

# Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

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## Basic Information

Official Name: Lebanon or Lebanese Republic

Capital: Beirut

Estimated population: 3,874,050 (July 2006 est.)

Websites:

[CIA, The World Factbook](#)

## Map of Lebanon

### Summary

Lebanon is located in the South-East of the Mediterranean basin; it has borders with Syria on the North and East and Israel to the South. The capital is Beirut and the other major cities are Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre and Zahle. Lebanon gained its independence from France in 1943. According to the unwritten “National Pact of 1943” (Cobban, 1985: 70), the President of Lebanon is a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies a Shia Muslim, the Commander of the Army a Maronite Christian and his Chief of Staff a Druze. There are 18 officially recognized religious sects of which the Shia and the Sunni Muslims, the Maronites and Roman Orthodox are the most powerful groups. Muslims make up 59.7% of the population: Shia, Sunni, Druze, Ismaili, Alawite or Nusayri, and Christians 39%: Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copts and Protestants while others make up 1.3% of the population.

The Parliament consists of 128 deputies; made up to proportionally represent the various sectarian groups, and serves for a 4-year term.

Websites:

[US Department of State](#)

[CIA, The World Factbook](#)

### Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) defines a Palestine refugee as “any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost their home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict”. UNRWA's services are available to all those living in its area of operations who meet this

definition, who are registered with the Agency and who need assistance. UNRWA's definition of a refugee also covers the descendants of persons who became refugees in 1948. UNRWA's five fields of operations are: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Gaza and the West Bank.

The Lebanese Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) estimate that there are around 415,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (Palestinian Human Rights Organization: 2002) and these are divided into 3 categories:

1- Refugees registered with UNRWA and the Lebanese authorities.

The number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon registered with the UNRWA in June 2006 was 406,342 (about 10% of the population of Lebanon). They are Palestinians who had fled Palestine in 1948 ([UNRWA](#)).

2- Palestinian Refugees registered with the Lebanese authorities (non-registered Palestinian refugees).

There are Palestinian refugees registered with the Lebanese authorities but not with UNRWA and are estimated to number between 10,000 and 40,000, according to the European Union's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) (Amnesty International, 2003). UNRWA states that the Lebanese Ministry of Interior has 'unofficially' informed it that these refugees number 13000 (UNRWA, 'The Latest Developments in the Living Conditions of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon', 2006). Half of these refugees were registered by the Red Cross and later by the Lebanese Government, and are also 1948 refugees, while the rest were registered under the orders of former Interior Ministries in the period of 1969 – 1978 and are 1967 displaced persons.

3- Non-ID Palestinian refugees.

The number non-ID Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is subject to controversy: the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) in March 2003 issued a report estimating there to be 10,000 of them; the US Committee for Refugees estimated 16,000 (World Refugee Survey, 2003); and the Danish Refugee Council, who carried out a survey in 2005, estimated the number at 3,000 people.

These refugees moved to Lebanon in the 1970s after the events of Black September in Jordan or because of the civil war in Lebanon and did not consider it necessary at the time to register themselves. However, after the PLO political military infrastructure in Lebanon was disbanded and the redeployment of the Lebanese security over Lebanon, their lack of documentation became a prominent issue. These refugees are residing in Lebanon without papers, and thus cannot access education, work, health or travel etc. Some of these refugees are actually registered with UNRWA in other fields of operation (UNRWA, 'The Latest Developments in the Living Conditions of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon', 2006).

UNRWA states that in view of the exceptionally difficult circumstances of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, it provides services to all 3 categories of refugees (UNRWA, *The Latest Developments in the Living Conditions of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon*, 2006).

However, these numbers do not accurately represent the number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, since many refugees registered with UNRWA are currently

residing in other countries. It is estimated, that the number of Palestinian refugees actually residing in Lebanon to be around 250,000 ([Forced Migration Review](#), Issue 26, 2006).

It is estimated that there may be around 100,000 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon who, since the 1980s, have emigrated to Arab Gulf countries and northern Europe, mainly to Germany, Denmark and Sweden (Dorai, *Palestinian Emigration from Lebanon to Northern Europe: Refugees, Networks and Transnational Practices*). About 15,000 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon live in Sweden and 2,000 in Denmark.

