the persons whose stories are included in this report there is the reoccurring theme that education is key not only for their own success, but they desire most for their children to have an even better education to move them into a better condition in the future. Striving to provide a good education for a child is not unique to Palestinians—parents around the world covet this for their children. However, the troubles of getting an education for Palestinian children in Lebanon is notably difficult given the access problems that will be discussed below.

UNRWA provides free primary, secondary, and vocational education services as part of its mandate for Palestinian refugees. However, the quality of this education is well-known to be poor and ridden with challenges for teachers and students alike due to several factors including limited funding, poor educational techniques, bad teacher-student ratios, and motivational reasons given the likely of unemployment upon graduation. During his time as a teacher, Ibrahim noted that he has met, “many students...who do not want to continue their studies because there is no future...it is difficult for them to be convinced just to try.” In essence, if Palestinian families have the opportunity and ability to send their child to a non-UNRWA school, they will likely take this route.

Looking at Saida, there are three types of schools available where Palestinian families can enroll their children. Firstly, UNRWA schools are free but teaching style and learning is markedly poor. Secondly, Lebanese public schools are free to Palestinians and tend to provide a better education than UNRWA school, but the public schools have a low quota at which they accept non-Lebanese students—once that quota is reached there is no obligation to accept more.

Thirdly, there are private schools in Saida that offer the best educational opportunities but the cost of attending these schools is high. Our focus is on the last two types of schools—public and private Lebanese institutions.

When he was a boy, Abu Karim attended a Lebanese public school in Saida. His story is unique however as none of the other stories of Palestinians profiled in this report attended a Lebanese public school. Instead they either went to an UNRWA school or to a private school. Abu Karim attributed his acceptance into a Lebanese public school to his family's personal connections (*wasta*) in Lebanon. The term *wasta* is used frequently in Lebanon to describe ways in which favors are granted using 'who you know,' and it emerged time and again as a means through which interviewees claimed they were able to obtain something most others could not access. Abu Karim's *wasta* came from his father who was employed for an influential Lebanese figure in Saida, and who when asked by Abu Karim's father to help get his son admitted into a Lebanese government school, that Lebanese person obliged the request. Therefore, it can be said that admission to public Lebanese school requires *wasta* and admission to a private school requires a steady salary to afford the fees. Most Palestinians cannot afford these fees and thus many end up sending their children to UNRWA school which have remarkably high dropout and fail rates. For those that remain in school, UNRWA's two vocational education schools, the one in Sibliin near Saida, and the other in the reconstructed portion of the northern camp of Nahr el-Bared do offer a link to university.

Abdullah, the son of Bilal the security guard, attended an UNRWA school in Ein el-Hilweh and once he graduated from the twelfth grade after successfully passing the Lebanese Baccalaureate II exam, he entered into the two-year Medical Laboratory technician course at the Sibliin Training Center (STC). Abdullah graduated from the STC and then entered the Global

University in Beirut where he was able to transfer about half of his credits from the STC to the Global University in order to obtain his Bachelors of Science in Medical Technician Studies. Abdullah received a scholarship from the Palestinian embassy that has covered about 40% of the tuition. In June 2012, Abdullah will become the first Palestinian graduate from Global University's Medical Technician Studies program. He hopes to find a job in his field of study but he knows it will be difficult. When asked if he will seek to continue his studying to the masters and doctorate level, he said he would like to but he cautioned that given the working environment in Lebanon for Palestinians that even if he were to get his doctorate he would not be able to advance high in the management chain and would not be promoted. Abdullah is not alone in his concerns about advancing higher in the medical profession. Interestingly, UNRWA released a 2012 media article on another Abdullah from Saida, this time Abdullah Abu Na'aaj who is a 35 year-old Palestinian also from Saida who received a scholarship from UNRWA to study nursing at the prestigious American University of Beirut (AUB). Like 18-year-old Abdullah, Abu Na'aaj desires to continue advancing his medical education since he has successfully completed his nursing program at AUB, and he was such a bright student that AUB's medical center offered Abu Na'aaj a job, which he goes to everyday by bus from Saida to Beirut. Despite his success, Abu Na'aaj laments, "Despite all that I achieved, I also can't be a member of the nurses' association, because I'm Palestinian."⁶⁰

While Abdullah and Abu Na'aaj have succeeded at every level of their education, few have risen as far as they both have. Vocational education is one way in which Palestinian students can find a door to university education, but only three of the STC's thirty-two courses are transferable to just three universities in Lebanon. Of these universities, all are known to be

⁶⁰ "Young refugees in Lebanon overcome barriers." Media release by UNRWA. March 16, 2012. <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=1302>.

highly favorable of Palestinian, but none are prestigious universities. The training that students acquire from UNRWA's vocational education schools are well respected by employers outside of Lebanon, because these courses are closely monitored and followed by UN personnel. In fact, companies in the Arab Gulf countries sometimes recruit graduates from these schools, yet graduates find it difficult to locate a job in Lebanon and less than half of their course credits are transferable to those three small universities. If more universities in Lebanon were to recognize the courses transferable from graduates of UNRWA's vocational education centers, there would be greater access for Palestinians to higher education. However, this is very unlikely to occur given the discrimination prevalent in Lebanon. Therefore, it is a continuous cycle that even the most educated Palestinians in Lebanon cannot find a suitable job and find continued restrictions at every step of the way. Rached, a Palestinian from Saida expressed his struggles in a 2011 documentary about the difficulty at finding work despite his education. Rached lamented that, "More than once they won't even look at my CV, I come back with it, and sometimes tear it up in anger. There's hardly a place I have left out. In the end I started sticking my CV onto traffic lights in Saida. It can't be fair that the only obstacle to finding work is that I'm Palestinian."⁶¹ Hence, the negative environment for all Palestinians in terms of education leads to that lack of motivation that Ibrahim noticed while he was a teacher and which UNRWA, NGOs, and others have duly noted as a major problem for its Palestinian students.

