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THE NEGLECTED PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON AND THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

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THE NEGLECTED PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON AND THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Lebanon has received app. 1.5 million refugees from Syria since the outbreak of the war in Syria 2011. Around 53.000 are Syrian Palestinians refugees. Since the beginning of the crisis, the government in Lebanon has followed a "No Camp Policy", refusing to establish refugee camps. Instead the refugees are seeking shelter in informal gatherings in primitive tent camps, e.g. in the Bekaa Valley on private rented soil or in the most poor areas including rented rooms in existing Palestinian refugees camps, which have existed in Lebanon after the refugee waves following the establishing of Israel in 1948.

Based on field study in Lebanon Spring 2016, this paper focuses on the consequences of the refugee crisis for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. 455.000 Palestinians are registered by UNWRA, the UN agency established to take care of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. App. 250.000 are living in the Palestinian camps while the rest are living outside Lebanon. Lebanon refuse to integrate or nationalize the Palestinians who have very restricted access to labor market and receive no help from the Lebanese government in public services.

Palestine refugees have experienced decrease in services and they see themselves somehow forgotten in the Syrian refugee crisis. This report focuses on how the Palestinians perceives the new situation with refugees from Syria, what consequences the crises have for their living conditions, and how they interpret their situation facing more pressure on their living conditions and still lesser perspective for a return to Palestine.

INTRODUCTION

Leaving the hipster café at midnight in Beirut's Hamra district, you immediately stumble upon a small crowd of women and children on the pavement. They are Syrian refugees begging on the street while local youngsters are commuting between the cozy bars, drinking beers and listening to loud music. Walking down Rue Hamra, you see small boys from the ages of eight, ten, twelve and older begging. Some of them are crying, apparently having given up all hope of receiving any money. They are there in the Latin Quarter of Beirut because their parents – who are most likely living illegally in the Palestinian refugee camps, hiding from the Lebanese authorities – have sent them there to beg money from the foreigners and local Lebanese consumers of parties, beers, and music. It is hardly possible not be touched by the misery of the young boys and to hand them some bank notes, but if you ask the locals about them, the answer will often be: "Oh, they're good actors; why don't they go back to Syria where they come from?" They then go on to highlight the places in Syria that seems safe, such as parts of Damascus, Latakia and maybe others parts of the war-devastated country. And, yes, if you do not have issues with the Syrian regime, you can stay in Latakia, for example: I met a young woman who had come to Beirut from Latakia in a taxi to date a French student she had met on social media. Asking her if I could go the same way to Latakia, her answer was no: "You need to have good relations with the government – for anyone else the route is not safe". In Syria the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is now greater than six million, none of whom are able to return to their homes because of the war. The same is true of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, but the narrative on the streets in Beirut among many of the locals is that the refugees would be better off going back to Syria than staying in Lebanon, where they threaten both security and society, cause social dumping, and exhaust the infrastructure. The bad smell of the garbage on the street and the switching off of electricity on a regular basis every day are symbols of

the refugee crisis, though they were not caused by it. Lebanon is tired of refugees, attitudes towards them oscillating between anger, indifference, and worries for the future of Lebanese society.

However, refugees are not a new phenomenon in Lebanon: ever since the war that followed the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, an event the Palestinians refer to as Nakba ("catastrophe"), Lebanon has hosted refugees. More than 450,000 Palestinians are registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), tolerated, but not part of Lebanese society. About 50% live outside Lebanon, many as stateless, and most of the rest live in twelve Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon or in informal settlements with severe restrictions on accessing the Lebanese labor market and social and health services. They are not integrated, but separated from Lebanese society. Even though most Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL) would like equal rights guaranteed by citizenship in order to become integrated and settled (tawtin) in the country, they still insist on their Right of Return to Palestine. However, they are refused civil rights in Lebanon and exposed to a political discourse that rejects their claims to citizenship through a false contradiction between tawtin and the Right of Return. Thus the argument for not allowing Palestinian refugees access to many sectors of the labor market is that, if Lebanon were to integrate them into the Lebanese state and society, they would stay in Lebanon forever. For many generations, therefore, they have being living as an alien group in Lebanon caught between being and not being part of Lebanese society, almost forgotten in daily life in Lebanon, although many work in the jobs they are allowed to do in the private sector, often the least attractive jobs with poor pay, or else they work illegally for salaries way below the norm and without the same labor rights as Lebanese citizens. This strange and problematic situation for the PRL has remained the same for generations and turned into a kind of normalcy in Lebanon, to a degree that one can almost talk about the PRL as "The Forgotten People."[1]

How has this group of refugees been affected by the war in Syria, which has sent more than 1.2 million Syrian refugees fleeing into Lebanon since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011? Although the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) handles the vast majority of the Syrian refugees, UNRWA handles Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). Clearly there is a difference in being registered as a UNHCR refugee rather than a UNRWA refugee, as the international community has paid much greater attention to the "new" UNHCR refugees from Syria than to the "old forgotten people" in Lebanon, not to mention Palestinian refugees elsewhere. How has this situation affected the PRL? Because the PRS are registered by UNRWA, they also fall into the "old" and to a large extent neglected

group of refugees, finding themselves being integrated into "the forgotten people" without the same attention from international donors from which the "new" Syrian refugees benefit. What does this mean for the PRS, most of whom are second- and sometimes even third-time refugees – first when they escaped from Palestine, secondly when they ended up in Iraq, from where they fled to Syria because of the Iraq war, and thirdly in escaping Syria for Lebanon? Many of these PRS are living in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, where they are referred to the services of UNRWA, send their children to the same UNRWA schools as the PRL, and depend on the same primary health services as the latter. While the international donor community has been aware of the "new" Syrian" refugees and has accordingly provided help and funding, the Palestinian refugees, both PRS and PRL, have widely been neglected.