### [The 2006 Conflict between Hizbullah and Israel](#)

The conflict between Hizbullah and Israel which began on 12/13 July 2006 and lasted for 34 days affected mostly Palestinian refugees in the South of Lebanon. The Palestinian refugees in southern Lebanon live in Tyre, the villages around Tyre and near the Israeli border as well as in the 3 refugee camps of the south: El Buss (1.5km from Tyre), Rashidiyeh (5km from Tyre) and Borj Shemali (3km from Tyre). There are Palestinian refugees also in the informal settlements around Tyre. Some of the camp residents lost their means of livelihood from the start of the hostilities, while many refugees reliant on overseas remittances could not access them due to bank closures ([UNRWA Report, August 2006](#)). The camps in the South became isolated and the camp inhabitants were unable to access supplies as leaving the camps became dangerous.

Many camp residents left the 3 camps and moved to the Sidon camps. On August 9<sup>th</sup> 2006, Israeli Defence Forces air strikes hit Ain El Helweh refugee camp in Sidon, killing 2 and injuring 10. It is estimated that 75% of the inhabitants of Wavel Camp in Baalbeck left the camp (UNRWA, 'The Latest Developments in the Living Conditions of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon', 2006).

About 47% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live outside the camps and thus were in the same situation as the Lebanese people. Some Palestinian refugees fled to Syria. UNRWA estimates that 16,000 Palestinian refugees were displaced as a result of the hostilities between Hizbullah and Israel (IDMC, December 2006).

## UNRWA Camp Profiles



Reprinted from UNRWA, [www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org). Lebanon Refugee Camp Profiles.

## Lebanon Refugee Camp Profiles

CAMP	NUMBER OF REGISTERED REFUGEES
Ein el-Hilweh	45,337
Nahr el-Bared	31,023
Rashidieh	25,580
Burj el-Barajneh	20,405
Burj el-Shemali	18,659
Beddawi	16,198
Shatila	12,235
El-Buss	10,107
Wavel	7,553
Mieh Mieh	5,037
Dbayeh	4,211
Mar Elias	1,411
Dikwaneh & Nabatieh (destroyed camps)	16,108

+ 10,092 refugees distributed throughout the camps

There are at present 12 official refugee camps in Lebanon, with 214,736 registered refugees living in these camps, making up 52.8% of the total number of registered refugees in Lebanon ([UNRWA, June 2006](#)). There are also about 15 unregistered Palestinian informal gatherings or unofficial settlements, and which were established by refugees settling on plots of land, and are not managed by UNRWA. However, UNRWA does provide direct education, relief, health and social services to registered and non-registered refugees living in these settlements or 'gatherings'. (UNRWA, *The Latest Developments in the Living Conditions of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon*, 2006).

None of the camps have any formal infrastructure. Some camps were partially destroyed during the civil war and the Israeli invasion and were never rebuilt. There is a lot of poverty and the unemployment rate is very high. The area of land allocated to the camps has remained the same since 1948. Thus in the more populated camps, the refugees could only expand upwards. Construction is not controlled and buildings do not conform to international safety standards.

In the South of Lebanon, the Lebanese government has banned the entry of construction material to the camps since the late 1990s. Thus, the conditions of the camp houses, streets and shops have deteriorated. Although this policy was revoked in for a few months in 2004, it was reinstated again in 2005 (Amnesty International, [Limitations on Rights of Palestinian Refugee Children, 2006](#))

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have the worst socio-economic situation in UNRWA's five areas of operations with the highest percentage of Special Hardship Cases (SHCs). There are approximately 46,204 SHCs and which is about 11.4% of the registered refugee population, in comparison with 8.7% in Gaza and 7.3% in Syria ([UNRWA, June 2006](#)). The SHCs receive direct support from UNRWA including direct food aid, cash assistance and shelter rehabilitation.

### **Political makeup of the Camps**

Palestinian groups and several Palestinian armed factions operate in the camps, although their freedom of movement is restricted. The Lebanese government has not tried to impose state control on the camps. There are about 15 Palestinian factions in Lebanon, the most important being: the coalition of Fatah (Fatah, Palestine Liberation Front, Palestinian Popular Struggle Front); the contingents of the PLO; and Islamic forces: Ansar, Islamic Philanthropic Association, Al Jamaa al-Islamiyya, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine/Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP/DFLP), Palestinian National Alliance, Arab Liberation Front (affiliated with Iraq), Saaqa (Popular Liberation Forces, which is affiliated with Syria), Fatah Intifadah, Fatah Revolutionary Council, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. (Suleiman 1999: 72).

