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POLICY BRIEF

Youth Mixed Migration in Lebanon

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Introduction

Lebanon is known by its long history of migration, whether the emigration of Lebanese population or the influx of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrant workers. Currently, Lebanon hosts the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, with around two million Syrian refugees entering the country since 2011 due to the war in Syria. Besides, about 200,000 Palestinian refugees have been living in Lebanon since 1948, along with 11,778 refugees from Iraq, Sudan, and other countries, in addition to around 250,000 migrant domestic workers. It's worth noting that Lebanon has not ratified the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 as well as its 1967 Protocol, and does not recognize the status of refugees or support refugee rights. Lebanon has also not signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families of 1990. While Lebanon has ratified seven out of eight core conventions of the International Labor Organization, it has not ratified the conventions that specifically protect the rights of migrant workers.


International and regional resources indicate that youth constitute a significant percentage of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers, especially in less developed countries, where ongoing conflicts, limited job opportunities, and restricted access to education, along with other development shortcomings, act as push factors for young people to seek a promising future elsewhere.

In Lebanon, the percentage of the young population (15-29 years old) among Palestinian refugees accounts for 27.8%, 26.6%¹ among Palestinian refugees from Syria, and 16%² among Syrian refugees. In times of conflicts, adolescents and young adults are likely to be the most vulnerable and adversely affected population groups. Research Studies have confirmed the impact of the precarious living conditions and risks that adolescents and young people face on their lives and aspirations, leading to long-term and profound negative effects on their future.

This paper falls within the framework of international and regional interest in the phenomenon of “mixed migration,” targeting youth, with the aim of monitoring their flows,

¹ Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) (2019), **The Population and Housing Census in Palestinian Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon** (LFHLCS), 2017, Detailed Analytical Report, p.70.

² UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the Children, UNHCR (2014), **Situation Analysis of Youth in Lebanon Affected by the Syrian Crisis**, April, p.3: <http://www.unfpa.org.lb/Documents/Situation-Analysis-of-the-Youth-in-Lebanon-Affecte.aspx>



collecting data on the characteristics of mixed movements, and identifying the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in order to address this matter in a way that respects their rights. This paper focuses on mixed migration in Lebanon and the specific role played by young migrants and refugees, based on recent available data, published and unpublished literature, as well as information provided by relevant authorities. It's worth noting that research and studies directly addressing youth mixed migration in Lebanon are very scarce³, while those addressing the overall situation of migrants and refugees include information that is to some extent applicable to young migrants and refugees.

Based on the prevalent patterns of mixed movements in Lebanon, this paper adopts the definition of mixed migration given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is as follows:

“Large-scale and mixed irregular movements occurring across borders for various reasons. These movements include a diverse group of individuals with varying needs and backgrounds traveling together, using the same roads and means of transportation, namely asylum seekers, refugees, victims of human trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, as well as migrants from vulnerable groups. Human traffickers and migrant smugglers often play a significant role in facilitating irregular and mixed migration movements⁴”.

Therefore, this paper addresses the overall economic and social situation in Lebanon, statistical data about the population and refugees in Lebanon and the legal framework adopted for migration and asylum matters, with a particular focus on the situation of youth⁵ among Palestinian refugees from Syria, in addition to Iraqi and Syrian refugees, concluding our study by proposing some recommendations directed at both the Lebanese government and relevant international and non-governmental organizations.

First: The General economic and social framework

Since early October 2019, Lebanon has been witnessing a worsening economic and financial crisis, compounded by the dual economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world between 2020 and 2022 beside the deadly explosion that occurred in Beirut Port on August 4, 2020. The country's actual economic and financial crisis is considered one of the

³ Of these studies, we mention: The United Nations Population Fund, Youth Mixed Migration in Beirut: Driving factors, lived experiences, sexual and reproductive health and rights, Pilot Study, 2019. (Main Researcher Dr. Hala Naufal).