The aim of this report is to draw attention to this neglected group of refugees in Lebanon, that is, those Palestinian refugees who have fled from Syria, as well as those who have been living in Lebanon since 1948. What have been the consequences of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon generally and for the PRL in particular?[2]

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT IN LEBANON

Lebanon emerged in 1920 as a French mandate and a republic in the new Middle East created by the United Kingdom and France in the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916) and ratified in the peace settlement after the First World War in the wake of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. From the start the mandate was marked by rivalry between different religious groups, especially Christen Maronites and Muslims, the latter being themselves divided between a majority of Shia Muslims and a minority of Sunni Muslims. Another important religious group is the Druze, and officially today Lebanon has eighteen distinct, officially recognized religious groupings that all have to co-exist in a state which covers a territory of only 10,542 sq. km (approximately a quarter of the territory of Denmark). In adding to the religious patchwork, the presence of Palestinian refugees complicates the political situation in Lebanon. A little more than 100,000 arrived in 1948, but due to demographic growth and the arrival of more Palestinian refugees following conflicts in neighboring countries, 455,000 had been registered by UNRWA before the Syrian civil war erupted in 2011, although many of the registered no longer live in Lebanon.

The constitution created in 1926 reflected the challenge of establishing a coherent state and a stable political system: it gave representation to all the religious groups in the parliament, but they still formed militias in the following decades, though without any of them gaining full control. Instead a National Pact in 1943 based on a 1932 census led to a vulnerable consensus on sharing power: all the recognized groups were still to have representation in the parliament, but the pact also stated that the president of the republic should be a Christian Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament a Shia Muslim. In 1946 Lebanon ceased to be a mandate territory and was granted formal sovereignty and independence, but neighboring and regional states, in particular Israel, Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, as

well as powers like France and the USA, continued to interfere in Lebanese politics through their relationships with, support to and mobilization of different factions in the small republic, which, together with a vulnerable political and sectarian power structure, led to civil war in 1958 and again to the long civil war in 1975–1990. The presence of the Palestinian refugees and the attacks they launched from Lebanese territory caused clashes with Israel in 1968 and, after the crisis in Jordan in 1970 in particular, a new wave of Palestinians refugees arrived in Lebanon, followed by the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Palestinian attacks into Israel, together with increased tensions between Christians and Muslims and interference by Syria (military intervention from 1976 to 2005) and Israel (military interventions in 1978, 1982, 1993, 1996, and 2006) threw Lebanon into civil war in 1975. Following peace negotiations in Taif in Saudi Arabia in 1989, the civil war came to an end in 1990. The Israelis continued to occupy South Lebanon, where they had established a so-called security zone in 1978. It was only in May 2000, after a year-long fight with Hizbollah, who had been established with the support of Iran in 1985, that Israel gave up the security zone and left Lebanon. The confessional distribution of key posts at the top political level continued, but the Taif agreement gave more power to the parliament, which was increased in size, as well as to the president and prime minister. The same agreement also required the militias to give up their weapons, but Hizbollah continues to control a strong militia that is probably able to outweigh the strength of the Lebanese Army.

As already indicated, the events of 2005 changed the structure of the political landscape in Lebanon. These changes were triggered by the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, a flamboyant businessman with enormous assets earned in Saudi Arabia. He came to power as prime minister for the first time in 1992 by launching an ambitious plan to rebuild the country after the civil war, including its infrastructure and the downtown area in the capital, Beirut, with his own company, Solidère, being the main contractor. Due to political instability and regional conflicts the project was delayed, as well as being heavy criticized for widespread corruption and the illegal expropriation of land, houses, and shops, especially in the poor areas of downtown Beirut and on the capital's seafront, where an impressive corniche was constructed. Although Hariri's relations with Syria were bad, which many see as the reason for his assassination, Syria continued to be involved in and to control significant aspects of Lebanese politics. However, Hariri's murder mobilized Lebanese to go onto the streets demanding reforms and the withdrawal of Syrian forces. The international community reacted by passing UN Security Resolution 1559, sponsored by France and the USA, which demanded the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanese territory and the disarming of Hizbollah. Hizbollah reacted by organizing a large demonstration on March 8 in support of Syria and rejecting the resolution, and on March 14,

a month after Hariri's death, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese rallied in central Beirut under the slogan "Freedom, Sovereignty, Independence". While Syria finally pulled its troops out, Hizbollah was not disarmed. The outcome of the event was the formation of two main blocs in Lebanese politics named after the days of the respective demonstrations: the March 8th bloc, comprised of Hizbollah, Amal, and the Free Patriotic Movement, a Maronite Christian group headed by Michel Aoun; and the March 14th bloc, headed by the Sunni Muslim Saad Hariri, son of the murdered prime minister, leader of the Future Movement, and supported by the Lebanese Forces (LF) and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party.

The withdrawal of the Syrian troops as well as the formation of the two main political blocs were major changes in Lebanese politics but the political landscape continued to be deadlocked, sometimes evolving into serious crises, as in 2008, when Hizbollah and the government ended up in a violent confrontation, which was finally composed. Meanwhile Syria continued to influence politics either through Hizbollah or more clandestinely through small extremist Sunni Muslim networks, especially in the Tripoli area in the north, where Fatah al-Islam infiltrated the refugee camp of Nahd al-Bared and caused a military confrontation with the army that led to more than 400 being killed and the demolition of the camp. Some research indicates that these confrontations were influenced by Syrian Intelligence activity.[3]

The situation in Lebanese politics developed into one of near-paralysis after the resignation of the president, General Michael Suleiman, in May 2014.