⁶¹ Rached. Interviewed in Philip Bajjaly's documentary *Someone Like Me* (2011). Video here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A71H4zXR6MY>

II. UNRWA AND THE LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP

Over sixty years after its creation the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) occupies a central place in the lives of Palestinian refugees. Initially intended to serve the approximately 700,000 Palestinians displaced during the 1948 War, UNRWA now serves over 4.7 million people in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.⁶² Throughout these areas, UNRWA is the largest service provider for Palestinians, providing elementary, secondary, and vocational schools for Palestinian youth. Moreover, it also supplies primary and secondary health care (with limited tertiary coverage in some cases) and relief services. However, the quality of these services has been severely diminished in recent years. In 1951, UNRWA provided approximately \$200 USD per refugee monthly; by 2004, this figure had dropped to \$7 USD a month.⁶³ In April 2012, Director of UNRWA Filippo Grandi stated that UNRWA was operating in spite of a funding gap of over \$65 million for the 2012 fiscal year.⁶⁴ As recently as fiscal year 2010, UNRWA was facing an even larger funding gap of \$103 million.⁶⁵

Due to its size and functions UNRWA plays a quasi-state role in the lives of many Palestinian refugees. Jalal al-Husseini wrote of UNRWA that, “Over the years, the agency...established itself as a quasi-state institution, taking on responsibilities traditionally assigned to national governments in the fields of education, health, and social services.”⁶⁶ Palestinians, in turn, ascribe various meanings to UNRWA as an institution and as a service

⁶² UNRWA, *UNRWA in Figures as of 1 January 2012*, Public Information Office, UNRWA Headquarters.

⁶³ National Institution for Social Care and Vocational Training, Beit Atfal al-Sumud Lebanon, Habitat International Coalition. “Institutionalized Discrimination against Palestinians in Lebanon.” Report submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (2004): 3.

⁶⁴ Dockery, Stephanie. “UNRWA head calls for easing of camp security, jobs for Palestinians.” *The Daily Star*. April 28, 2012. www.dailystar.com.lb.

⁶⁵ Lombardo, Salvatore. From his speech on June 29, 2010 at the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. Full text is available here: <http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/Media-Room/Speeches.aspx>.

⁶⁶ Al-Husseini, Jalal. “UNRWA and the Palestinian Nation-Building Process,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29 (2000): 51.

provider. These values and meanings attached to UNRWA's services are influenced by the laws and conditions in the different fields of UNRWA's operations. Moreover, the meanings Palestinians ascribe to UNRWA are influenced by the varying circumstances within their own lives. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon express seemingly conflicting opinions about UNRWA, shaped in part by the legal restrictions imposed by the Lebanese government. These opinions further vary depending on whether Palestinians live inside or outside of refugee camps.

In part the different meanings Palestinians ascribe to UNRWA stem from ambiguities in its mandate. Prior to UNRWA, responsibility for Palestinian refugees was accorded to the League of Red Cross Societies in Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan and to the American Friends Service Committee in Gaza.⁶⁷ UNRWA was established by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302(IV) dated December 8, 1949 which designated UNRWA with two primary objectives: to conduct direct relief and works programs to assist Palestinian refugees and to work with local governments to prepare for the termination of UNRWA's activities.⁶⁸ While UNRWA today has the trappings of a quasi-state its mandate does not include a political component. The UN established the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) to resolve issues generated by the 1948 war. Nonetheless, with the failure of UNCCP, UNRWA has taken a more prominent role in a highly politicized context. For instance, in the early 1950s UNRWA implemented resettlement strategies in Lebanon that resulted in the establishment of refugee camps.⁶⁹ While UNRWA's intention to provide more efficient and sustainable assistance stems from its humanitarian character, its actions also have important political consequences. Another ambiguity of UNRWA's mandate is its temporary nature.

⁶⁷ Bocco, Ricardo, "UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees: A History Within History", *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 28, Nos 2 & 3, (2009), p.231.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.232

UNRWA was intended “to organize itself out of existence” by creating sustainable works projects that would reduce the number of refugees requiring assistance.⁷⁰ UNRWA’s mandate must be renewed every three years that inhibits it from engaging in long-term planning. The political situation of local governments, especially in Lebanon, also hampers any type of advanced or visionary planning.

The situation of Palestinians residing in Lebanon has changed significantly since 1948. Throughout these stages Palestinians have expressed different opinions about UNRWA, its role and its services. For many today UNRWA confers the legitimacy of the international community on their situation. It serves as recognition of their right to return. UNRWA is not without its critics as it has been attacked by groups for keeping the refugee issue relevant instead of letting it die down. These attacks have primarily come from Israeli right-wing politicians and Zionist supporters. Former Member of the Israeli Knesset Benny Elon criticized UNRWA when he said in 2009 that it, “is an agency that has yet to rehabilitate a single refugee, and will never do so...UNRWA was not created to service the Palestinians population, but rather, to service the Palestinian national narrative. As such, its perpetuates the conflict and offers the refugees conflict and blood instead of wellbeing and life.”⁷¹ This sort of monologue concerning UNRWA as a Palestinian conspiracy that keeps the story of Palestine alive and relevant is a common critique of UNRWA. Nevertheless, UNRWA’s purpose is to provide humanitarian services to those Palestinian refugees lacking a state institution that provides them with these services, since neither has the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank managed this task nor has Lebanon offered these benefits. Therefore, as a humanitarian agency of the U.N., UNRWA keeps a