⁴ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a ten-point action plan, updated in 2016. This definition is not different from that of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is as follows: “The main characteristics of mixed migration flows are their irregular nature and the multiplicity of driving factors, as well as the diverse needs and characteristics of the individuals concerned. Mixed flows can be defined as ‘complex population movements, including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied minors, environmental migrants, smuggled persons, victims of trafficking, and stranded migrants, among others.’ (IOM's Ninety-Sixth Session, Discussion Note: International Dialogue on Migration): https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/migrated_files/Country/docs/Mixed-Migration-HOA.pdf

⁵ The available information is about young male and female aged 15-29 years old.



worst economic crises in the world since the mid-nineteenth century ⁶, causing significant and enduring negative effects on social, health, and environmental aspects. Lebanon's nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dropped from around \$52 billion in 2019 to an estimated \$23.1 billion in 2021. The continued economic downturn led to a significant reduction in disposable income, with a 36.5 % decrease in per capita GDP between 2019 and 2021. In July 2022, the World Bank downgraded Lebanon to the lower-middle-income country category, marking a noticeable decline from its previous upper-middle-income status. The banking sector unofficially imposed strict capital controls and stopped offering loans or attracting deposits. The decline in average income, coupled with a triple-digit inflation rate and a sharp depreciation of the Lebanese Pound, has led to a severe contraction in purchasing power. It is worth mentioning in this regard that unemployment rate increased from 11.4 % in 2018-2019 to 29.6% in 2022 ⁷. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth contracted by 20.3 % in 2020, and the collapse of the national currency resulted in inflation rates exceeding 100 % (in 2022, the annual inflation rate reached 171.2 %). Inflation acts as a regressive tax, disproportionately affecting the poor and the disadvantaged population, as well as individuals with fixed incomes, like retirees. It is likely that poverty rates will continue to worsen, potentially covering three-quarters of the population according to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). A higher percentage of households face challenges in accessing food, healthcare, and basic services. The contraction of per capita GDP in real terms and the rise in inflation will undoubtedly lead to a significant increase in poverty rates and will impact the population through various channels, including the loss of productive employment opportunities, a decrease in real purchasing power, and the cessation of international remittances ⁸. Since the crisis began, the youth population in particular, have been struggling, while highly skilled individuals seize potential opportunities abroad, causing ongoing social and economic losses for the country ⁹.

The ongoing economic and financial crisis has had a significant impact on refugees and migrants, particularly those concentrated in the most deprived areas of Lebanon as they face significant challenges in finding employment opportunities, housing, and accessing basic services like healthcare and education in a country already failing to afford its population with necessary services ¹⁰.

⁶ Report of the Lebanese Economic Observatory, Spring No. 2021 (accessed on 15/05/2023)

⁷ World Bank in Lebanon, accessed on 15/05/2023 on:
<https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/country/lebanon/overview#:~:text=%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89%20%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%20%D8%AB%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AB%20%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%8B,%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AA%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%A3%D8%BA%D8%B3%D8%B7%D8%B3%2F%D8%A2%D8%A8%202020>

⁸ The World Bank, Lebanon is in a state of deliberate depression with unprecedented consequences for its human capital, stability and prosperity. accessed on 25/4/2023
<https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/news/press-release/2020/11/30/>

⁹ Adapted, On the Lebanese Economic Observatory's report (Beirut, 1 December 2020): Lebanon is suffering from a serious drain on resources, including human capital, as brain drain has become an increasingly desperate option.

Second: Statistical data on population and refugees in Lebanon

The estimated population residing in Lebanon (excluding residents in Palestinian refugee camps) was estimated at 4,842,000 in the year of 2018-2019 ¹¹. Lebanon faces a lack of accurate data about its resident population and their characteristics, especially data related to migrants (refugees, undocumented residents, migrant workers, etc.). The only population census dates back to 1932, with no subsequent census efforts since then. Information regarding migrant workers and refugees is often estimative and varies by source due to the absence of registration systems and a significant number of unregistered refugees and migrants. Differences in statistical information, in addition to numerous issues faced by migrants and refugees in Lebanon, are linked to the “invisibility” of refugees in urban areas.

1. Palestinian refugees

Palestinian refugees are one of the longest-standing refugee groups in Lebanon. Over the decades, other groups of refugees and asylum seekers have moved to the country. The following table provides the latest data on categories of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon.