The situation in Lebanese politics developed into one of near-paralysis after the resignation of the president, General Michael Suleiman, in May 2014. This peculiar development led the leader of the Future Movement, Saad Hariri, to suggest a candidate from the March 8 bloc, Suleiman Frangieh, as president, apparently provoking his ally Samir Geagea of LF to nominate General Michel Aoun. While Hizbollah was prepared to support either, the Shia Muslims insisted on promoting Aoun, leading to a political deadlock, with the result that the presidency remained vacant until Michel Aoun was at last chosen in October 2016. Parliamentary elections have been postponed twice, the second time to 2017. This political paralysis has had serious consequences for politics, the economy, and relations with international partners and the international community, including the World Bank, IMF, EU, and UN. It has clearly also had an impact on ways of dealing with the crisis in Syria and the refugees, including the Palestinians arriving from Syria, as well as the existing Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon.

THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

"Of the three main refugee host countries (Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan), Lebanon has had the fastest growing Syrian population", observes Filippo Dionigi in his report on 'The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon'.[4] At the beginning the border between Syria and Lebanon was open, and the only thing Syrians needed to do when entering Lebanon was to present an ID card. In the first year approximately 100,000 Syrians arrived, and the reaction in Lebanon was relatively calm, as the Lebanese expected the crisis in Syria to end quickly, allowing the Syrians to return to their own homes. There were also grateful memories of how Syria extended friendly hospitality to refugees from Lebanon during the Summer War in 2006, when Israel, in its war against Hizbollah, bombed vast areas, including the Hizbollah controlled area in southern Beirut. But Lebanon's open-door policy in the first few years was also based on two other factors. After the civil war Syria kept troops in Lebanon and exerted a comprehensive influence over Lebanese politics, formalized in a security and cooperation pact that made Lebanon increasingly important for both Syrian security policy in relation to Israel and Syria's economy, given the high levels of movement across the border.

Secondly the virtual paralysis of Lebanese politics and the different relationships with Syria of the different political factions and thus different interpretations of the Syrian crisis caused passivity within the government. In other words, the presence of the Syrian refugees became a sensitive issue in Lebanese politics, with the potential to increase tensions among anti-Syrian groups like the Future Movement, as well as Michel Aoun, who had aligned his party with the pro-Syrian Amal and Hizbollah. With the dramatic increase in refugees and Hizbollah's open involvement in the war in Syria in support of the al-Assad regime, as well as increased tensions and clashes between Syrian opposition groups on the one hand and the army and Hizbollah on

the other, with the risk of the Syrian conflict spilling over into Lebanon, the refugee problem went higher up the political agenda. Nonetheless Lebanese politicians were reluctant to talk about refugees and refused to establish camps where the refugees could be resettled because they did not want to see Syrians repeating the history of Palestinians in Lebanon. As Dionigi states: "As with previous refugee populations such as the Palestinians and the Iraqis, the legal status of Syrians in Lebanon currently lies in a grey zone area between 'alien', 'displaced' (nazih) and 'de facto refugee'. The government has constantly steered away from the internationally acknowledged notion of 'refugee', fearing to undertake obligations such a status can demand".[5] Thus, Lebanon never signed the 1951 Convention on Refugees, leaving the concept of the refugee open to all manner of political quarrels.

As the problem of the growing Syrian population in Lebanon increased, it could no longer be ignored, and the government was forced to take action. Reports of the Lebanese authorities forcing Syrians to relocate back to Syria and suggestions that refugee camps be established in Syria instead were among the more cynical attempts to deal with the problem. In May 2015 the government asked UNHCR to stop registering refugees, and as a consequence we have no reliable official figures of how many refugees are actually living in Lebanon. In the summer of 2013 the General Security Office (GSO), which is responsible for border control, started enforcing stricter controls at the borders, and in autumn 2014 the government agreed a policy paper introducing restrictions and new measures for Syrians in Lebanon, to be implemented from January 2015. Syrians now needed a visa to enter Lebanon, and it became difficult for them to obtain permission to stay in Lebanon, especially work permits, which required documents from an employer, as well documentation proving one's ability to pay for one's stay in Lebanon. The GSO, to which applicants above fifteen years old have to pay a USD 200 per person fee for a six-month stay, handles all applications and documents. The stay is renewable free of charge for another six months subject to approval, but after a year applicants need to pay another fee, which is hard to afford for many Syrian families who live in the poorest parts of Lebanon without employment or working illegally in poorly paid jobs.[6]

The more than one million refugees who have arrived in Lebanon have, of course, had tremendous consequences for Lebanese society and economy. Beside the heavy pressure on infrastructure, including water and electricity supply and garbage removal, housing costs have increased significantly: the rent for a room of ten square meters in a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut has doubled during the crisis. These increases in housing costs naturally have an impact on everyone in Lebanon, from the landlords and landowners who earn more from it to the refugees and Lebanese people who need to pay higher rents. This also affects NGOs and international or-

ganizations, including UNHCR and UNRWA, which have to rent buildings to run schools and health clinics.

