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## *Institutionalization in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon*

Devon Woznack

### **Introduction**

Immediately following the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, the majority of Palestinians were expelled from Israel. They fled and settled as refugees in camps throughout the Middle East, including several in Lebanon. This event came to be known to them as *al-nakba*, or the catastrophe. Since then, many changes in leadership have plagued the Lebanese camps, each further institutionalizing the camps and services. These changes, combined with dwindling resources and discrimination by the Lebanese government, have created a hostile environment for the refugees. This institutionalization can be seen in several ways: via the establishment of aid organizations to control, monitor and provide services to the refugee population, the construction of hospitals, schools and homes, and the establishment of an educational system specifically devoted to the refugees.

Despite this, the Palestinian refugees' status in Lebanon is simultaneously and counterintuitively impermanent. A notable lack of personal and community security has been created through discrimination in education and lawmaking against registered, unregistered and non-ID refugees, and inferior established services and education. These many issues, combined with the knowledge that they could be expelled from Lebanon at any moment, makes for a precarious situation. The very existence of such camps in resource-starved nations, such as Lebanon, helps to exacerbate the alienation of refugees, as well as their dependence on foreign aid. It also increases tension between refugees and their host countries, which promotes an

attitude of hostility that has often led to violence. The passing of power between the Lebanese government, the United Nations Refugee Works Association or UNRWA, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or PLO, has destabilized the camps and caused confusion over responsibilities, which have resulted in many of the refugees' needs being neglected, as well as restriction of the upward mobility of refugees.

### **An Overview of 1948**

The Arab-Israeli war of 1948 resulted in both the creation of the state of Israel and the subsequent expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who sought refuge in surrounding countries such as Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>1</sup> The responses from these countries and the attitudes within them towards the refugees have ranged from welcoming to hostile. Countries such as Jordan have invited refugees to gain citizenship, while Lebanon has propagated brutality and persecution against its refugees on many occasions.

To this day, there are those that argue that this mass exodus was a willful act on the part of the Palestinians at the behest of their political leaders, but much evidence put forth by such respected scholars as Ilan Pappé, Dawn Chatty and Julie Peteet shows that the migration was forced by the militant Zionist Israeli government. Chatty explains that, “nearly three-quarters of a million people in Palestine were forced from their homes by armed Jewish militias.”<sup>2</sup> Though the refugee camps may have been intended to be temporary, they have been systematically institutionalized despite violent clashes and dwindling resources. They now face a strange impermanence under the guise of permanence.

<sup>1</sup> Julie Peteet, *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 54.

<sup>2</sup> Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and dispossession in the modern Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 204.

### **Lebanon as a Host Country**

As of December 2013, UNRWA has 455,000 registered refugees across Lebanon, located in 12 “official” camps and many unofficial gatherings. Palestinian refugees make up a startling 10 percent of the population in Lebanon, and have faced near-constant hostility from the Lebanese, who see them as competition for already scarce jobs and resources.<sup>3</sup> Lebanon refuses to allow Palestinian refugees citizenship.

Julie Peteet, who discusses various responses to refugees, says that, “Unlike Lebanon, Jordan offered citizenship, and Syria gave refugees the right to work. In Gaza, refugees overwhelmed a small strip of land with scant resources and almost no local sources of aid.”<sup>4</sup> To be fair, Lebanon still administered some aid and allowed aid organizations to operate within the country. Additionally, not all Palestinian refugees in Lebanon had bad experiences -- “Some refugees had very positive, heartwarming experiences that reaffirmed their faith in humanity, while others suffered insults and denial of hospitality.”<sup>5</sup> What began as a varied experience in Lebanon eventually became a hostile, othering situation as the refugees’ friends and relatives were overwhelmed and the Lebanese government forced Palestinians into camps and gatherings despite their local ties. Lebanon’s refusal of integration, institutional discrimination, and violent persecution gave way to difficult, unhealthy, and dangerous living conditions.<sup>6</sup> The camps themselves have undergone many destabilizing changes such as wars, invasions, and lack of resources. High rates of poverty among refugees makes upward mobility very

<sup>3</sup> “Where We Work,” United Nations Refugee Works Association, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>.

<sup>4</sup> Julie Peteet, *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 55.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Ole Fr. Ugland et al., *Difficult past, uncertain future: living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: FAFO, 2001), 13.

difficult, cementing the refugee's reliance on aid and services provided by the camps.