Table 1: Categories of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon

Category	Number
Refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	Around 479.000
Refugees not registered in UNRWA records but registered in the Lebanese authorities' records	35.000
Refugees without identification documents (without IDs)	3.000 - 5.000
Refugees from Syria since 2011	42.000

Sources:

- 1- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon> (11/5/2023)
- 2- UNHCR, The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, February 2016: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/56cc95484.pdf>

¹⁰ See, but not limited to, the report of the International Organization for Migration entitled “Economic Crisis, COVID-19 and Beirut Port Explosion, which has exacerbated the vulnerability of migrants in Lebanon”. accessed on 15/8/2023: <https://lebanon.un.org/ar/128585-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D9%83%D9%88%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF-19-%D9%88%D8%A5%D9%86%D9%81%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%A3-%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%85%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%B6%D8%B9%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%6-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%8C-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B3%D8%A8>

¹¹ CAS and International Labor Organization (ILO), LFHLCs 2018-2019 Lebanon, Beirut, 2020, p.18

The number of registered Palestinian refugees with UNRWA is approximately 479,000 refugees. Around 45 % of them live in 12 refugee camps in the country ¹². A Palestinian refugee census conducted in 2017 in 12 camps and 156 gatherings revealed that their total number was only 183,255 individuals ¹³ due to their continuous emigration from Lebanon while an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 Palestinian refugees without identity documents who arrived in the early 1960s do not possess any valid official documentation. Additionally, the number of registered Palestinian refugees by the Department of Political and Refugee Affairs (DPRA) and those not registered with UNRWA is around 35,000 refugees.

Palestinian refugees from Syria began flowing into Lebanon shortly after the start of the Syrian crisis in March 2011, but their numbers increased significantly in the second half of 2012 as the crisis intensified ¹⁴. More than half of the residents (approximately 42,000 in 2016) ¹⁵ arrived in 2013, with the largest proportion arriving during the first three months of that year. Many of them emigrated from Lebanon, while about 35,000 ¹⁶ individuals stayed in the country, many of whom living in refugee camps.

2. Other refugees and asylum seekers

Since 2011, Lebanon became one of the world biggest hosting country of refugees as more Syrians were seeking refuge amid the war that broke out in their country, leading to a substantial demographic change in Lebanon. By 2014, the number of Syrian refugees, referred to by the Lebanese government as “displaced Syrian population” exceeded one million. In response, Lebanese authorities adopted a unified stance to limit the ability of Syrian refugees to remain in Lebanon and imposed different policies on them starting from

¹² UNRWA: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon> (11/5/2023)

¹³ LFHLCS, op.cit.

This number includes 165,549 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and 17,506 Palestinian refugees from Syria

¹⁴ UNRWA & American University of Beirut (AUB) (2015), **Profiling the Vulnerability of Palestine refugees from Syria living in Lebanon**, p.6

¹⁵ The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, op.cit, p. 12

¹⁶ Interview with Sari Hanafi, Associate Professor of Sociology at the American University of Beirut and editor-in-chief of the Arab Journal of Sociology “Idafat” (means “Additions” in Arabic). Friday, 18 November 2016

¹⁷ Robert Forster and Are John Knudsen, National and International migration policy in Lebanon, EFFEXT Background Paper, Lebanon, p. 8. It should be clarified that the Lebanon General Directorate of General Security (LGDGS) announced the new amendments to the visa procedures on 31 December 2014. Previously, Syrian nationals could have obtained a six-month renewable visa without paying any fees upon entering Lebanese territory. Through the new measures that classified the visa into six categories - tourism, business, study, transit, short stay, or medical reasons, to control the number of refugees, noting that Lebanon ranks second in the world for the size of asylum on its territory, as well as monitoring unregistered Syrians.

However, on 15 January 2015, the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in an attempt to clarify that the new procedures were not being classified under the visa. The ministry is likely to take into account previous agreements that consider it unnecessary for Lebanese and Syrians to travel between the two countries to obtain visas. However, it stresses that Syrians will not be prevented from entering Lebanon through a border crossing without getting the required papers.

Accessed on 15/8/2023 at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/57736>



January 2015¹⁷. The table below provides the latest available data on registered refugees and asylum seekers in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) records in Lebanon. It’s worth noting that the registration of Syrian refugees ceased in May 2015 as per a decision by the Lebanese government¹⁸.

Table 2: Registered Refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon, April 2023

Number of Registered Refugees	Country
805326	Syria
6350	Iraq
2189	Sudan
3239	Other nationalities

Source: UNHCR, Fact Sheet, Lebanon April 2023, op.cit

Based on the data collected from official authorities and non-governmental organizations working on refugee affairs, the numbers provided in the table above are significantly lower than the actual numbers of refugees on Lebanese territory. Since the end of the civil war in 1990, Lebanon has received increasing numbers of Asian, African, and other Arab workers, mostly Syrians¹⁹. The ongoing conflict in Syria since 2011 has forced thousands of Syrians to seek refuge in Lebanon, which has received approximately 1.8 million Syrians according to official estimates²⁰ (including 805,326 registered Syrian refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as of April 2023).