There is no doubt that the refugee crisis has had an enormous negative impact and caused many serious challenges for Lebanon. In this context, it is understandable that Lebanon's reaction to the crisis has mainly been to stop or reduce the flood of Syrian refugees into its territory by enforcing border controls and introducing strict restrictions for obtaining permits to stay in Lebanon. However, these measures, together with the no camp policy, have themselves had negative consequences, causing problems both for Lebanon and for the refugees: the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are supposed to pay all the costs of living in Lebanon themselves, including housing, food, and health services, and the government do not run or allow formal camps; this policy is known as the no camp policy. Because of this policy, most refugees are living in informal tent camps in the Bekaa Valley, the poorest parts of Lebanon, or inside the Palestinian refugee camps. As many of them run out of money, despite the substantial aid provided by international donors channeled especially through UNHCR, many are not able to pay the registration fee to GSO and thus stay on in Lebanon unregistered, which in the eyes of the Lebanese authorities is "illegal". The number of unregistered Syrians is increasing, and they hide from the authorities by living in poor areas or in the Palestinian refugee camps, where the Lebanese police and military have no access (except on special occasions). As they still need to generate an income, they send their children to beg in the streets or take up the most poorly paid jobs, thus putting pressure on other groups in Lebanon who used to do these jobs, like the longer established Palestinians and poor Lebanese citizens. The result is social dumping, more obstacles for the Palestinians in trying to generate a sufficient income, and a steady increase in the number of Syrians who are not registered as refugees and who are trying to cope with the situation by marrying off their daughters to wealthier locals, leading to an increase in polygamy. The babies of non-registered refugees are consequently stateless. These problems are growing, and the no camp policy is simply increasing the challenges for the refugees, the Palestinians, and the Lebanese state and society generally.

However, the no camp policy, the visa restrictions on Syrians, the increased border controls, and the troublesome registration fees are not the only measures Lebanon has taken to cope with the Syrian refugee crisis. In partnership with UNHCR in particular, as well as a whole range of NGOs sponsored by international donors, including the EU, which has increased its funding for humanitarian aid and development programs many times over since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict, the Lebanese government has implemented programs in the health and education sectors. The government has tasked the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and the High Relief

Committee to coordinate humanitarian aid and take care of basic needs. Nonetheless the Lebanese state has been reluctant to take on a more active role, leaving UNHCR with greater autonomy in developing programs implemented by international donors in coordination with government institutions, which have also coordinated programs with local and municipal authorities.

Since the onset of the crisis, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) has opened the doors of Lebanese public schools to Syrian refugee pupils. At the beginning, these children were enrolled in the regular morning classes together with Lebanese pupils, but in 2013 the MEHE and UNHCR initiated the 'Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon' (R.A.C.E.) program involving nationwide outreach and awareness, help with children's transport between school and home, and additional afternoon classes. According to the UNHCR more than 470,000 registered, school-aged (3-17) Syrian refugee children were enrolled in Lebanese public schools in January 2016.[7] This and other programs organized by UNHCR, funded by international donors and implemented in coordination with Lebanese government institutions, address some of the problems for the Syrian refugees, and the numbers enrolled in these public schools indicate clearly the enormous challenges that Lebanon, the UN, and NGOs are facing.

Despite these efforts, it is estimated that more than 250,000, and perhaps as many as 300,000 Syrian children are still not enrolled in schools.

Despite these efforts, it is estimated that more than 250,000, and perhaps as many as 300,000 Syrian children are still not enrolled in schools.[8] In many cases, of course, this is because they are not registered, and some local schools, especially in rural areas, may be having problems in actually fulfilling the MEHE's instructions. Projects targeting the needs of Syrians have also created tensions locally in poor areas because Lebanese citizens living in poverty are witnessing the kind of assistance they would like from the government but do not receive being provided to the Syrians by UNHCR and NGOs. These problems and tensions become even more acute if we look at the situation in the Palestinian refugee camps.

THE NEGLECTED PALESTINE REFUGEES

Following the war after the establishment of Israel (Nakba), the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194 (III) (AR 194) in December 1948. Paragraph 11 states that the UN "resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors 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 loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Government or authorities responsible". These words constitute the principle of the Palestinian Right of Return, which still, after more than seventy years, has not yet been realized, and seems as far off as ever. Because the UN and the international community define the Palestinian refugee problem as "temporary", the UN legal framework regarding the Palestinian conflict is anachronistic. Following AR 194, the UN established the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), mandated with the task of realizing the Right of Return or achieving compensation as stipulated in the resolution. This would basically mean solving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, establishing a Palestinian state, and presenting a choice for those registered as Palestinian refugees to be resettled in Palestine or receive compensation. The UNCCP never succeeded in its task, and today no one really believes that it could have done so at the time or that it is capable of doing so either now or in the near future. Still the UNCCP exists as the only UN agency with the task of solving the Palestinian refugee problem by finding a sustainable solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, even though it has not produced anything for decades. As Michael Kagan notes in his article on the so-called "protection gap" debate: "Every year, the General Assembly goes through the ritual of noting 'with regret that the UNCCP has been unable to find means of achieving progress' in implementing Resolution 194's provisions for refugee return and compensation, and then asks the UNCCP 'to continue exerting efforts' and 'to report' the following year."[9]

As a result, this supposedly temporary refugee problem is increasing day by day. According to UNRWA, Palestine refugees are defined as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. UNRWA 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. The descendants of Palestine refugee males, including adopted children, are also eligible for registration. When the Agency began operations in 1950, it was responding to the needs of about 750,000 Palestine refugees. Today, some 5 million Palestine refugees are eligible for UNRWA services. UNRWA began maintaining Palestine refugees' registration records in May 1950. By the time the initial registration process closed, in June 1952, we had registered 914,000 out of 1,000,000 Palestine refugees. We reopened the registration process in 1992, and now, Palestine refugees can register with UNRWA irrespective of their current place or country of residence."[10] With more than five million refugees, in sheer numbers the Palestinian refugee problem is the largest in the world – and for today's media, it may be the most ignored. The number is steadily increasing and will carry on doing so until a sustainable solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has been implemented that makes it possible for Palestinians to return to the state of Palestine. Only then will their registration by UNRWA cease. To this should be added an unknown but high number of non-registered Palestinian refugees and an even higher number of Palestinians registered by host states but not by UNRWA, either because they are living outside UNRWA areas of activity or for other reasons do not satisfy UNRWA criteria. This is why a special terminology has evolved: "Palestine refugee" is used for those registered by UNRWA, while state-registered and non-registered refugees are called "Palestinian refugees".