⁷⁰ Weighill, (1997)

⁷¹ Elon, Benny. In Interview with Maayana Miskin. “Israeli Initiative: UNRWA Has Never Helped And Never Will.” *Israel National News*. February 2, 2009. <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/133246> (accessed January 24, 2011).

neutral policy toward Israel. But by its very existence UNRWA helps to keep the Palestinian narrative relevant and aids in reasserting human agency by highlighting both the successes and challenges that this refugee community must contend with daily. By keeping the international and local audiences aware of these issues, UNRWA does not allow for the stripping of a refugee's human agency. UNRWA in fact helps to reassert Palestinian individualism and historicizes and to some extent politicizes its beneficiaries. Scholar Rex Brynen puts this debate in perspective:

...Critics, rather than addressing Israel's historical role in the forced displacement of Palestinians in 1948, would rather see refugee claims as somehow emanating from the nefarious machinations of the Palestinian leadership, host countries, and the UN. While seeing the six decades of refugee yearning as artificial, they accept without question that the Zionist movement could be ultimately established on the basis of a Jewish yearning for national homeland after more than two millennia of displacement and Diaspora.⁷²

Despite UNRWA's critics, its services have been invaluable in the Lebanese context, particularly after 1982, the year when the PLO was forced out of Lebanon.

UNRWA's registration card holds particular symbolism. For some Palestinians it is their only official identity document and represents their status as refugees, as well as its accompanying claims such as the right to return.⁷³ For others it is a material example of their exclusion. Abu Karim, a refugee we interviewed in Saida, showed us his UNRWA registration card. He commented on its large size, which was too big to fit into a wallet. He felt it was representative of Palestinians' marginal status in Lebanon. "Why can't it be a normal size?" he asked. Furthermore, Abu Karim associated the card with instances of discrimination by Lebanese security forces. He recounted entering Ein el-Hilweh, the largest refugee camp in

⁷² Brynen, Rex. "UNRWA as Avatar: Current Debates on the Agency—and Their Implications." Paper presented at American University of Beirut's conference entitled *From Relief and Works to Human Development: UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees after 60 Years*. October 8 & 9, 2010. Available at http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public_policy/pal_camps/pc_events/Documents/20101008ifi_unrwa60_conference_conference_papers/day2/ifi_unrwa_conf_day2panel3_paper2_brynen.pdf.

⁷³ Al Hussein, Jalal & Bocco, Riccardo, "Dynamics of humanitarian aid, local and regional politics" in *Palestinian Refugees: Identity, space and place in the Levant*, ed. Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), p. 132.

Lebanon located near Saida. “Sometimes if I give the UNRWA ID [his employee ID] to the guards at Ein el-Hilweh, they say, “This is not legal. I want the Palestinian ID, the blue card.”

While some Palestinians view UNRWA’s registration card as recognition of their rights under international law, others like Abu Karim regard it as a symbol of their discrimination under

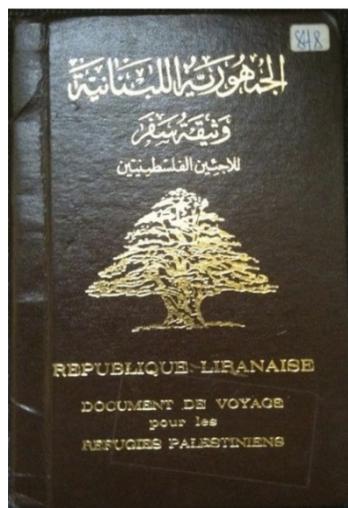


Figure 1: Palestinian Travel document issued by Lebanon

Lebanese law.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon registered with UNRWA are able to obtain travel documents that resemble a passport.

However, these passport-like documents that are issued by the Lebanese government to Palestinians are not the size of a typical passport, instead they are about thirty percent larger than a normal sized passport. Moreover, the personal details of the individuals

holding these travel documents are hand-written and on the outside of the passport-looking document, the terms *Document de Voyage*

pour les Refugies Palestiniens and *watheeqah safir lil-laja'een al-filistiniin*, or in English ‘Travel Document for Palestinian Refugees’ is emblazoned on the cover of the document in both French and Arabic (see⁷⁴ Figure 1). This sort of labeling of a Palestinian as a ‘refugee’ on their travel document reinforces Malkki’s depoliticalization of a refugee whereby their nationality card that is used for travel inherently links both ‘Palestinian’ nationality with the term ‘refugee.’ The consequences of traveling with these documents that strip a Palestinian individual of a unique national identity, and emphasizing the label of refugee, were during our interviews.

Ibrahim’s daughter Leila⁷⁵ is an accomplished academic and was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship from the United States Department of State to study at the University of Kentucky.

⁷⁴ This image comes from Franklin Lamb at <http://www.almanar.com.lb/english/upimg/frank4.jpg>

⁷⁵ Leila. Personal interview conducted by the authors in Saida, Lebanon. 15 March 2012.

In spite of that fact that she won this prestigious award from the United States, upon her arrival in the United States, Leila repined that, “Every time I go to the U.S. they [American customs officials] stop me and ask where I got this [her travel document].” She added, “Even the U.S. treats us differently. The U.S. gives only a visa for 3 years while the Lebanese get 5 years.” Additionally, Umm Abdullah reinforced this notion of discrimination that Leila described when, during our interview with her and her family, she took out her travel document and described how Syrian border officials questioned the legitimacy of her over-sized ‘passport’ with her personal details handwritten inside. In this regard, Palestinian refugees must navigate the significance their travel documents and personal identification cards carry with them since their oversized shape and the manner in which the document’s owner’s personal details are scribbled down can instantly draw suspicion from officials who can instantly identify the document holder as a Palestinian refugee—a person outside of their homeland and in an unnatural position of exceptionalism.