#### **Websites:**

[Palestinian Human Rights Organization](#)

[US Committee for Refugees](#)

[US Department of State](#)

## Historical Background

In 1948, Palestinians from the areas of the North of Palestine: Haifa, Acre, Safad and the Galilee region, were forced to leave their homes, due to Israeli military forces attacks and ethnic cleansing. Many villages were destroyed in that area and these Palestinians fled over the border with Lebanon. They numbered around 100,000 (Petee, 1997), which is about 14% of the Palestinian refugees who fled Palestine in 1948. Those who were economically well-off travelled directly to the big cities, while the majority remained in the border areas.

During the first months, the Palestinians were housed and given food by Lebanese farmers. They were assisted at the beginning by the LRCS (International League of Red Cross Societies), which provided tents, clothes and food. There was also some aid presented from public and private sources. The Lebanese Government also offered assistance by offering the LRCS free depots, warehouses, security, labour and transport. The Lebanese Authorities later allocated certain area for the refugees to settle in. In 1949, the Lebanese Government tried to send some of the Palestinian refugees to Syria, which consequently led to the closure of the borders by the Syrian Government.

In 1949 UN Resolution 302 established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (EMHRN Mission, 2000: 11). In 1950 UNRWA began operations. In 1953, it was decided to exchange the tents with semi-permanent shelters. UNRWA originally established 16 camps, of which 3 were destroyed (Tel-El-Zaater, Nabatiyeh and Jisr-El-Basha) and 1 was evacuated (Gauroud) (UNRWA, 2002). UNRWA schools were established in the camps. Between 1948 – 1958, the Palestinian refugees lived in relative harmony with their Lebanese hosts, with some freedom of expression and political activity (Suleiman, 1999: 67).

During the 1950s, demands from Sunni politicians for a greater Muslim role in the Government of Lebanon, together with Sunnis' support for Nasser's calls for Pan-Arabism, as well as the 1957 staged elections were the sparks that led to the 1958 civil war. (Cobban, 1985: 85 – 95).

From 1959 onwards, Israel persistently refused to implement UN General Assembly Resolution 194 *'that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for the loss or damage to property which, under principles of international law an in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible'*. In the wake of these events, the initial welcoming and tolerant attitude of the Lebanese changed. In order to discourage permanent resettlement, the Lebanese government started placing harsh restriction on the refugees. For example, no housing development was permitted. In 1962, Palestinians were classified as foreigners and

work permits became difficult to obtain. Martial law was imposed on the refugee camps, all which resulted in the 1969 'uprising' in the camps.

The defeat of Egypt and Syria's in the 1967 Six-Day War resulted in a wave of support for the Palestinian guerrilla movement in most Arab countries. In Lebanon, members of various Lebanese groups, as well as other people, demonstrated to demand the Lebanese Government support the right of the Palestinians to mount guerrilla warfare against Israel from the Lebanese territories (Cobban, H., 1985: 103). In 1968, the first large scale Israeli incursion into Lebanon took place, in order to force the Lebanese Government to control the Palestinian guerrillas, and the subsequent pro-Palestinian demonstrations that took place marked the first of the Palestinian related crises that began to have a serious effect on Lebanon's political system (Cobban, 1985: 109).

With the signing of the 1969 Cairo Agreement between the Lebanese Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) the situation of the refugees improved substantially. The Cairo Agreement granted residency, freedom of movement and labour rights to the Palestinian refugees, as well as autonomy of the refugee camps and the right to carry out armed attacks against Israeli targets from Lebanese soil. However, the freedom of movement, residency and labour rights remained tied to the Cairo Agreement and never became national legislation. The PLO presence in Lebanon became known as Fatahland, or the Palestinian 'state within state', as a result of the almost total control of the Arkoub region (in the south-east Lebanon) by Arafat's men. (Fisk, 1990: 74)

During the 1970s, the PLO rapidly became a political power and extended financial and military support to the Lebanese left-wing, which angered the Maronites and right-wing parties. PLO attacks against Israel led to Israeli retaliations against Palestinians and Lebanese, especially in the South, which in turn diminished Lebanese support for the Palestinians and their cause. All this aggravated the already existing tensions between the various Lebanese political factions and eventually led to the outbreak of the 1975 civil war.