Yet the Palestinian refugee problem is treated as a special and temporary problem by the international community. While UNHCR handles all other refugees under the provisions of the 1951 UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Palestinian refugees are exclusively handled by UNRWA and the ineffectual UNCCP. And while UNHCR works on the basis of the legal definitions of the Convention, "UNRWA lacks a legally ratified definition of its mandate. The General Assembly has never established a uniform definition of 'Palestine refugee'. UNRWA's 'working definition' of a Palestine refugee was developed by the Agency for the purposes of determining eligibility for services. This is why it contains an economic element (loss of livelihood), but as a result it is not a comprehensive set of criteria defining the status of a Palestinian refugee. The working definition is also inherently ill-suited for identifying people with current international protection needs because it is based on past events rather than current threats."[11] This constitutes what has been labeled a "protection gap" concerning Palestine refugees. Obviously, the UNHCR is on more

solid ground than UNRWA is when it seeks to confront host governments that are ignoring or are proving unwilling to carry out their responsibilities towards refugees, even though for good reasons UNCHR tries to avoid conflicts with host governments. "In that regard Palestinian refugees are granted revocable privileges but no rights. As a result, they are less protected under international law than any of their counterparts in the world. This is why in UNRWA zones Palestinian refugees can be forced to live in camp, prohibited from working or cannot benefit from family reunification."[12] In addition, there are restrictions on the right of movement, both in and out of the host country, as well as between camps.

Thus the reality is that no UN agency is working on solving the Palestinian problem – because of the Palestinian exemption from the 1951 Convention, there is a protection gap. In his analysis of this problem, Michael Kagan, Senior Fellow at the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo, divided needs for protection into three areas:

1. Promoting durable solutions
2. Promoting the general welfare of Palestine refugees
3. Individual rights protection

He concludes that the most acute problem is the lack of protection for individual rights, and we can add here that this lack has increased significantly during the crisis following the uprising and war in Syria. Of course, he notes the overall and overwhelming problem of the lack of attempts by the international community to press for a sustainable solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Let us look briefly at the three areas where there is a protection gap.[13]

Promoting durable solutions

Since the breakdown, in 2000, of the so-called Oslo process initiated in September 1993 after secret negotiations between the PLO and Israel, attempts to restart a peace process under the auspices of a quartet consisting of the United States, Russia, the EU, and the UN were started in Madrid in 2002. The idea was that negotiations should lead to a two-state solution establishing a Palestinian state and a negotiated solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. As late as September 2016, a statement by the Quartet concluded that no progress has been made in that respect and that developments on the ground were making a two-state solution still more difficult to reach.[14] The phrase "developments on the ground" refers to the security barrier Israel has built on occupied Palestinian territory in violation of international law and the illegally built Israeli (or Jewish) settlements established in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Together with the so-called security roads, which enable

Jewish settlers to move from the settlements to Israel in greater safety, these "developments" have reduced Palestinian territory on the West Bank by 60%, and Israel continues to annex more territory on a daily basis. The Quartet coordinates a range of projects supporting economic and other kinds of development programs for the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza, but these efforts are being made simultaneously with a constantly worsening situation in the Palestinian territories due to the de facto Israeli occupation and military campaigns. After the disastrous war in Gaza in 2014, when more than 2200 Palestinians were killed, over 270,000 displaced, 138 schools, 26 health facilities and almost 900 private homes destroyed, 90,000 homes damaged, infrastructure, and water supplies and power stations bombed, generating an estimated USD 4-6 billion in reconstruction costs, no progress has been made in establishing a Palestinian state that could implement the provisions of AR 194.[15] The war ended with a ceasefire agreement that included the lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, but this has not yet happened, and living conditions in Gaza have steadily worsened since the signing of the agreement.

Neither the USA and the Quartet nor any UN agencies are protecting the Palestinians with a view to creating a durable solution to the Palestine refugee problem. In that respect, the protection gap is obvious and indisputable.

The reality today is that the only external actor that could push for serious negotiations in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is the USA, due to its close relations with Israel and its strong and privileged position in the international community, including its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, which also allows it to veto resolutions. Despite the fact that the official US position on, for example, Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories is that they violate international law, the US vetoes any resolution criticizing Israeli behavior in this regard, thus actively protecting Israel's illegal activities rather than Palestinians' legal rights.[16] The USA insists that the only path towards a solution to the Palestinian problem is through bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, faction effect giving Israel the upper hand and the power to set the terms for the negotiations. While no serious negotiations have been conducted for years, the situation on the ground is changing dramatically, leaving still less territory for building a Palestinian state, which to a majority of Palestinians today seems completely out of reach. The result is that neither the USA and the Quartet nor any UN agencies are protecting the Palestinians with a view to creating a durable solution to the Palestine refugee problem. In that respect, the protection gap is obvious and indisputable.