### **1948-1985 and Associated Changes in Leadership**

The Lebanese camps' early years were marked by numerous changes in leadership, a lack of distinction in responsibilities of organizations and general instability, creating an environment ripe for hostility and violence. It is pertinent to separate the timeline into categories to more easily address the associated leadership and events. The 1975-1990 time period can be separated into several distinct categories: 1975-76 is defined as the "early civil war period," the 1982 invasion by Israel as its own category, the Israeli post-invasion period from 1982-85, 1985-1990 period of the camp wars, and the post war period from 1990-on.<sup>7</sup> To complete the chronology of events and their dates the timetable must be expanded to include 1948, 1950 and 1967.

In 1948, the year of *al-nakba*, the UN set up temporary camps for refugees, which were comprised of cloth tents staked on mud. Lebanon leased the land utilized by the camps to the United Nations, and in some cases, landowners rented out or sold their land directly to the UN.<sup>8</sup> As the refugee population steadily increased, the UN found it necessary to devote more resources to the displaced Palestinians and, "The formation of UNRWA in 1950 ostensibly signaled the end of temporary relief and acknowledged the long-term nature of the refugee situation."<sup>9</sup> UNRWA and the Lebanese government worked together to govern the camps and provide aid, though the latter was the job of UNRWA and aid organizations alone. Through the early 1950s the camps remained mud-covered tent settlements despite

<sup>7</sup> Julie Peteet, *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Julie Peteet, *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 62.

several years of UNRWA administration.<sup>10</sup>

In 1967 the Six Day War caused significant strife for the Arab states defeated by Israel, and brought Gaza, West Bank, and West Jerusalem under Israeli rule. Though Lebanon was not among those defeated, the war resulted in increased tensions and membership in the PLO that had been formed in 1964.<sup>11</sup> Promoting free Palestinians and a strong military force, “From 1968 to 1982, the resistance controlled the camps,” albeit in cooperation with UNRWA. Unfortunately, “Palestinian military control over and autonomy in substantial parts of Lebanon led to accusations of ‘a state within a state’ ” and led to much resentment.<sup>12</sup> During this period morale and services provided to refugees increased greatly. However this would not last. Following an invasion by Israeli troops in 1982, the PLO withdrew, and the camps were left with next to nonexistent leadership with unclear responsibilities.

Palestinian social and welfare institutions commingled with UNRWA in such a way as to blur the boundaries of the mission and role of UNRWA (see Schiff 1995). Questions of areas of operational authority and the political status of aid employees effectively undercut the possibility of stable categories of aid and refugee.<sup>13</sup>

During the time that the PLO was in control of the camps in Lebanon, “outside sources of aid were often considered politically suspicious, part of a conspiracy to resettle or spy on Palestinians, or

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>11</sup> Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and dispossession in the modern Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 211.

<sup>12</sup> Julie Peteet, *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 52.

generally apolitical or charitable.”<sup>14</sup> Refugees’ feelings towards aid have fluctuated depending on their leadership or autonomy, and the associated power.<sup>15</sup> Following the withdrawal of the PLO, tensions were high for both the refugees and the Lebanese people. With the Lebanese civil war still raging around the camps, aggressions flared and eventually turned towards the camps and the refugees themselves during a period referred to as the ‘camp wars.’

### **The Camp Wars**

The camp wars starting in 1985 are considered a sub-conflict related to the Lebanese civil war. During this time the camps were under siege by Lebanese and Syrian militias, the most notable being the Amal militia who were “Shia Muslim militia set up in 1974 by Imam Musa Sadr, an Iranian friend of Ayatollah Khomeini” and whose “interest is to promote and protect the Shi’i people in south Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley.”<sup>16</sup> The refugees were forced into a desperate and volatile position. During periods of ‘cease fires’ reported by international news agencies, shelling and other violations of the cease-fire continued.<sup>17</sup>

The wars decimated the camps and the period after they ended was devoted to rebuilding rather than improvements in existing infrastructure, which might have taken place had the militias not caused so much damage. The camp wars restricted the already limited upward mobility of the refugees by destroying homes, goods, food and medical supplies that may have been stepping-stones to a higher socioeconomic status and impeded even aid organizations. UNRWA was unable to function, and hospitals and volunteers were not allowed

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Suzy Wighton, *One day at a time: diaries from a Palestinian camp* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), xv.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 26.

to transport many of their wounded to better equipped hospitals.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, it increased the refugees' reliance on aid due to the destruction, loss of property, and disabilities that resulted. As technology and development in the rest of the world has advanced, the camps continue to lag behind, facing many obstacles to their progress.