Thousands of Iraqi refugees also fled to Lebanon from Syria after being displaced there due to the instability and violence that followed the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Statistics on Iraqi refugees in Lebanon have varied, although no recent data is available on their numbers. In

¹⁸ See this reference: UNHCR, Fact Sheet, Lebanon April 2023: accessed on 15/8/2023 at: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/4773>

¹⁹ The mass recruitment of Syrian workers by Lebanese entrepreneurs began in the 1960s, when Lebanon witnessed an economic boom, particularly in the construction sector. During the 1980s, the period of the civil war (1975–1991), the movement of Syrian workers intensified, but a large number of them remained in the country. Since the end of the civil war, Syrian workers have returned in large numbers after the demand for labor in the reconstruction market:

John Chalcraft (2009): *The invisible cage, Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 310 p.

²⁰ “Lebanese minister: we are not a colony, and Europe’s decision on Syria’s displaced population is a stab in our back.” accessed on 15/8/2023 at: <https://lebanon.un.org/ar/128585-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D9%83%D9%88%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF-19-%D9%88%D8%A5%D9%86%D9%81%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%A3-%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%85%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%B6%D8%B9%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%8C-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B3%D8%A8>

2007, the number of Iraqi refugees was estimated by the UNHCR Beirut office at 40,000 while the Lebanese Ministry of Interior Affairs (MOIA) estimated the number to be 100,000 ²¹.

Third: Legal framework for migration and asylum

The legal framework for migration in Lebanon consists of a set of legislations initiated with the Nationality Law of 1925 (amended in 1960) and the Law of 1962 regarding the entry, residence, and exit of foreigners. These initial laws have been complemented by additional laws and decrees, the most recent of which is the Anti-Trafficking Act No. 16/2011. Regular migration is subject to visa rules and proceedings from which citizens of some countries exempt from these requirements (entry visas can be granted at the airport or border crossing points).

²¹ Serene Assir, **Invisible Lives: Iraqis in Lebanon**, 9 April 2007: <https://electronicintifada.net/content/invisible-lives-iraqis-lebanon/6849> (accessed on 2/6/2023)

¹³ Hala Naufal, **Youth Mixed Migration in Beirut: Driving factors, lived experiences, sexual and reproductive health and rights**, Pilot Study, **Country Report**, (not published),)UNFPA & DRC), March 7, 2018, pp.10-11

¹⁴ UNRWA & American University of Beirut (AUB) (2015), **Profiling the Vulnerability of Palestine refugees from Syria living in Lebanon**, p.6

¹⁵ The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, op.cit, p. 12

¹⁶ Interview with Sari Hanafi, Associate Professor of Sociology at the American University of Beirut and editor-in-chief of the Arab Journal of Sociology "Idafat" (means "Additions" in Arabic). Friday, 18 November 2016

¹⁷ Robert Forster and Are John Knudsen, National and International migration policy in Lebanon, EFFEXT Background Paper, Lebanon, p. 8. It should be clarified that the Lebanon General Directorate of General Security (LGDGS) announced the new amendments to the visa procedures on 31 December 2014. Previously, Syrian nationals could have obtained a six-month renewable visa without paying any fees upon entering Lebanese territory. Through the new measures that classified the visa into six categories - tourism, business, study, transit, short stay, or medical reasons, to control the number of refugees, noting that Lebanon ranks second in the world for the size of asylum on its territory, as well as monitoring unregistered Syrians.

However, on 15 January 2015, the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in an attempt to clarify that the new procedures were not being classified under the visa. The ministry is likely to take into account previous agreements that consider it unnecessary for Lebanese and Syrians to travel between the two countries to obtain visas. However, it stresses that Syrians will not be prevented from entering Lebanon through a border crossing without getting the required papers. Accessed on 15/8/2023 at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/57736>

¹⁸ See this reference: UNHCR, **Fact Sheet, Lebanon April 2023**: accessed on 15/8/2023 at: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/4773>

¹⁹ The mass recruitment of Syrian workers by Lebanese entrepreneurs began in the 1960s, when Lebanon witnessed an economic boom, particularly in the construction sector. During the 1980s, the period of the civil war (1975–1991), the movement of Syrian workers intensified, but a large number of them remained in the country. Since the end of the civil war, Syrian workers have returned in large numbers after the demand for labor in the reconstruction market: John Chalcraft (2009): *The invisible cage, Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 310 p.