In 1974, an Israeli air raid totally destroyed Nabatiyeh refugee camp (in the South of Lebanon) and in 1976, Christian Phalangist militias overran and destroyed 3 refugee camps in East Beirut (Tel-El-Zaater, Jisr-El-Basha and Dbayeh). Of these, only Dbayeh still exists and receives some UNRWA assistance (UNRWA, 2000). Tel-El-Zaater was besieged for 51 days and upon surrender, an estimated 3,000 of its inhabitants, mostly Palestinian refugees (Khalidi, 2001: 4) as well as some Lebanese, were massacred.

In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, occupied Beirut and forced the PLO out of Lebanon. The evacuation of the PLO led to a worsening situation for the Palestinian refugees. In spite of a negotiated agreement whereby the US guaranteed the safety of 'Palestinian non-combatants in Beirut', the refugees were left virtually unprotected and were targeted by attacks from various different groups and factions, notably the Christian Phalange and Amal movements. This was accompanied by internal conflict among the Palestinians as well as external conflict with Israel.

## Websites:

### [Destroyed Villages](#)

## The Violence

While violence against the Palestinian refugees was one of the key features throughout the war. Three periods particularly stand out:

### **The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, 1982**

Israeli air strikes and artillery killed around 2,400 people in West Beirut (many in the camps of Sabra and Shatila), 1,100 in the refugee camps of Sidon and 1,200 in the camps of Tyre. In the camps of the South, the Israeli army later systematically destroyed houses that had survived (USCR Report, 1999: 7). During the siege of West Beirut in the summer of 1982, hundreds of Palestinians were killed in the refugee camps of Sabra, Shatila and Bourj-El-Barajneh (USCR Report, 1999: 7).

### **Sabra and Shatila**

After the PLO withdrawal from Beirut in August 1982, and the Israeli Army's occupation of Beirut in September 1982, Christian Phalangist militias entered the camps of Sabra and Shatila and massacred around 1000 Palestinian refugees and Lebanese civilians residing in the camps, while the Israeli Army failed to intervene (USCR Report, 1999: 7).

### **The camps war, 1985 – 1987**

Between 1985 and 1987, the Syrian backed Amal Movement, a major Shia militia, attacked several Palestinian camps in Beirut and in the South in order to get rid of the remaining pro-Arafat PLO combatants (Suleiman, 1999: 68). During periods of intense fighting many of the camps were besieged, cut off from the outside and suffered from lack of food, clean water and medical supplies (USCR, 1999: 8). However, the Amal movement was not able to seize control of any of the camps. It is estimated that the fighting resulted in the destruction of 80% of homes in Shatila camp (Beirut), 50% of homes in Burj El Barajneh camp (Beirut) and Sabra (an informal settlement next to Shatila) was almost totally destroyed. An estimated 2,500 people were killed during this period (Khalidi, 2000: 7).

## Conflict-induced displacement

Between 1975 and 1991, many Palestinian refugees were displaced, some of them many times. The USCR's 1999 report on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon estimates the number of internally displaced Palestinians at 20,000. It is reported that between 1972 – 1988, around 90% of Palestinian refugees have been displaced once, 66% displaced twice and 20% three times or more (Khalidi, 2001: 10, Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1995).

Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon forced many refugees to flee their homes in the camps in Beirut and in the south of the country and seek refuge in other camps. The Nahr El Bared camp received more than 1000 Palestinian refugees who settled in an empty plot of land in the north of the camp, which had been intended for the construction of a hospital. Subsequently, the area has been incorporated within the camp and is known as 'the place of the emigrants'. In 1987, as a result of Amal's

siege of Shatila and the destruction of 80% of the camp, around 14,000 of its 17,000 inhabitants were displaced again (USCRI, 1999: 8).

### Informal Settlements of Displaced Palestinian refugees

The refugees that have left their original camps or have been driven out due to war or violence against them became dispersed around Lebanon. Many have settled on plots of land which later became gatherings or informal settlements. The settlements have no access to UNRWA services such as sanitation, water and electricity. There are about 15 informal settlements of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

The living conditions in the informal settlements are even worse than the camps. In the Jal Al-Bahr settlement in Tyre, which is located on the coast, some houses were destroyed by flooding in 2005. However, the Lebanese government continues to prohibit the refugees from carrying out any reconstruction or refurbishment to their houses (Amnesty International: *Limitations on Rights of Palestinian Refugee Children*, 2006).