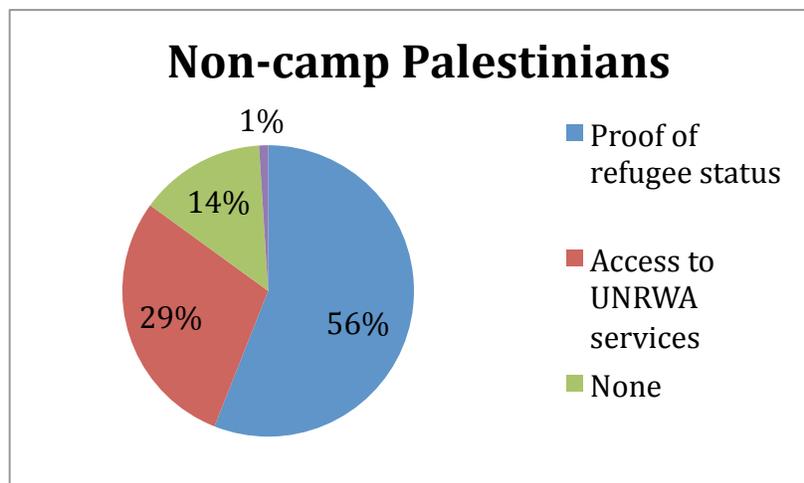
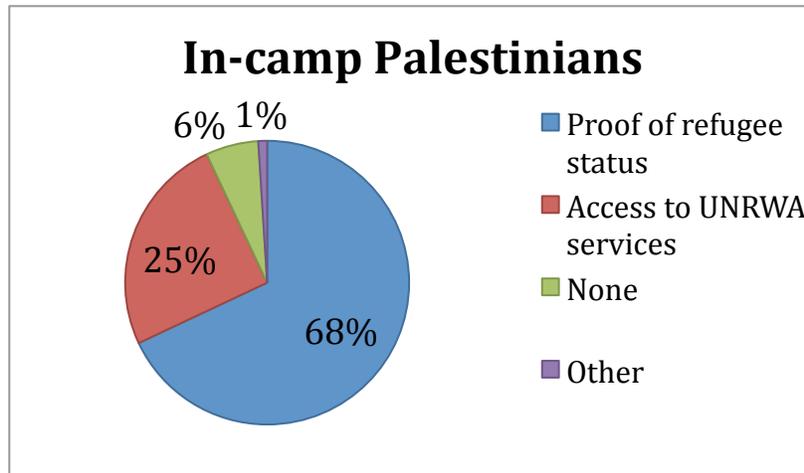
In 2005 the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (Geneva University) and the University of Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) conducted a survey, known as the Near East Project (NEP) Survey on the living conditions of Palestinians registered with UNRWA.⁷⁶ The survey is primarily focused on socio-economic issues but it also included general questions about the value of UNWRA and the main problems faced by refugees in their host countries or territories. Importantly the responses were disaggregated for area of residence.

The first question focused on what is the main advantage of registration with UNRWA. It was a multiple-choice question that offered the following answers: access to UNRWA services, proof of refugee status, other [specify], none, don’t know, no answer.⁷⁷ Among those

⁷⁶ Bocco, Ricardo, et. al., *The Living Conditions of Palestine Refugees: A Synthesis Report*, (2007) UNRWA-IUED/UCL Survey.

⁷⁷ Al Hussein, Jalal & Bocco, Riccardo, *Ibid*, p. 144, fn. 19.

surveyed in Lebanon 62% of respondents cited proof of refugee status as main advantage, while 27% claimed it was access to UNRWA’s services. Additionally 10% chose “none”; 1% chose “other.” When the responses are disaggregated for area of residence as shown in the two graphs below, more non-camp refugees (29%) than camp refugees (25%) believed access to UNRWA services was the main advantage.⁷⁸ This response appears somewhat surprising considering



camp refugees in Lebanon are statistically more impoverished and access UNRWA’s services more. In addition, the majority of UNRWA’s services are located in the refugee camps. This discrepancy can be explained however by the limited access of non-camp refugees to basic

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137-138.

services. Due to government restrictions and the high cost of private services, UNRWA continues to be valuable for those outside the camps. A 2009 Fafo opinion poll of Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip showed only marginal confidence in the services of NGOs operating on behalf of Palestinians; only 36% registered ‘quite a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ of confidence in local NGOs and a only slightly higher percentage for international NGOs at 37%. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority received a low confidence rating at 31%. The organization that tallied the highest percentage of confidence in helping Palestinians was UNRWA, with 76% respondents expressing confidence in their services.⁷⁹ Although these results come from Palestinians living in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and not from refugees in Lebanon, the results can offer some insight more broadly into the support for UNRWA.

In our interviews with non-camp refugees, we frequently heard of frustration with the quality of UNRWA’s services. A particular complaint concerned UNRWA’s medical services. Out of UNWRA’s five fields of operation, refugees in Lebanon expressed the lowest levels of satisfaction with UNRWA’s medical services. Jawwad described the general sentiment best: “For anything not serious we can go to the UNRWA clinic.” The clinics tend to be small with limited staff and numerous patients. Abu Karim, whose wife works at an UNRWA clinic in Ein el-Hilweh, commented, “The clinics are about the size of an apartment.” For secondary and tertiary medical needs refugees seek services from the Palestine Red Crescent Society, Lebanese government-run, and private hospitals that have agreements with UNRWA. UNRWA covers all primary and secondary services but, due to financial restrictions, cannot cover full tertiary care.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ “Surveying Palestinian Opinions March 2009.” Surveyed and report produced by FAFO (2009). Available at <http://www.fafno.no/ais/middeast/opt/opinionpolls/poll2009.html>.