²⁰ "Lebanese minister: we are not a colony, and Europe's decision on Syria's displaced population is a stab in our back." accessed on 15/8/2023 at: <https://lebanon.un.org/ar/128585-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D9%83%D9%88%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF-19-%D9%88%D8%A5%D9%86%D9%81%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%A3-%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%85%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%B6%D8%B9%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%8C-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B3%D8%A8>

²¹ Serene Assir, **Invisible Lives: Iraqis in Lebanon**, 9 April 2007: <https://electronicintifada.net/content/invisible-lives-iraqis-lebanon/6849> (accessed on 2/6/2023)

The country legislation also regulates irregular entry, residence, and exit of individuals from Lebanon, such as: prohibition of overstay, duration of residence based on nationality and status, penalties against employers of irregular migrants with high rates of irregular labor, annual regularization of the legal status of irregular migrants through work permits. Human trafficking and sexual exploitation are prohibited and punishable by law ²².

In theory, labor migration is strictly controlled. Foreign workers must be sponsored by a resident in Lebanon to obtain a residence permit ²³. Jobs should be open to non-Lebanese.

The special status of Palestinian refugees: Palestinian refugees are considered foreigners belonging to a special category (Decision No. 319 of 1962). They do not receive any kind of identification cards, but they get cards issued by the “General Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs.” Besides, Palestinian refugees officially recognized by the Lebanese state do not receive any civil or social rights. The personal card issued by this directorate, along with the UNRWA card, serve evidence of refugee status and are essential requirements for residence, movement, travel, withdrawal of official documents, and conducting transactions ²⁴.

Non-Palestinian refugees: Lebanon does not recognize non-Palestinian refugees. As a result, the Lebanese government considers non-Palestinian refugees - who are refugees according to the UNHCR - as irregular migrants. The right to political asylum is not stipulated in the Lebanese constitution, which contradicts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, stating that “everyone has the right to seek asylum and enjoy it in other countries in the event of persecution”. Lebanon has long been proud of its role in drafting the declaration but excluded the right to asylum protection ²⁵.

As previously mentioned, Lebanon has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol ²⁶. The current status of refugees is primarily determined through the provisions of the “Memorandum of Understanding” signed between Lebanon and the UNHCR on September

²² Hala Naufal, *Youth Mixed Migration in Beirut: Driving factors, lived experiences, sexual and reproductive health and rights*, Pilot Study, **Country Report**, (not published), (UNFPA & DRC), March 7, 2018, pp.10-11

²³ The sponsorship system includes severe restrictions and consists of laws, regulations and customary practices that link the legal residence of migrant workers with their employers. Workers cannot leave or change their jobs without the employer’s consent. Those who leave their jobs without their employers’ permission risk losing their legal residence and face detention and deportation. (Lebanon’s arbitrary bail system): <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2022/01/03/380894> (accessed on 28/5/2023)

²⁴ “Youssef Courbage-Hala Naufal, *the Palestinians in the World, a Demographic Study*. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Beirut, January 2020, p. 136

²⁵ Paul Tabar, *Lebanon: A Country of Emigration and Immigration*, p.11: <http://schools.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/cmrs/reports/Documents/Tabar080711.pdf>

²⁶ Although Lebanon has signed, among other conventions, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, or the Convention on the Rights of the Child. See: Hala Naufal (2011), *La situation des refugies et travailleurs Syriens au Liban suite aux soulèvements populaires en Syrie*, (2011), CARIM Notes d’analyse et de synthèse 2011/73, Module socio-politique, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI), Institut universitaire européen, 2011, p 4.

9, 2003²⁷. According to this memorandum, Lebanon is not a host country for asylum seekers and refugees but rather a transit or temporary refuge. The Memorandum of Understanding provides limited guarantees only to refugees recognized by the UNHCR and does not cover any refugee who entered the country before 2003 or those rejected by the UNHCR. In practice, these individuals become undocumented and irregular residents, facing imprisonment if arrested²⁸.

Palestinians without identity documents and the majority of Palestinian refugees coming from Syria lack legal status in Lebanon, which limit their ability to exercise their human rights and access basic services²⁹.