### Rights and Legal Status

The legal status of Palestinians in Lebanon has never been addressed since their arrival in 1948. In 1950, the Lebanese government created the Central Committee for Refugee Affairs, which was responsible for the administration of Palestinian refugee issues. Then in 1959, the Department of Palestinian Refugee Affairs was created as an office in the Ministry of Interior. In 1962, the Lebanese Government classified the Palestinian refugees as foreigners (Law 10 of 1962) (International Federation for Human Rights Report, 2003: 10) according to this law all foreigners had to obtain work permits.

According to Decree no. 927 of 1959 (Khalidi, 2001: 16), the Department of Palestinian Refugee Affairs (DPRA) is responsible for the designation of areas as camps; the registration of the inhabitants of the camps; the registration of births, marriages, deaths and changes of residence; the right to accept or refuse the transfer of financial aid for the refugees from abroad. However, neither the DPRA nor the wider Government of Lebanon promise to provide any social services. This is left entirely to UNRWA.

In 1987, the Lebanese Government unilaterally abrogated the 1969 Cairo Agreement, thus cancelling all socio-economic rights previously granted to Palestinians. The issue of Palestinian rights was briefly considered in 1991, when a committee was specially created for this purpose. The Palestinian representatives presented a memorandum to the committee for the 'Civil and Social Rights of the Palestinian People' (Suleiman, 1999: 68). However, nothing concrete resulted from this committee and since the early 1990's, Lebanon has placed immense restrictions on the Palestinians in the form of legislation: Palestinian refugees have no political, social or civil rights (UNRWA, 2002). Any question of granting them rights is seen as a step towards permanent integration (USCR Report, 1999: 2). Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are discriminated against and harassed on a daily basis. They are liable to be arrested, detained and harassed by security forces, as well as by rival Palestinians.

In 2000, Decree no. 4082 changed the name of the Department of Palestinian Refugee Affairs to the Department of Political and Refugee Affairs (International Federation for Human Rights Report, 2003: 12).

### Websites:

[US Department of State](#)

[Amnesty International – 2003 Report](#)

## Legal Status

Lebanon was party to the Casablanca Protocol of 1965 Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States, which states that:

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

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

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

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

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

Lebanon signed the protocol on 3/8/1966 but has placed the following reservations:

Article One: Palestinians residing at the moment in Lebanon are granted the right of employment, together with the right to keep their Palestinian nationality, in accordance with prevailing social and economic conditions in the Republic of Lebanon.

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

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

Reservations on the Fourth and Fifth Articles.

(Source: [Resource Centre for Palestinian residency and Refugee rights \(Badil\)](#))

### [The Department of Palestinian Refugee Affairs \(DAPR\)](#)

DAPR was created by Presidential Decree No. 42 of 1959.

Article 1: The DAPR shall carry out the following:

- Contact UNRWA Lebanon to ensure the receipt of relief, shelter, education, health and social services for the Palestinian refugees;
- Receive and examine applications for passports and transfer them to the Surete Generale (General Security);
- The registration of personal documents relating to birth, marriage, divorce, death, change of residence and change of sect or religion;
- Approve applications for the reunification of dispersed families;
- Approve the exemption of custom duties for personal and household items for persons coming from Palestine for family reunification;
- Designate the localities of the camps and process documents and procedures for their lease or ownership;
- Issuing permits to allow the transfer of residence from one camp to another;
- Approve marriage applications from refugees in Lebanon to refugees in other Arab countries;
- Approve the transfer of frozen or incoming funds to refugees in Lebanon.

Article 2: The Ministers of state shall provide DAPR with the necessary technical assistance.

(Suleiman, 2006: 12)

### [Residency, travel and travel documents](#)

The Lebanese Government issues Travel Documents to enable the Palestinians to travel and work abroad. A different kind of document is issued to each of the three categories of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon:

- Refugees registered with both UNRWA and DAPR are issued with permanent residency documents and a 5-year renewable travel document;
- Refugees registered only with DAPR (non-registered refugees) get issued with permanent residency documents and a Laisser Passer with 1 year validity, renewable 3 times;
- Non-ID refugees who are not registered with either UNRWA or DAPR are not issued with any documents at all.