⁸⁰ For more information on the medical services UNRWA covers, see: UNRWA, *Health in Lebanon, October 2011*, (<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011100225718.pdf>).

Individuals are expected to pay any expenses UNRWA does not cover and if an individual cannot cover the remaining expense they “will go to Hamas or Fatah to ask for additional money.” The NEP survey about the living conditions of Palestinian refugees sought their recommendations for improving health care. In Lebanon 75% recommended reducing the cost.⁸¹ Since UNRWA’s services are free to registered refugees, the recommendation indicates the significant burden posed to accessing non-UNRWA medical services.

Though Palestinians may criticize UNWRA’s services, it is regarded as an excellent employer. UNRWA provides its employees with private insurance giving them the ability to access non-UNRWA medical care. Only 5% of Palestinians in Lebanon have private insurance, which highlights the value of this benefit.⁸² Additionally, UNRWA jobs are regarded as secure and as place where one can advance their career. Abdullah, who is studying to be a lab technician, said, “If I work at a hospital I don’t expect a promotion. I will stop at a certain level. In UNRWA you will receive a promotion with a salary [increase].” Palestinians do not encounter the numerous restrictive employment laws when they work for UNRWA. Additionally, for Palestinians UNRWA is not associated with the discriminatory culture encountered in other employment environments.

⁸¹ Bocco, Ricardo, et. al., *The Living Conditions of Palestine Refugees: A Synthesis Report*, (2007) UNRWA-IUED/UCL Survey, p.105.

⁸² *Ibid.*

III. PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE RELATIONS

Since 2005 there has been a gradual thaw in relations between the Lebanese government and the Palestinians. The shift occurred after the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Al-Hariri and the election of the coalition government lead by Fouad Siniora. Hezbollah, the strongest supporter in Lebanon of Palestinians, were members of Siniora's government and sought to improve the situation of Palestinians. Trad Hamade, a Hezbollah member of Siniora's government, was appointed as the Labor and Agricultural Minister and while in this position he lifted the ban that prohibited Palestinians from working in manual and clerical positions.⁸³ Although this change did not significantly improve Palestinians' access to employment, it indicated a new accommodating approach to the Palestinian issue taken by the government.

The tenuous rapprochement was undercut by the Nahr el-Bared crisis in May 2007. Militants from Fatah el-Islam fought with the Lebanese Army at the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp located near Tripoli in northern Lebanon. The fighting lasted fifteen weeks, displaced 30,000 people, killed 500 individuals, and resulted in the destruction of the camp.⁸⁴ The Nahr el-Bared incident severally strained relations in the northern part of Lebanon since many of the Lebanese soldiers killed while fighting with Palestinian militants were from the north. Despite this serious outbreak of violence relations continued to improve in the greater political realm. Notably, in August 2010 Lebanese labor laws restricting Palestinian employment were reformed further. The new changes permitted Palestinians to work in all professions open to foreigners

⁸³ Knudsen, Are, "Widening the Protection Gap: The 'Politics of Citizenship' for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 1948-2008" *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 22.1, 2009.

⁸⁴ Knudsen, Are, "Nahr el-Bared: The political fall-out of a refugee disaster" in *Palestinian Refugees: Identity, Space, and Place in the Levant*, ed. By Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), p.97.

and removed the fee required to apply for work permits.⁸⁵ But this change in the labor laws did not come without its objections, particularly from Christian political parties including the Kata'eb (Phalange) Party and the Lebanese Forces who were keen to table this alteration to the law instead of approving it.⁸⁶ Christian political parties feared that by supporting this amendment it would be the first in a series of steps towards Palestinian *tawtin* (naturalization) in Lebanon—something highly unlikely given the desire from both Lebanese and Palestinians to avoid this at all costs.⁸⁷ Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, head of the Progressive Socialist Party, rejected the claims from the Lebanese Christians parties and bellowed that he had, "...never seen anyone in my whole life more stupid than the Lebanese Right-Wing [referring to the Lebanese Forces and Kata'eb]."⁸⁸ The amendment to the labor law was passed, but it has not been enforced since that time, something not uncommon with the weak nature of the Lebanese government.

In an additional sign of the thawing of relations the Minister of Social Affairs, Wael Abu Faour has taken a public role in supporting the case of better conditions for Palestinians in Lebanon. He was quoted during an October 2011 forum in Beirut on Palestinian employment rights in Lebanon, that "it is not possible to have stability and security for Lebanese without having stability and security for Palestinians."⁸⁹ Three months later, Abu Faour visited Burj

⁸⁵ IRIN, "Palestinians still dissatisfied despite labour law changes," 30 August 2010,

(<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/90327/LEBANON-Palestinians-still-dissatisfied-despite-labour-law-changes>).

⁸⁶ "Commentaries & Reactions related to the 'Democratic Gathering' (PSP) Draft Bills presented at the 2nd Parliamentary Session." From the CEP (2010): <http://www.cep-lb.org/pdf/CommentariesonPalestinianRightsSummaryTable12July20102.pdf>.