Fourth: Vulnerability of refugee youth and the risks they face

Based on the definition used in this paper for the concept of mixed migration, this section focuses on the conditions of Syrian, Iraqi, and Palestinian refugee youth arriving from Syria since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011.

1. Lack of legal status

The absence of legal status deprives refugee youth of their basic rights, preventing them from accessing services provided by the state, including healthcare and education. Approximately 70% of Syrian refugees lost their legal status, their mobility right and their ability to work and access healthcare and education amid the introduction of the new residency policies in January 2015. The latter implemented by the Lebanese government indirectly promotes irregular employment, exposing refugees to financial exploitation, including long working hours, low wages, and lack of protection. It also exposes the most impoverished refugees to dangerous situations that force them into unfavourable choices, including engaging in illegal work, weapons and drugs smuggling, and attempting irregular migration³⁰.

Palestinian refugee youth from Syria currently residing in Lebanon face challenges in legalizing or renewing their residency status. Since their arrival in the country, the Lebanese General Security authorities have issued several circulars allowing them to renew the required residency permits. Most of these permits were valid for one to three months, many of which

²⁷ Memorandum of Understanding between the General Directorate of General Security and the UNHCR Regional Office on Dealing with Asylum Seekers Refugee Status, 9 September 2003. The General Directorate of General Security is part of the Ministry of the Interior and is responsible, among other things, for enforcing all laws relating to foreigners in Lebanon. See General Security website, “General Security History and Functions”, on: www.general-security.gov.lb/English/History/GSFunction/

²⁸ Françoise De Bel-Air (2017). Migration Profile: Lebanon. European University Institute, Robert Shuman Centre for Advanced Studies ; Migration Policy Centre, Issue 2017/12, pp. 3- 4

²⁹ Aidoun, Undocumented Palestinians in Lebanon (Non-ID Refugees), 2014, <http://bit.ly/1W9Jrg7>

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017: Lebanon

were issued at intervals. During this period, renewal was theoretically not possible, while the first year of residency renewal was free. In 2014 and part of 2015, the annual cost of renewing legal residency documents for those who had exceeded one year of residency was 200 USD per person ³¹. It is likely that many Palestinian refugee youth from Syria did not approach the General Security authorities out of fear of arrest and deportation or due to the length and cost of the process. Since October 17, 2015, several memoranda have been periodically issued to allow the renewal of residency documents for free. Deportation orders were also issued for some Palestinian refugees from Syria whose residency permits had expired, although these orders had not been implemented ³².

As for Iraqi refugees, the UNHCR office in Lebanon has provided apparent recognition to refugees arriving from Baghdad and southern Iraq since February 2007. However, less than 10% of those who arrived in Lebanon are already registered with the UNHCR. This recognition provides refugees with partial protection; but it does not grant resettlement rights or full protection. Since Lebanon is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention, Lebanese authorities do not give much importance to the UNHCR recognition of Iraqis as refugees. Therefore, many of them think registering themselves with the UNHCR is useless

Iraqis usually enter Lebanon with tourist visas valid for one month, or by being smuggled across the Syrian-Lebanese border for a fee of 100 to 150 USD. A survey conducted by the Danish Refugee Council in 2007 revealed that 71% of Iraqi refugees covered by the survey were in an irregular status, and 95% of them arrived in Lebanon through smuggling means across the Syrian-Lebanese border. Slightly over half of them reported never feeling safe in Lebanon ³³, while the majority of Iraqi refugees consider Lebanon as a transit point to Western countries ³⁴.

2- Living Conditions

A. Young Syrian Refugees

Young Syrian refugees (15-24 years old) entered Lebanon due to the overall deterioration of security conditions in their home country or fear of violence practiced against them

³¹ The results of the study on “Profiling the Vulnerability of Palestine refugees from Syria living in Lebanon”, show that although less than 3 per cent entered Lebanon illegally, more than half had no valid entry visa during the summer of 2014, indicating that the majority entered Lebanon legally but had lost their legal status due to the overstay of the visa. One of the reasons for not having a legal status was the inability to pay 200 USD for the renewal of residence for each member of the family.