Promoting the general welfare of Palestine refugees

UNRWA was established precisely to promote the general welfare of Palestinian refugees, and there is no doubt that throughout its existence it has actually done its best to do so, and currently it is carrying out professional activities to aid the Palestinians in the UNRWA zones by protecting their living conditions. Especially in areas like education, where it runs primary schools and provides scholarships for further education, and in primary health care, where it runs health clinics, women's programs centers, and community-based rehabilitation centers, UNRWA has an expanded range of services. UNRWA also provides food aid and issues microcredit loans, and until recently it also provided cash support for housing, but due to budgetary constraints this aid has been abolished. UNRWA offers services to both Palestine and Palestinian refugees, but the last group experiences additional problems because of their legal status. However, UNRWA does not limit its services to providing help for basic needs, schooling and health, as it also promotes freedom of movement and urges host states to observe international law and human rights, permit access to labor markets etc. This is challenging because, like UNHCR, UNRWA needs to avoid conflicts with host countries and is therefore limited in its activities in these respects. During armed conflicts, especially during Israeli military operations in, for example, Gaza, but also during the Summer War in Lebanon in 2006 and the current civil war in Syria, UNRWA at best provides shelter within its institutions. However, the destruction and large numbers of casualties during the war in Gaza in 2014, mentioned already, clearly shows that UNRWA's capacity is very limited when it comes to offering real protection during armed conflicts. Nonetheless it tries, and it is important to stress that, when reporting to the UN or when the general director makes speeches in the General Assembly, UNRWA always stresses the need for sustainable solutions to the Palestinian refugee situation.

Individual rights protection

When it comes to the protection of individual rights, however much UNRWA wants to promote protection in this respect, its capacity to do so is very limited. The host countries in which UNRWA operates have very different approaches regarding how to handle the Palestine refugees. While in Syria before the outbreak of the conflict the Palestinians were de facto integrated into Syrian society with full access to the labor market, the situation in Lebanon is very different. Here Palestinians are not allowed to take jobs in the public sector, and there are also many restrictions in the private sector. For example, they are not allowed to work in the health sector, as lawyers or in a range of other professions, nor are they allowed to own property in Lebanon. There is a list of jobs they are allowed to do, but then there are problems with the Lebanese unions accepting them as members.[17] The result is widespread unemployment, an illegal work market, and social dumping, all of which has in-

creased as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis. While UNRWA is aware of all the problems relating to human and social rights and tries to confront the Lebanese government on the issues, the reality is that the UN agency only can point out the problems – it can in no way enforce solutions.

It is thus obvious that Palestine refugees are exposed to a protection gap in all three areas. It is becoming increasingly unsatisfactory for the international community to treat this supposedly temporary problem more or less as a permanent situation that nothing can be done about. Concerning the human and social rights issues, Palestinians are in a very vulnerable situation, with almost no protection. Only in respect of welfare (basic needs) are they protected due to services provided by UNRWA in UNRWA areas and by UNHCR or host countries outside those areas. Before the international community, for example, the General-Director's speeches in the UN and UNRWA both argue the necessity of a political solution to the Palestine problem, and the agency makes a lot of effort to provide shelter during armed conflicts, as well as speaking for Palestinians' human and social rights in the host countries, but it is obvious that UNRWA's resources and capacities in these respects are limited.

Nonetheless there is no doubt that it is because of UNRWA's activities that the Palestinian nation in UNRWA areas performs so well in education and health compared to other nations in the Arab Middle East. There is also no doubt that UNRWA thereby contributes to stability in the region. That said, UNRWA also faces criticisms, which originate from two sources in particular: on the one hand from the Palestine refugees, and on the other hand from right-wing groups, especially in the US and Israel. Right-wing criticism makes the argument that the UN in general and UNRWA in particular are biased in their support of the Palestinians, that UNRWA only prolongs the Palestinian problem, that UNRWA institutions are used by Islamist groups for the production of rockets that are used to target Israel, and that UNRWA schools are promoting jihadist ideology, including support for ISIL. Based on these accusations, they argue either for an end to UNRWA and its activities or, in the US, for the funding of UNRWA to end.[18] Given that the USA contributed 24% of UNRWA's total core budget in 2014, the ending of US funding would be a catastrophe for UNRWA and would create a severe crisis. The accusations from the right wing are, of course, rejected as groundless, but with the election of Donald Trump as the new US president many are worried that they will find fresh momentum in the new administration. International donors, states in the Middle East, and Palestinians themselves argue that the ending of US funding could lead to increasing instability, human catastrophes, and conflict in the already war-torn Middle East.

Criticism of UNRWA from the Palestinians themselves is basically anchored in three arguments, namely concerns of UNRWA as representing the Palestinians in rebuilding camps after especially Israel attacks or the confrontation in Nahr al-Bared with the Lebanese army, wasta and reforms, but especially the latter, which aim at matching a restricted budget to increasing expenditure due both to demographic changes and more recently also to the Syrian refugee crisis. Palestinians grass root organizations have argued that UNRWA did not work together with them in rebuilding camps arguing that several only exists today, e.g. Shatila, to the efforts of the NGOs and not to UNRWA who often has ignored these grass root organizations. Wasta is an Arabic word meaning favoritism, and by extension the need for connections or knowing somebody in order to find a job, get things done etc., as well as the idea that employees protect each other. According to this criticism, it is almost impossible for Palestinians without the right connections to access jobs in UNRWA institutions or to get rid of employees who are perceived as not performing well. Whether this criticism is valid or not we cannot judge here, but only note that wasta is a widespread phenomenon in Middle Eastern societies and thus a frequent issue everywhere. The other criticism is related to reforms aimed at matching UNRWA budgetary restrictions to increasing expenditure. This may mean increasing school classes to fifty, ending cash support for housing, or changing the distribution of food support in the form of goods like flour, fruit, bread etc., and providing families with electronic payment cards (e-cards) to use in grocery stores so they can buy goods according to their own choices.