⁸⁷ "Lebanese MPs debate refugee rights: Parliament to study proposal allowing Palestinians to work and own property." *Al-Jazeera*. June 16, 2010. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/06/201061651947386938.html>

⁸⁸ Commentaries & Reactions related to the 'Democratic Gathering' (PSP) Draft Bills presented at the 2nd Parliamentary Session." CEP (2010).

⁸⁹ "Abu Faour fii 'arad diraasat lilhamlia haq al-'amal: al-laaj'oun al-filistanioun yeadaf'oun thaman at'tanaaqadat al'lubnaaneea." *As-Safir*. October 14, 2011. <http://www.almustaqbal.com/storiesv4.aspx?storyid=490090>

Barajneh in January 2012. He became the first Cabinet minister to visit a Palestinian refugee camp since 2006.⁹⁰

Moving from this broader, more national level perspective, Palestinians interviewed for this report spoke of improved relations on a personal level. Since they lived outside of the camps and in mixed neighborhoods, the people we interviewed had Lebanese neighbors with whom they had good relations. This held true across socio-economic cleavages. Abdullah lived in an impoverished neighborhood composed of Lebanese and Palestinians close to Ein el-Hilweh. He believed relations between the two communities were generally good. Ibrahim, who was born in Acre during the British Mandate and who lived in a maisonette along the Mediterranean coast, prospered in Lebanon although he is a refugee and developed deep ties to Lebanon. “I feel like I belong to this society. My wife is Lebanese. I don’t feel any problem with them.” Ibrahim’s strong personal relationships with Lebanese society were able to withstand the tumult of the civil war. Often, though, the decline in sectarian thinking was associated with the post-civil war generation and youth.

In our discussions, age was important to enhanced relations in two respects. First, improved relations were seen as a generational shift, as Abu Latif noted, “The new generation is something different.” Jawwad shared this sentiment by claiming that, “Fear has gone out. Now people are friendly with each other.” Second, when the interviewees discussed positive personal relationships with Lebanese, they often emphasized developing them at a young age, usually in an educational environment such as private schools in Saida or universities with mixed Palestinian and Lebanese populations. Another avenue for building relationships and understanding between young individuals from both of these communities can be seen in local

⁹⁰ Gatten, Emma. “Social affairs minister makes rare visit to Palestinian camp,” *The Daily Star*, 25 January 2012, (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Jan-25/161001-social-affairs-minister-makes-rare-visit-to-palestinian-camp.ashx#axzz1sv4BjYFk>).

initiatives such as a photography course run by the Lebanese NGO Zakira Project which brings Lebanese and Palestinian youth together and trains them on photography. In return, the budding photographers are asked to explore each other's lives in cities and refugee camps. Renowned Lebanese photojournalist Ramzi Haidar noted during an al-Jazeera documentary on his work with the Zakira Project with Palestinians and Lebanese youth in Saida that the main goal of this project is "to get [youth from both communities] to know each other, to establish a relationship between each other, and to start a dialogue through the camera."⁹¹

Jawwad further associated this generational mindset shift with the role played by universities. "In universities you have a mix of people and it is changing things. If you want Palestinians to have their dignity in Lebanon it is in schools." Everyone interviewed believed education was the key to success in Lebanon, and it was best to pursue it outside of the UNRWA school system. Private schooling presented only minor concerns about the effect on their children's Palestinian identity. While eating dinner at Ayman's home, his son showed us a picture he drew in school. The teacher instructed the class to draw their flag and Ayman's son drew the Lebanese flag. Ayman, however, recounted the incident with a shrug, believing his children will understand more about Palestine as they grow older. Ibrahim, whose children are half-Lebanese (but officially Palestinian in the eyes of the Lebanese government), took them to UNRWA schools to imbue them with an understanding of situation of Palestinians in Lebanon. "I used to take them to the UNWRA school and say, 'This is your society. Don't forget.'" Ibrahim, however, was the only person we interviewed who expressed this sentiment.

Private schools present Palestinians with the opportunity to escape the rigidness and stagnation associated with UNRWA schools and with camp life. In addition to providing a better

⁹¹ Haidar, Ramzi. "Shooting Hope." A segment from Al-Jazeera's *Witness* program. Aired May 22, 2010. <http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2010/05/2010522112644502482.html>

education, private schools were seen as producing broader minds. For Abu Karim this is a crucial reason he sends his child to private school. “If I registered my daughter in Saida’s UNRWA school her mind will be closed. This is the reason I register her at [a private] school. At [a private] school her mind will be open.” Others we interviewed expressed similar sentiments. They associated a more cosmopolitan perspective with Palestinians who live outside of the camps. It should be noted that this difference is one of self-perception. Additionally, Palestinians who live outside of the camps do not perceive themselves as being less Palestinian. Rather, we would argue, they are expanding the notion of what it means to be Palestinian in Lebanon.

In spite of strong personal connections to Lebanese society and the relative success of those interviewed, there was a hesitancy to claim Lebanon as their home. Abu Karim referred to Lebanon as “a home,” implying it did not have all of the characteristics one associates with home. For Abu Karim this stemmed largely from the restrictive civil rights laws. Abu Latif believed “Home means security and you don’t feel secure in this country. But [Lebanon] is the only place you can go and come back without any problem.” Ibrahim expressed the complicated dynamic concisely when he said, home “for all of my emotions, memories, connections, family is Lebanon” but “my homeland is Palestine.” His daughter Leila, however, had a different perspective. She regarded Lebanon as her home. “I was born here. I built all of my life on this land... This is my society and my culture.” Unlike the other people we interviewed Leila’s mother is Lebanese, which may, in part, account for her different perspective

The hesitancy we encountered among non-camp Palestinians to claim Lebanon as home may also be due to the older age of our interviewees. In her recent dissertation May Farah found a difference in identity among young adult Palestinian refugees who live inside the camps and

those who live outside. Farah found young adult camp refugees regard Lebanon as a ‘shelter’ (*malja*) because they view their lives in Lebanon as temporary. Non-camp refugees regard it as ‘home’ (*bayt*) because “they consider their lives in Lebanon as permanent, as home.”⁹² Farah’s extensive research focuses on Palestinians born after 1985 and explores important differences in the ways the two groups regards each other. Yet in terms of Palestinians’ extreme social marginalization, Farah notes, “both groups of refugees expressed frustration and resentment at their continued exclusion by the Lebanese government and people.”⁹³ The desire for greater civil rights in Lebanon is found across Palestinian society and, for many, is entirely distinct issue from naturalization.