³² Chaaban, J., Salti, N., Ghattas, H., Irani, A., Ismail, T., Batlouni, L. (2016), “Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon 2015”. Report published by the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), p. 8

³³ Danish Refugee Council (2007), Iraqi Population Survey in Lebanon, pp. 46-47.
https://iraqlogger.powweb.com/downloads/Full_Report_3.pdf

³⁴ Serene Assir, Invisible Lives: Iraqis in Lebanon, 9 April 2007: <https://electronicintifada.net/content/invisible-lives-iraqis-lebanon/6849> (accessed 2/6/2023)



or their families. They chose to live in familiar areas or where they have relatives and/or acquaintances. The percentage of females seeking refuge in Lebanon was significantly higher than males, with 46% of females being married or having been married previously, compared to 11% of males. Slightly over one in five, or about 22%, have children. Around one-third, or 30% live in temporary housing. Most youth reside in overcrowded homes, with an average of 8 individuals per housing unit where no basic facilities are available. Only a minority of 6% of this category of refugees receive formal education, but dropping out for various reasons, namely the unaffordable cost of education, financial issues, the misalignment of Lebanese curricula with those used in Syria, and transportation costs. Half of the youth are economically active, meaning they either work or seek employment, while the other half are unemployed, with a majority of females, estimated at 86%. Nearly two-thirds of those employed are dissatisfied with their work conditions primarily due to low wages, and they often seek any available work due to their multiple needs. While health services are often inaccessible because of cost, 96% of youth have access to primary healthcare services, including pregnancy and childbirth-related services. Early marriage is prevalent and seems acceptable to youth and their families if suitable opportunities arise, often used as a coping strategy in current circumstances ³⁵.

The young Syrian refugees describe the Lebanese people attitudes towards them as both positive and negative. However, the negative stance is more prevalent and is attributed to the deteriorating economic conditions in Lebanon, especially concerning employment. Conversely, Lebanese youth express biased attitudes against their Syrian counterparts and harbor fears about them. Alongside the collective fear associated with the large number of Syrian refugees and their prolonged stay in Lebanon, signs of sympathy with their conditions are also observed ³⁶.

B. Young Palestinian Refugees from Syria

The majority of Palestinian refugees (63%) reside in 12 scattered camps throughout Lebanon, while the rest (36.6%) live in peripheral areas around the camps or in settlements across the country. The infrastructure of the camps was already overstretched before tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees from Syria arrived. The vast majority of the workforce among Palestinian refugees from Syria is employed informally, with less than 14% having work contracts. Most of them (60.4%) do low-skilled jobs, resulting in high levels of poverty and extreme poverty. Poverty rate reached 65% in 2015, while extreme poverty rate was at 3%. Poverty particularly

³⁵ Situation Analysis of Youth in Lebanon Affected by the Syrian Crisis, op.cit:

The situation analysis was based on a random sample of 985 young males and females aged 15–24. Of these, 86% have entered Lebanon through the Syrian-Lebanese border.

³⁶ *Idem*, p.31.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017: Lebanon

affects young refugee populations, as 71% of them live in poverty and 5% suffer from extreme poverty³⁷.

The continuous deterioration of the economic and political situation in Lebanon, along with the government's restrictions on Palestinian refugees and the constraints imposed on UNRWA's budget, as well as the increasing needs, have had a negative impact on the quality of education given to young Palestinian refugees from Syria. Given the differing roles and cultural norms that make males the main providers for their family, young people tend to leave school at an early age. Accordingly, females' school attendance rate is 75.2% compared to 64.3% for males in intermediate level, and 42.9% for females compared to 28.4% for males in secondary level. The dropout rate for the age group of (16-18 years) is at 11.3% for males and 7% for females³⁸. More students lose motivation to complete their education and find it difficult to justify the reason behind studying due to limited access to appropriate employment opportunities in the highly discriminatory Lebanese job market³⁹.

C - Youth Iraqi Refugees

There is no up-to-date information available on the living conditions of young Iraqi refugees except for the results of a survey conducted by the Danish Refugee Council for Iraqi Refugees in 2007. At that time, unmarried young men living in youth hostels constituted 68% of male Iraqi refugees. These individuals lack health insurance, access to healthcare facilities, and protection from work hazards. They are also ineligible for social assistance despite their low-income jobs. This group of young people is more susceptible to persecution by law enforcement authorities as part of security measures, leading to detention. Additionally, they are more vulnerable to deviant behavior due to their harsh working conditions and face challenges in their living arrangements independently without direct family or support networks in Lebanon⁴⁰.