While an increase in the size of classes would obviously mean deterioration, UNRWA considers the introduction of e-cards an improvement. Nonetheless many in the camps perceive this change as a cut to their food supply, and implementation of this measure resulted in social unrest, demonstrations, and the blockading of UNRWA offices over the spring and summer of 2016. Problems like these could be solved, the critics claim, by including the grassroots more fully in the development of reforms. Criticism of UNRWA by Palestinians in Lebanon has increased in line with the development of the Syrian refugee. Even if some of this criticism may be valid, it is fair to say that most of the problems that have arisen in recent years are related to the Syrian refugee crisis. As already explained, this has created increasing problems for both UNRWA and the Palestine refugees in Lebanon.

THE CRISIS AND PALESTINIAN IDENTITY

Palestinian identity is intimately linked to the idea of Palestine as the homeland of Palestinians, and thus the Palestinian problem cannot be solved before a Palestinian state is established in the area of the former Palestine. The refugee problem is, of course, embedded in this demand for a state to which all Palestinians have the right to return. This is also the reason why Palestinians insist on maintaining the international community's definition of the problem as a temporary one: not until all Palestinians have the free choice of staying where they live – for example, as citizens of Denmark or as Palestine refugees in Lebanon, or returning to a state of Palestine comprising at least the territory of Gaza and the West Bank as defined by the June borders of 1967 before the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories – will the rights of the Palestinians be fulfilled. Until this is realized, most Palestinians insist on the refugee problem being defined as temporary, even though in practice it is more or less treated as permanent by Israel and (though not formally) the international community in so far as no solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is in sight for the foreseeable future. This situation has created a polarized duality in the narrative on Palestinian identity between the Right of Return and settlement (tawtin) in host countries, especially in the Arab Middle East. The latter have exploited this dual narrative by arguing that giving Palestinians full social rights or even citizenship would in fact mean supporting Israeli policy, which is seen as being unwillingly to cooperate in finding a solution consisting of a Palestinian state and a sustainable resolution of the refugee problem, and as undermining UN General Assembly Resolution 194 and the principle of the Right of Return. However, the Arab host countries have developed very different approaches to the dilemma of maintaining the principle of the Right of Return and integrating the Palestinians into their societies with social rights, including access to the job market and public services. Lebanon in particular has exploited the principle of the Right of Return to forcefully reject the integration of Palestinians

into Lebanese society by using rather unpleasant rhetoric. Many in Lebanon still accuses the Palestinians of causing the civil war in Lebanon and perceive them as an alien element in Lebanese society. This highly unpleasant Lebanese narrative of the Palestinians in Lebanon also shapes understanding, political rhetoric, and policy concerning the Syrian refugees. Even though the Arab states may differ over the dilemma between the Right of Return and the settlement of Palestinians on their own territory, they agree that any new interpretation concerning settlement should reject all forms of settlement that conflict with the special circumstances of the Arab host countries as laid down in the Arab Peace Initiative (the Saudi Arabia peace plan) ratified in the Arab League 2002 and again in 2007. In reality this gives the Arab host countries a free hand to handle the Palestine refugee problem in whatever way suits them best.[19]

The principle of the Right of Return has also played an important role in Palestinian negotiations with Israel. Thus the Declaration of Principle signed by the PLO and Israel in Washington in 1993 and followed by the so-called Oslo Accords excluded the 1948 Palestine refugees from any role in the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, leading to widespread opposition to the peace negotiations from both secular and nationalistic Palestinian factions, especially in Lebanon and Syria, as well as among the Palestinian Islamic groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The PLO approach, basically represented by Yasser Arafat's Fatah, was pragmatic, one that they themselves perceived as realistic, in so far as they admitted that the Right of Return could not fully be implemented, neither at the time of the negotiations nor in the future. On the other hand, other PLO factions, as well as the Islamic groups, considered the Declaration of Principle and the Oslo Accords a betrayal of the Palestinian cause and an undermining of AR 194.

Among Palestinians in general interpretation of the Right of Return has undergone historical changes. Based on fieldwork in refugee camps in West Bank, Lebanon, and Jordan in 2008-2011, Sophie Richter-Devroe, Lecturer at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, has analyzed and described this development from the point of view of the Nakba generation, which tends to long for a permanent return to their homes and villages of origin. They thus express a radical claim on the Right of Return principle that excludes tawtin, in contrast to the middle generation, which stresses human and social rights and international law as a platform for improving conditions in the host countries, as well as to the younger generations, who – as Richter-Devroe notes – formulate the most "innovative political imaginaries on return."[20] In my own fieldwork in the camps in Lebanon, I found among the young Palestinians an even greater desire to develop an innovative approach, sometimes leading to vigorous quarrels between the generations and different political communities.