In 1995, Order No. 478 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs imposed an exit and entry visa, which left many Palestinian refugees and holders of Lebanese travel documents stranded outside of Lebanon, unable to return. In January 1999, the Government eased the visa restriction (International Federation for Human Rights Report, 2003: 14)

## Right to Health Care

All Palestinian refugees are denied access to Lebanese public health care, relying on UNRWA medical centres as well as hospitals that have contracts with UNRWA. While UNRWA provides primary and secondary health care, it is only able to contribute a limited reimbursement towards tertiary hospital care. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is also a principal health provider, although the lack of funding after the PLO's withdrawal from Lebanon in 1982 has had a serious downward effect on the quality and scope of the services it provides.

## Right to Education

Palestinian refugees are denied access to Lebanese public schools. Lebanon is the only location where UNRWA offers secondary education to counter balance the restricted access to public schools and the high costs of private schools (International Federation for Human Rights Report, 2003). UNRWA runs 74 primary schools and 3 secondary schools in Lebanon, educating a total of 45,259 pupils (UNRWA, 2002). In its five fields of operation, Lebanon is the only one in which UNRWA operates secondary schools. Nonetheless, UNRWA concedes that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have 'limited access to public secondary education' while private secondary education is beyond the means of most Palestinian refugees ([UNRWA](#)).

Generally, the facilities in UNRWA's school are in bad condition and the school buildings are in need of repair or replacement. Lebanon's schools have among the highest class sizes in UNRWA's five areas of operations (USCRI, 1999: 19). There is also an overall lack of recreational space for students. The poor socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon compel many students to leave school and seek work in order to support their families. Palestinian schools in Lebanon have the highest drop-out rates in all of UNRWA's areas of operations ([UNRWA](#)).

However, in the case of Palestinians without identity documents, secondary school education is inaccessible altogether due to their inability to sit for the intermediate schooling exam (taken at age 15) because they do not have any recognised ID.

## Right to Employment/Freedom of Association

The 5 main sources of income of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are: employment with UNRWA; remittances from relatives working abroad; employment in Palestinian associations or organizations; employment in agriculture and Lebanese companies; employment in shops and enterprises within the refugee camps.

Lebanese labour law stipulates that only members of the Lebanese professional associations can receive licences in order to work in any skilled profession. Associations can be freely established. However, for foreigners they are controlled by the reciprocity clause (Ministerial Decree No. 17561 of 10 July 1962). As stateless persons, Palestinians cannot form associations.

Various ministerial decrees (No. 1/289 of 18 December 1982 and Ministerial Decree of 15 December 1995) prohibit Palestinians from around 72 trades and professions (International Federation for Human Rights Report, 2003: 12). Since 1994, Lebanese police has been cracking down on unlicensed Palestinian clinics, pharmacies, shops and enterprises, inside and outside the refugee camps (USCR Report, 1999: 12).

A new decision was taken in 2005 by the Lebanese minister of Labour granted Palestinian refugees born in Lebanon the right to work in private sector jobs which previously were limited for Lebanese only ([Arabic News](#)). However, it is not known if this decision will make much difference as obtaining a work permit is an expense that few Palestinians can afford. Palestinian refugees remain unable to take syndicated professional jobs such as engineering, law and medicine (UNRWA, *The Latest Developments in the Living Conditions of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon*, 2006).

### [Social Security](#)

Employed Palestinians have no right to social security. The reciprocity clause stipulates that citizens of another country residing in Lebanon enjoy the same treatment and rights as the Lebanese citizens residing in their country. But as Palestinians are stateless, this clause does not apply to them.

### [Restrictions on Building](#)

The Lebanese Government forbids the reconstruction of totally destroyed camps, and in other camps any reconstruction or building requires a special permit which is usually not issued. In some camps, Lebanese soldiers verify that the residents are not smuggling in building materials. Building without a permit is punishable by arrest and detention (USCR Report, 1999).