### **Physical Landscape and Services of the Camps**

If the creation of UNRWA signaled the end of temporary relief, then the gradual shift from tents to buildings within the camps signaled the permanence of the refugee population. Today's camps are a far cry from those of the 1950s; what started out as tents staked on muddy ground has become buildings crafted from all kinds of materials. The camps are "shanty towns," meaning that they're often a gallimaufry of buildings, shacks, and structures that are thrown together with whatever materials are available.

According to Ugland's study, 60 percent of refugees reside in *dars*, which are described as one room structures that are built onto as the need arises, and have auxiliary rooms, verandas, balconies and other such structures built out of whatever materials are available.<sup>19</sup> The most common building materials found in the camps were cement, plastered stone, and building stone. However, 8 percent of homes used a material called "eternite" for roofing, which the study found to be linked with higher instances of chronic illness and others still used asbestos which is known to cause illness and even death.<sup>20</sup>

There is near constant construction to accommodate the growing population, though it does not always come easily or legally. Building

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ole Fr. Ugland et al., *Difficult past, uncertain future: living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo:FAFO, 2001), 186.

<sup>20</sup> Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 75-76.



restrictions have eased in recent years, but it was not always so; prior to 2004 there was a near stop on importing building materials or the granting of building permits.<sup>21</sup> These strict regulations have led to an increase in illegal building that is often torn down by Lebanese officials who catch wind of the modifications.<sup>22</sup>

As time has passed the city has grown more cramped due to building in areas with limited space. Unfortunately, no additional space has been granted, “Despite a fourfold increase in the registered refugee population.”<sup>23</sup> According Uglund et al., in 1999 the average household size was 5.3, which was smaller than camps in other countries.<sup>24</sup> Comparatively, the study done by UNRWA in 2010 cited the average household size was 4.5, which may indicate that the building has helped to alleviate crowding to some degree.<sup>25</sup> That being said, some households’ sizes are still over 10 people to a house. They face mental and physical problems as a result. Additionally, with a large population living within such a limited amount of space come issues with refuse.

The camps in Lebanon have consistently faced inadequate sanitation and services. Constant changes in leadership, organization and responsibilities create significant issues and divert important resources, which once allocated, are difficult to free up. Sanitation has

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International, *Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon* (London: International Secretariat, 2007), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 15. Amnesty International, *Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon* (London: International Secretariat, 2007), 14.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ole Fr. Uglund et al., *Difficult Past, Uncertain Future: Living Conditions among Palestinian Refugees in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: FAFO, 2001), 45.

<sup>25</sup> Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), x.

been a consistent issue since the camps' founding, and is noted by Suzy Wighton, UNRWA, Amnesty Int'l and Uglund, though UNRWA, in the face of criticism, pointedly omits this (and unreliable electricity) as an indicator of housing quality and poverty.<sup>26</sup> It is especially problematic for gatherings, where 33 percent of households face issues with refuse disposal.<sup>27</sup> The lack of resources available to organizations such as UNRWA exacerbates an already problematic situation. Additionally, although the establishment of extensive electricity infrastructure serves to demonstrate the permanence of the refugee camps, the lack of quality also indicates impermanence.

Though in Lebanon services are provided to the camps, they are haphazardly organized and often inadequate. The necessity of additional buildings and services coupled with the need to improve aging infrastructures in 60+ year-old camps is undermined by the Lebanese government's refusal to approve building permits and passports and their continued unwillingness to integrate refugee populations into the nation. Palestinian children, though technically not barred from attending Lebanese schools, face much discrimination in the selection process and Palestinian adults are barred from many professions. This sort of institutional discrimination and exclusion has held back progress and further alienates the refugee population.

### **Discrimination, Poverty, and Education**

As of 2010, 66 percent of Palestinians refugees were living in poverty and nearly 7 percent of refugees were living in "extreme

<sup>26</sup> Suzy Wighton, *One day at a time: diaries from a Palestinian camp* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), 62.; Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 16.; Amnesty International, *Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon* (London: International Secretariat, 2007), 4.; Ole Fr. Uglund et al., *Difficult past, uncertain future: living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: FAFO, 2001), 199.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*; Amnesty International, *Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in*

poverty.”<sup>28</sup> It comes as no surprise that studies have shown that both employment and education affect poverty levels, particularly when “high status employment is linked to lower poverty.”<sup>29</sup> Discrimination by the Lebanese government remains a roadblock to increased employment among the refugee population. In addition to this government-sanctioned discrimination, prior to 2005, Palestinian refugees were specifically barred by the Lebanese government from working in more than 70 professions and are still barred from over 30, including engineering, many health professions, teaching, architecture and many other areas.<sup>30</sup> This is unlikely to change any time soon, according to UNRWA and the International Labor Organization.<sup>31</sup>