⁹² Farah, May. *Home versus Shelter: Place, Media, and Identity Among Lebanon’s Palestinian Refugees*. Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2011, p. 13.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 117

CONCLUSIONS AND A WAY FORWARD

Palestinians refugees in Lebanon face numerous hurdles in their lives. Our research demonstrates the ways non-camp Palestinian refugees in Saida assert their agency by negotiating their restricted existence and achieving numerous successes in their lives. Furthermore, our paper follows on the work of scholars who seek to investigate the lives and conditions of refugees beyond the simple categorization of them as victims. Our research examines their identities and lives in its specificity. In short, the stories profiled in this paper show that despite the Lebanese institutional restrictions some Palestinians have found ways to live their lives by finding homes in urban centers, obtaining successful jobs, and sending their children to private schools in hopes of a brighter future—all of these are common goals most people wish to attain in their lives, regardless of their refugee status. Ibrahim noted that he is not seeking a stake in Lebanese politics or their politics structure, but rather he states simply “Give me some civil rights just to let me live as a human being.” Ibrahim’s sentiment echoed statements made in 2010 by Abdullah Abdullah, PLO Ambassador to Lebanon: “All the Palestinians want is the right to work like any other foreign nationals.”⁹⁴

Integration, or *tawtin*, is a significant fear amongst many sections of both Lebanese society and Palestinian society. We argue that granting Palestinian’s basic civil rights is a distinct issue that should not be conflicted with fears over *tawtin*. We take a neutral point of view on the fear of *tawtin* and the purpose of this paper is not to advocate one way or another for this concept. Instead, we explored the ways in which Palestinians live their lives in a highly restricted society that is not their own and yet continue to achieve successes, albeit limited by

⁹⁴ Lamb, Franklin. “Palestinians work, Lebanon wins.” *Al-Ahram*. July 15-21, 2010. No. 1007. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2010/1007/op13.htm>

many external factors. Our research has also shown that regardless of class distinction within Palestinian society, non-camp refugees face similar hurdles in advancing their lives. Bilal was concerned that if he lost his job his family would lose their one-bed apartment, while Ibrahim could not register his penthouse apartment and feared what his children would do should anything happen to him or his wife in whose name the apartment was registered. Both fathers were concerned about the future of their children since they cannot pass on their homes to them. Abu Karim noted that the size of his registration ID card did not fit in his wallet. Leila mentioned that the Palestinian passport looked handwritten, was larger than normal passports and that custom officials in the United States believed it was fake and illegitimate. In this vein, Lebanon's harsh and discriminating laws towards Palestinians harm even those individuals who have managed to circumvent some of the restrictions placed on them. In essence, they have had to use a combination of absolute determination and hard work for a better future for themselves and their families plus a bit of good luck just to scrap by outside of the appalling camp conditions.

We have concluded that the statement at the beginning of this paper, "Conventional wisdom has it that [non-camp] Palestinians residing elsewhere are better off, on the average, including superior education," is to some extent accurate, at least for those individuals we interviewed for this study. Nonetheless, the wording "better off" and "superior education" is misleading. Non-camp Palestinian persons profiled in this report do live in nicer conditions than many inside camps, yet they still suffer the same discrimination and fear the possibility of losing a life's worth of hardwork. Their homes can be lost if the person in whose name it is registered changes their mind or if that person dies. Non-camp families can thus lose their homes if a hostile relationship develops between the non-Palestinian registeree and the Palestinian family.

Likewise, access to non-UNRWA schools, in particular public Lebanese schools or private schools, either requires a bit of *wasta* or considerable income. However, if as in the case of Ayman, a family grows too large to pay for all of the schooling costs, they must then choose between sending their children to a ‘better’ school or making other sacrifices. The lack of high paying jobs and the discrimination in the job market for Palestinians precludes high salaries and potential promotions to more senior positions that would help accommodate higher education fees for growing families. These problems are chronic for Palestinians throughout Lebanon. Therefore, the Lebanese government should modify its legal structure to align it with international standards regarding treatment of refugee populations. Enacting these proposed recommendations will be difficult given the complex confessional political system in Lebanon, therefore Lebanese politicians and their constituents will need to understand the positive tradeoffs of making these recommendations a reality.