### [Restrictions on Property Ownership and Transfer](#)

Presidential Decree 11614 of January 1969, modified in April 2001 by Law No. 296, prohibits persons 'who not carry a citizenship issued by a recognised state' from owning property in Lebanon. Article 1 of the amended decree states: "no non-Lebanese person, either natural or juridical, and also no Lebanese juridical person reputed by the present law to be alien, is entitled to acquire through a contract or any other legal deed concluded between living persons, any real property rights in Lebanese territory or any other real right from among the rights referred to in the present law, except after obtaining a permit granted by a decree issued by the Council of Ministers on the proposal of the Finance Minister. There shall be no exception to this rule except in cases explicitly stated in this present law or in a special text. No real right of any kind may be acquired by any person who does not carry a citizenship issued by a recognised state, or by any person if such acquisition contradicts with the provisions of the constitution relating to the prohibition of settlement". This ruling goes on to state that non-Lebanese persons can acquire property in Lebanon, but only under certain conditions. For instance, the area of any property should not be in excess of 3,000 square metres in total.

This property law prohibits Palestinians from the ownership of properties and also prohibits them from transferring their already purchased property and deeds to their children (Amnesty International, *Limitations on Rights of Palestinian Refugee Children*, 2006).

### [Right to be Registered and Right to a Name](#)

Children born to non-ID Palestinian fathers are not registered with UNRWA nor receive any identity documents from the Lebanese government, but in fact become

non-ID as well. (Amnesty International, *Limitations on Rights of Palestinian Refugee Children*, 2006)

### Naturalization (tawteen)

On the 18 April 2003, during the meeting of the newly formed Lebanese cabinet, President Lahoud stressed that the government will not back down on its insistence that Israel complies with the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, and that Lebanon rejects any plans for their settlement in Lebanon (tawteen) (Al-Ahram, 19 April, 2003). At present, any resettlement (tawteen) of Palestinian refugees is forbidden by the Lebanese constitution (International Federation for Human Rights Report, 2003: 11).

The Lebanese Government and the majority of the Lebanese people oppose any permanent integration of the Palestinian refugees (USCR Report, 1999: 1), under the pretext that granting citizenship to the Palestinians, who are mostly Sunni Muslims, would upset the delicate sectarian balance in Lebanon. They also blame them for the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon. It is interesting to note that in the 1950s and 1960s around 50,000 Palestinians were granted Lebanese citizenship, mainly Christian Palestinians as well as some middle-class Muslim families. However, the latter achieved this by employing the services of lawyers and proving Lebanese ancestry. During the 1990s, about 20,000 more Palestinians were granted nationality (Khalidi, 2001: 16). In 1994, Shiites from the seven border villages and a year later some Sunnis, as well as the remaining Christian Palestinians who hadn't been granted Lebanese nationality in the 1950s or 1960s became Lebanese (Petee, 1997).

Palestinians born in Lebanon, and even the children of Lebanese mothers and Palestinian fathers who are considered Palestinian, and are not granted Lebanese citizenship. However, Palestinian women who marry Lebanese men may obtain citizenship (Khalidi, 2001: 16).

On May 27, 2003, the Lebanese Shura Council ordered the Ministry of Interior to re-examine the files of around 150,000 people who have been granted Lebanese citizenship according to Decree No. 5247 of June, 1994. The timing of this ruling is significant, as according to Lebanese law a period of 10 years has to elapse before new Lebanese citizens are granted full civil rights. The Minister of Interior has declared that he will revoke the Lebanese citizenship of Palestinians and others who have obtained the citizenship by false means ([PHRO press release, May 2007](#)).

### Civil Society

One of the clauses of the 1969 Cairo Agreement was 'formation of local committees composed of Palestinians in the camps to care for the interests of Palestinians residing in these camps'. The PLO at that time provided assistance services to the Palestinian refugees. With the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 and the collapse of control by the Lebanese government, the PLO took over the provision of water, sanitation and electricity in the camps. The PLO also funded income-generation projects. The PLO invested in setting up schools, hospitals and factories. Health services improved and expanded (Weighill, 1997: 299). The PLO's withdrawal from Lebanon in 1982, left a

void in the services provided to Palestinian refugees, and that was not replaced by any other organization or institution.

With the exception of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Palestinian NGOs are forbidden to operate in Lebanon by law. They must be registered as Lebanese NGOs, serve both Lebanese and Palestinians and have a Lebanese majority of employees (USCR, 1999: 21). NGOs offer services in the areas of education, health care and employment. There are some Lebanese civil associations which provide assistance to the Palestinian refugees in the form of clothes, food and shelter.