Unemployment rates remain high. As of 2010 only 37 percent of refugees between 15 and 65 were employed, though the ILO’s definition of unemployment is problematic because it only takes into account those who are unemployed and actively looking for work.<sup>32</sup> Technically the “unemployment” rate has dropped from 17 percent to 8 percent. This is in tandem with the decrease in unemployment of the rest of the Middle East.<sup>33</sup> If we look at how much of the entire population is unemployed, regardless of age, gender and job searching, then we find that that number skyrockets to 56 percent.<sup>34</sup>

*Lebanon* (London: International Secretariat, 2007), 9.

<sup>28</sup> Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 32.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>30</sup> Amnesty International, *Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon* (London: International Secretariat, 2007), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 13.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*; Ole Fr. Ugland et al., *Difficult past, uncertain future: living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: FAFO, 2001), 135.

<sup>34</sup> Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in*

Those who manage to find work often do manual labor for very little pay.<sup>35</sup> Competition and discrimination mar the labor market for Palestinian refugees.

The issues of identification and mobility are drastic for refugees in Lebanon. Identification is not always easy to obtain and without it, many legal restrictions exist. A legal refugee has “UNRWA registration and identity documents.”<sup>36</sup> There are roughly 3000-5000 “non-ID” refugees, meaning those who are not registered with UNRWA or the Lebanese government and therefore have no legal identification documents.<sup>37</sup> Non-ID refugees are legally distinct from “unregistered” refugees, who are merely not registered with UNRWA but are registered with the Lebanese government instead and number up to 35,000.<sup>38</sup> Non-ID refugees are not able to obtain passports and therefore are unable to travel outside of the camps or access many services.<sup>39</sup> Even those refugees who have identification, passports and visas are not guaranteed re-entry into Lebanon after travelling abroad.<sup>40</sup>

Non-ID refugees are legally invisible residents of the camps and face many restrictions in life and society. They are not allowed to build, make improvements, or repair their homes, severely impacting their quality of life.<sup>41</sup> Marriages of non-ID refugees, even to a registered refugee, are not legally recognized. Furthermore, children of even one non-ID refugee are not able to register with UNRWA and

*Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Julie Peteet, *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 60.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>37</sup> Amnesty International, *Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon* (London: International Secretariat, 2007), 6.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Julie Peteet, *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 176

therefore cannot get identification themselves. Though non-ID children are allowed to attend UNRWA schools, they are not allowed to receive recognition for their education, which in turn greatly disadvantages them in the labor market.<sup>42</sup> As a whole, registered, unregistered, and non-ID refugees alike face widespread discrimination, extending even to education system put in place by UNRWA--as can easily be seen.

UNRWA manages education in the absence of assistance from the Lebanese government. In its early years, UNRWA focused on providing jobs for Palestinian refugees, promoting integration and reducing the number of refugees on relief, which was at times viewed with suspicion by the refugees.<sup>43</sup> In 1956 UNRWA shifted its attention away from labor and focused instead on relief, medical aid and education, in light of the increasing difficulty in employment.<sup>44</sup> Providing work was an interim solution--education was an institution focused on maintenance of a population, which in and of itself is a far more permanent goal.

Despite the refocus on education, as of 1999 a third of Palestinian refugees still lacked an elementary school education and 20 percent of the population was considered illiterate.<sup>45</sup> Undereducation is in part due to inadequate schooling and employment opportunities, which have resulted in high dropout rates.<sup>46</sup> The undereducated are far more likely to experience poverty and have issues finding employment.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Amnesty International, *Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon* (London: International Secretariat, 2007), 27.

<sup>43</sup> Julie Peteet, *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 64.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ole Fr. Ugland et al., *Difficult past, uncertain future: living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: FAFO, 2001), 107,115.

<sup>46</sup> Amnesty International, *Exiled and suffering: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon* (London: International Secretariat, 2007), 24.

<sup>47</sup> Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and

Unemployment, underemployment, and poverty all affect mental and physical health.

### **Mental and Physical Health**

Despite widespread concern for the health of refugees, there are still many problems that plague the camps and gatherings. Both physical and mental health suffer greatly within the camps, warranting a closer look.<sup>48</sup> Refugees face many challenges when it comes to staying physically healthy. Factors such as inferior building materials, limited space, crowding, stress and discrimination take a heavy toll on the body. The need for medical care within the camps and gatherings is paramount. Providing both emergency medical aid and also sustained care has remained at the top of the priority list of local and foreign aid organizations since the *nakba*. UNRWA is primarily in charge of the health of the refugees, providing emergency and primary care to them, though there are other governmental and non-governmental organizations assisting, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Medical Aid for Palestinians, Save the Children, and many others.