³⁷ Chaaban, J., Salti, N., Ghattas, H., Irani, A., Ismail, T., Batlouni, L. (2016), "Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon 2015", op. cit. p. 45-53-54-82

³⁸ Youssef, (S). (2020) Adolescent boys and youth in Lebanon, A review of the evidence, Report, London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence

³⁹ Changes in Lebanese law in 2005 and 2010 granted Palestine refugees in Lebanon legal access to some official jobs in the private sector that were previously limited to Lebanese citizens. However, reports indicate that the legal ban on Palestinian refugees include 36 free or trade union professions (including medicine, agriculture, fishing and public transport). See The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 2016, op.cit.p.5

⁴⁰ Iraqi Population Survey in Lebanon, op.cit

Conclusion and Recommendations

Lebanon has not ratified the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and does not recognize the refugee status or support their rights. Additionally, Lebanon has not signed the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The current status of refugees is determined through the “Memorandum of Understanding” signed between Lebanon and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whereby Lebanon is considered a transit or temporary refuge country.

In Lebanon, there are approximately 200,000 Palestinian refugees coming to the country since 1948, 11,778 registered refugees from Iraq, Sudan, and other countries, and about two million Syrian refugees since 2011 due to the Syrian war. Information related to migrant workers and refugees is often approximate due to the lack of registration systems and a significant number of unregistered refugees and migrants.

Palestinian refugees are considered a special category of foreigners in Lebanon and are issued cards by the “General Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees” along with the UNRWA card that serves as evidence of refugee status and is essential for residency, mobility, travel, obtaining official documents, and conducting transactions. However, Lebanon does not recognize non-Palestinian refugees; therefore, the Lebanese government considers non-Palestinian refugees - who are refugees according to the UNHCR - as irregular migrants. The absence of legal status deprives refugees in general, and young refugees in particular, of their basic rights, preventing them from accessing employment opportunities and basic services provided by the State, including healthcare and education.

With the increasing number of Syrian refugees fleeing their country since 2011, there has been growing political, economic, and social pressure on Syrian refugees to leave Lebanon. This pressure is exacerbated by the ongoing economic and financial crisis and the spread of “xenophobia.”

Based on the basic needs of young migrants and refugees and aiming to address them in a way that respects their rights, we can provide the following recommendations to both the Lebanese government and international organizations and non-governmental organizations concerned with their affairs.

1. To the Lebanese Government

- Develop a clear migration policy in Lebanon.
- Improve migration management tools by establishing a monitoring mechanism, adopting a data collection strategy on migration patterns and studying them.

- Review Lebanon's residency system and the way it recognizes the legal status of migrants and refugees.
- Establish mechanisms to monitor irregular and mixed migration movements among youth, collect data on their motivations, characteristics, and needs.
- Abolish the sponsorship system, which makes migrant workers subject to violence.
- Recognize that refugees are a specific and protected group under international law, as the situation in their countries of origin prevent them to return.
- Sign the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and ratify agreements protecting migrant workers.
- Recognize the right of young migrants to healthcare, education, and employment within the framework of applicable laws.
- Strive to improve the economic situation to create employment opportunities for both youth in host communities and young refugees.
- These recommendations aim to address the challenges faced by young migrants and refugees in Lebanon and promote their rights and well-being.

2. To International Organizations

- Prioritize the efforts of implementing a political solution to the Palestinian refugee issue.
- Striving with the concerned parties to find a political solution to the Syrian refugee issue.
- Increase the budget of UNRWA to provide healthcare, education, protection, water, sanitation, hygiene, and other forms of support for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.
- Secure the necessary funding for international organizations to respond to the Syrian crisis and provide healthcare, education, protection, water, sanitation, hygiene, and other forms of support for Syrian refugees and their host communities.
- Raise awareness and address obstacles that hinder young refugees from accessing education services (e.g., curriculum differences and language barriers).
- Support evidence-based pilot studies to demonstrate the positive economic impact of refugees, as they can also be an asset through the transfer of their capital and skills.

- These recommendations aim to enhance the support and resources available to both Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Lebanon and address the unique challenges faced by young refugees in accessing education and other basic services.

3. To Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):

- Collect and exchange information about migrants while respecting privacy, confidentiality, and migrants' security.
- Young migrants require a combination of psychological, social, healthcare, and legal support, which can be achieved by establishing strong referrals between different relevant sectors or by creating comprehensive centres.
- Implement sustainable emergency response programs to provide immediate assistance to young migrants and refugees in collaboration with international organizations.
- Encourage United Nations agencies to recognize the risks faced by the displaced youth generation among migrants and ensure they receive adequate support on both psychological and social levels.