Examples of local NGOs are:

Organization	Activity
Abu Jihad Al Wazir Institution	Education
Arab Resource Centre for Popular Arts (ARCPA)	Education; child care; cultural activities; youth activities; legal aid.
Association for the Development of Palestinian Camps (Inaash)	Education; child care; cultural activities; youth activities.
Children & Youth Centre	Education; child care; youth activities.
Developmental Action without Borders	Cultural activities; youth activities.
Disabled Revival Association	Health; disabled.
General Union of Palestinian Women	Health, Education; child care; cultural activities; youth activities; legal aid; vocational training; women issues; social assistance; microfinance self-reliance.
Health Care Society (HCS)	Health/reproductive health
Martyr Abu Jihad Al Wazir Institution	Disabled
Medical Aid for Palestinians	Health/reproductive health
Nabil Badran Centre for Disabled Children	Health/reproductive health; education; cultural activities; youth activities; vocational training; disabled.
Najdeh Association	Health/reproductive health; education; child care; cultural activities; youth activities; legal aid; women issues; vocational training; social assistance; microfinance & self-reliance.
National Association for Social Medical Care and Vocational Training	Health/reproductive health; child care; women issues; vocational training; social assistance; microfinance & self-reliance.
National Foundation for Health, Social and Educational Services	Health/reproductive health; education; cultural activities; youth activities; women issues.
National Institute for Social Care and Vocational Training	Child care; cultural activities; youth activities; vocational training, women's issues; social assistance.
Palestinian Red Crescent	Health/reproductive health
Palestine Social Cultural Association	Education; cultural activities; youth activities; water & sanitation.
Popular Aid for Relief and Development (PARD)	Health/reproductive health; youth activities; disabled; social assistance; waster & sanitation.
Sanabil Association for Relief and Development	Health/reproductive health; education; child care; cultural activities; youth activities; legal aid; women issues; vocational training;

	disabled; social assistance; water & sanitation; microfinance & self-reliance.
Social Association for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped	Health/reproductive health; disabled.
Social Communication centre (Ajial)	Education; child care; cultural activities; youth activities; women issues.
Social Handicapped Association	Health/reproductive health; disabled.
The Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation	Education; child care; cultural activities; youth activities; disabled; social assistance; water & sanitation; microfinance & self-reliance.
The Joint Christian Committee for Social Service	Health/reproductive health; education; child care; youth activities; vocational training; women issues; social assistance.
The National Institute of Social Care & Vocational Training	Cultural activities; youth activities; vocational training; women issues; social assistance.
The Palestinian Arab Women League	Cultural activities; women issues; microfinance & self reliance.

### Websites:

[Palestinian Non-Government Organizations in Lebanon](#)

[Palestinian refugees in Lebanon](#)

[Jerusalemites](#)

[Across Borders](#)

[Al Najdeh Association](#)

[The Welfare Association](#)

### International Organizations

UNRWA offers education, health, relief and social services to Palestinian refugees. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon rely heavily on the services provided by UNRWA as they have very limited access to the public education and public health services. UNRWA has 74 primary and preparatory schools, 3 secondary schools and 25 primary health care facilities. Lebanon is the only place where UNRWA offers secondary school education (UNRWA, 2002). However, since 1994 UNRWA has been facing serious budget shortages which have affected the quality and scope of the services it provides.

The United Nations International Children's Fund's (UNICEF) program for Palestinian refugees 1998 – 2000, targets the refugees who live in the informal camps and thus don't receive UNRWA's services. The program consists of projects and activities in service delivery, training, health education and capacity building.

## International NGOs

[Amnesty International](#)

[Austcare](#) (Australians caring for refugees)

[CAFOD](#)

[Christian Aid](#)

[Resource Centre for Palestinian residency and Refugee rights](#) (Badil)

[Danish Refugee Council](#)

[Human Rights Watch](#)

[ICRC](#)

[IFRC](#)

[Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad](#)

[Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF)

[Norwegian People's Aid](#)

[Norwegian Institute for Social Sciences](#)

[Norwegian Refugee Council](#)

[Oxfam GB](#)

[Refugees International](#)

[Response International](#)

[Save the Children](#)

[Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre](#) (SHAML)

[Terre des Hommes – Italy](#)

[World Vision](#)

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