Diving a bit further into why it would benefit Lebanon to ease restrictions on Palestinians, it could in fact help strengthen and secure the Lebanese economy. Law 11614 was amended in 2001 in order to help make doing foreign business and investment in Lebanon easier, but other factors still make Lebanon an incredibly unfriendly place to establish or operate a business. According to a World Bank report released in 2012, Lebanon ranks below the regional average for ease of starting a business. The regional average for ease of starting a business is 98, but Lebanon ranks 109, while Saudi Arabia rates the easiest at 10, and other nearby countries such as Egypt (21) and the United Arab Emirates (42) rate relatively high as well.⁹⁵ Moreover, acquiring building permits in Lebanon is extremely difficult. Lebanon ranks 161st on the ease of acquiring construction permits; Saudi Arabia is the region’s easiest at 4 and the regional average

⁹⁵ “Doing Business—Country Profile: Lebanon.” Published by the World Bank and IFC (2012): 16.

is 91.⁹⁶ Despite the fact that in 2001 the amendment to allow foreign investment in Lebanon was seen as a way of opening up the Lebanese economy to foreigner investment, the notion that by simply opening it up to everyone (while restricting Palestinian property ownership) to enhance the Lebanese economy, other institutional restrictions are preventing greater growth in the Lebanese economy. Lebanon's economy has successfully grown in recent years. From 2008 to 2010, Lebanon's economy grew by eight percent. Nevertheless this strong growth phase ended in 2011 when for a variety of reasons including regional political uproar and cash-flow disruption caused the Lebanese economy to grow only 2 to 3 percent.⁹⁷ By easing internal restrictions on business and property rights for both the Lebanese business sector and foreigners, including entrepreneurial Palestinians, Lebanon could help insulate its economy from such external shocks. In this sense, by allowing internal actors to have the opportunity to operate a business in Lebanon, the country would not only have a strong foreign business presence, but it would also have stronger protection against economic chaos in foreign markets, thus resulting in Lebanon growing into an even stronger economy. Salvatore Lombardo, Director of UNRWA's operations in Lebanon, backed this perspective during a June 2010 conference when he asserted that allowing greater access to the Lebanese economy, "...will have a huge impact on Lebanon's economy and stability. Lebanon will gain, since it will have a workforce that will invest here."⁹⁸

Some other items for reconsideration and implementation to help alleviate these issues highlighted above:

Immediate Recommendations

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁹⁷ "Country Profile: Lebanon." World Bank (2012) Available at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/LEBANONEXTN/0,,menuPK:294913~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:294904,00.html> (accessed April 17, 2012).

⁹⁸ Lamb, Franklin. "Lebanon wins economically if Palestinians are granted the right to work "What's in it for my confession – and how about me?" *Atlantic Free Press*. 04 July 2010.

- Lebanon needs to enforce the law allowing Palestinians greater access to jobs that was passed in August 2010 but has yet to be enforced.
- More Lebanese universities need to recognize the credits transferable from UNRWA's vocational education centres. Furthermore, the Lebanese government needs to accredit these institutions so that the diplomas are actually recognized by the state as a legitimate educational attainment degree. Graduates from these UNRWA trade and technical courses are well trained and suitable for college level programs—universities would benefit from receiving strong students who have already demonstrated success at a higher educational institution.
- UNRWA needs to get more support from donors to improve its services and to overcome the issues concerning its funding gaps.
- Travel documents for Palestinian refugees need to be modified to match the norms as defined by the U.N.'s International Civil Aviation Organization for passport documents, removing from the front cover the term 'Palestinian refugee.'

Longer-term Recommendations

- Lebanon needs to take a rights-based approach and accept international standards concerning refugees.
- Lebanon should consider offering Palestinians a status similar to what is provided to Palestinian refugees in Syria, in which they have the same rights and responsibilities as citizens except for certain nationality or political rights.
- A solution to the refugee question needs to be resolved in the international arena.

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ANNEX

Annex A:

Discussion Questions Used During Interviews:

Record the interviewees first name, age, sex.

Are you registered with UNRWA?

Questions concerning housing:

Where do you live?

How long have you lived in your present location?

Where did you live previously?

[list all places lived in since birth with dates ...]

Why did you leave the camp?

Do you still have family who lives in the camp?

What do you think they feel about your decision to leave the camp?

Do you think that they want to live in the camp or also move outside of the camp?

In your new location, Do you own or rent your home?

If you rent your home, who do you rent from?

If you own your home, when did you buy it?

If purchased after 2001, is your home registered in your name?

In 2001 a law (Law No. 296) was passed which limits Palestinians from owning property in Lebanon. How did this law impact your experience of buying your home?

If purchased before 2001, what was the process for you to purchase your home?

As a Palestinian refugee did you face difficulties when you purchased your home?

How did the local officials react when you purchased your home?

What is your relationship like with your neighbors?

Will you be able to give your house to your children?

Has Law No. 296 (2001) changed your situation as a home owner?

Describe your relationship to your neighbors.

Do your neighbors know you are Palestinian?

How do Lebanese citizens act toward you when they know you are Palestinian?

How often do you return to the refugee camp?

Do you consider Lebanon your home?

Do you want to return to Palestine?

Questions concerning education:

Where did you attend school and why?

Where do your children attend school and why?

What type of school is it? UNRWA/private/Lebanese?

If anyone attended government schools or private school, describe the experience of registering at a government/private school?

What documentation did you need to provide?

How was your experience of registering at a government/private school different from your Lebanese neighbors or colleagues?

Did the school treat your child differently than Lebanese children? If so, how?

How did Lebanese children treat your child?

What is the benefit of your children attending a government/private school?

What is the benefit of your children attending an UNRWA school?

Questions concerning healthcare:

Where do you go for healthcare and why?

Do you have access to Lebanese hospitals?

Have you ever gone to a Lebanese hospital?

How were you treated at the government hospital?

Can you go to a government hospital in an emergency?

Have you gone to an UNRWA medical clinic?

Do you prefer the UNRWA medical services or the government medical services?

Questions concerning work:

Do you work? If so, what do you do?

How did you find the job?

Is your position stable?

Describe your relationship with your employer.

Who are your co-workers and how would you describe your relationship with them?