Despite assistance from other organizations, the system is still overburdened with the sheer number of people coupled with camp conditions that interfere with promotion of health. UNRWA's studies have found that chronic illness is prevalent in the camps of Lebanon, with 72 percent of households having at least one case of chronic illness, some containing multiple cases.<sup>49</sup> Between 1999 and 2010, cases of chronic physical illness increased 12 percent.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, UNRWA's 2010 study found that 41 percent of households have at

Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 36.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.; Ole Fr. Ugland et al., *Difficult past, uncertain future: living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: FAFO, 2001), 67.

least one case of chronic depression.<sup>51</sup>

An interesting contradiction that I came across in my research was that Ugland claims that “members of the households with the lowest income report considerably poorer mental health than the average,” whereas in UNRWA’s study done in 2010 claims that “There are no significant differences in the rate of psychological problems among the poor (including extreme poor) and non-poor. Poverty levels seem unrelated to self-reported mental health.”<sup>52</sup> This discrepancy warrants exploration, and may result from the motivations of the organizations or people endorsing and publishing these studies.

Ugland’s study was funded by Norway, conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and FAFO Institute, and was accepted by the Prime Minister of Lebanon, H.E. Rafik Hariri.<sup>53</sup> The stated intent of this study was to “produce an unbiased and “objective” description of current living conditions current living conditions by using statistical indicators that are internationally recognized and suited for international comparison.”<sup>54</sup> The language used in this study is sympathetic to the refugees, saying that they “suffer from a difficult past and they share an uncertain future.”<sup>55</sup> It shows the problems within the camps and acknowledges the unsustainable nature of their residence. Their—and most likely

<sup>51</sup> Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 43.

<sup>52</sup> Ole Fr. Ugland et al., *Difficult past, uncertain future: living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: FAFO, 2001), 78.; Jad Chaaban et al., *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2010), 66.

<sup>53</sup> Ole Fr. Ugland et al., *Difficult past, uncertain future: living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon* (Oslo: FAFO, 2001), 13 and 16.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Lebanon's—motivation (as the Lebanese Prime Minister granted official approval) is to show that the refugees cannot stay in Lebanon because they are unhappy and it is not a sustainable situation. UNRWA, on the other hand, is in charge of maintaining order and quality of life to the best of their abilities within the camps. They may be motivated to show that overall attitudes, health and mental health are better because it gives them legitimacy as an organization and shows progress. This is not meant to imply any dishonesty, just that the data may perhaps be skewed to fit their needs. Though recent studies question whether there is a correlation between poverty and mental health, it seems unlikely that a correlation found a scant 11 years prior would cease to exist.

Missing from the picture of poverty and mental health within the camps and gatherings is the aspect of suicide rates. Both poverty and mental health are key factors in suicide, and it warrants a place in research projects such as the ones discussed here. Though this may be a difficult situation to research and one that could find negligible results, it seems a pertinent issue to pursue, though one that this paper is not equipped to cover.

## **Conclusion**

The once-temporary camps set up for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have become a permanent part of the Lebanese landscape while the refugees themselves have been held at arm's length and excluded from Lebanese government and life. As leadership of the camps has changed the refugees themselves have been alternately empowered and systematically oppressed.

The permanent aspects of the camps are offset by the institutionalized discrimination and lack of security that the refugees face in day-to-day life. Lebanon's hostility, alienation and violent persecution of the refugees has cemented their status as refugees reliant on foreign aid, limited their ability to escape the camps and led to repeated violence. Institutionalized discrimination within the job markets, schools and day-to-day life continues to hamper efforts for a



solution to the refugees' precarious situation.

Though UNRWA shifted its focus from labor to education, it suffers from the same disease that the other services do—inadequacy. Much of the population is either illiterate or undereducated, causing difficulty in employment and upward mobility. Any and all problems faced by registered refugees are dramatically increased for non-ID refugees, who have almost no legal rights with regards to travel, education, mobility and marriage and without progress, their children have and will continue to face the same insecurities and discrimination. The Palestinian refugees' place in Lebanon is a decidedly impermanent one according to the Lebanese government's policies and laws surrounding the camps. Though much of camp life and the landscape of the camps has been institutionalized over the last sixty years, instability and uncertainty runs rampant.

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