The arrival of Syrian refugees has further influenced the identity narratives of Palestinians in Lebanon: from being "just" aliens, they had become the "old refugees," who, compared to the new "arrivals", were refugees the Lebanese have grown used to and almost come to regard as part of Lebanese society, in contrast to the Syrian, who were considered merely "temporary" refugees. This gave Palestinians some hope of being accepted more, which in reality has not happened. The Syrian Palestinians arriving in the camps in Lebanon were shocked at the living conditions and at the severe restrictions on Palestinians in Lebanon. They did not want to live under such conditions and were motivated to continue to other places with better conditions, which they imagined they would find in Europe, in particular in Germany and Scandinavia. This attitude also had an influence on young Lebanese Palestinians who on the one hand did not expect to be able to return to Palestine and on the other hand did not believe that conditions concerning social and human rights and living conditions would improve in Lebanon. They insist on their rights and the right to citizenship, whether in Lebanon or elsewhere, while at the same time maintaining a longing for Palestine in their hearts as an integral and important part of their identity. Even though they do not expect the Right of Return to be realized, they will never give it up but retain it as an integral part of a kind of postmodern identity narrative that can sometimes be difficult for the Nakba generation to comprehend.

The Syrian Palestinians arriving in the camps in Lebanon were shocked at the living conditions and at the severe restrictions on Palestinians in Lebanon.

These developments in the identity narrative show that the impact of the Syrian crisis on the Palestinians is complex, being both negative, in the sense of increased pressure on living conditions and tougher restrictions from the Lebanese authorities, and positive in creating – at least among the younger generations – increasing self-confidence in demanding human and social rights and citizenship without giving up on the Right of Return.

SOCIAL UNREST, THE RISK OF TERRORISM, AND PROJECTS "COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM"

While the international community including European states, EU, and the USA have allocated significant funding in aid to the Syrian refugees for humanitarian reasons the concerns are indeed also related to worries about destabilization of Lebanon and rise of extremism and terrorism as ramifications of the refugee crisis. Thus the aid is not solely justified in humanitarian aid but in countering the risk of a collapse of Lebanon resulting in new waves of refugees struggling to reach the shores of Europe and eruption of political violence and terrorism related to a still worsened refugee crisis. Migration and refugee waves have been securitized both in the European discourse as developments Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL known as DAESH in the Arab Middle East) or al-Qaida are able to exploit in deploying terrorist in EU and in Lebanon where the government has claimed that ISIS and al-Qaida uses the refugee crisis as a cover to infiltrate in the Palestinian camps. Instead of focusing on the political problems related to the situation in Syria and in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict the refugee crisis is seen as a breeding ground in itself for developing political violence and terrorism: Taken out of the political context, refugees and Palestinians are seen as potential terrorists, which justifies strategies and initiatives in order to counter extremist violence. This perspective on individuals among the Syrian refugees and the Palestinians of being what is called "radicalized" and thus in risk of becoming terrorist is increasingly part of humanitarian aid programs to Syrian and Palestine refugees according to NGOs operating in Lebanon. But this focus seems to be a deviation from the political and socio-economic problems of the Syrian as well as the Palestine refugee problem.

Since the confrontation with Salafi jihadist groups and Lebanese forces in the Nahr al-Bared Camp in northern Lebanon in 2007, which led to more than 400 killed, 30,000 displaced, and the demolition of the camp, many worries have surfaced

about new outbreaks of violence. It was jihadists from Syria with experience of the insurgency in Iraq who had infiltrated Salafi groups in the Tripoli area and the Nahr al-Bared camp and who were behind the confrontations in 2007. Some of the jihadists were later involved in militant confrontation in the Ain al-Hilweh camp in Saida in southern Lebanon, where they had found shelter from the Lebanese security forces. Especially after the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, the Lebanese authorities and the international community have been concerned about the possibility of the war spilling over into Lebanon. There have been militant confrontations and terrorist acts, and it is known that jihadists from Syria affiliated with different Islamic militias fighting there, including DAESH and the al-Nusra Front (renamed Jabhat Fatah al-Sham in July 2016), have infiltrated Palestinian factions in the camps and are operating in the border areas between Lebanon and Syria.

The threat is real, and the Lebanese security forces and military intelligence are on high alert in order to counter it. But the problem and the situation are much more complex and nuanced than what is often depicted in the international media and among foreign-policy circles and think tanks. Here the picture is that al-Qaida and DAESH are infiltrating the Palestinian camps in order to recruit fighters for their wars in Syria and Iraq, as well as to conduct terrorism inside Lebanon and target Hizbollah, which is supporting the Bashar al-Assad regime and is heavily involved in the fighting against the Islamist militias in Syria. Ain al-Hilweh camp in particular has been at the center of this narrative as a nest for hatching jihadists and terrorists. Actually some of the perpetrators behind the terror attack in Hizbollah-controlled South Beirut in November 2015 were Syrians affiliated to DAESH hiding in the Burj Barajneh camp, though the bombs had been put together by other insurgents in an apartment in the Christian quarter of Beirut. Several confrontations between Syrian jihadists and the army have taken place in the Arsal area, Bekaa, and on the border with Syria. Security around the border is today very tight, and the Lebanese Army is working closely with military intelligence and Hizbollah in order to prevent a spillover from the Syrian war.

Hizbollah, which is working closely with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, is also very active in mediating between the different Palestinian factions, of which there are more than thirty in the camps. The camps are often described as "no-go areas" where all kind of militant groups can emerge and recruit supporters, but the reality is that the factions are constantly in dialogue and mediating in order to avoid militant internal confrontations, as well as conflicts with the army, which is also playing a part in these ongoing attempts to prevent violence among these groups.[21] It is also important to stress that the vast majority of Palestinians in the camp reject militancy and violence as tools for obtaining social and political improvements. Although

al-Qaida and DAESH have a certain presence in Lebanon and the camps, the Palestinian Islamic groups, the secular groups and Hizbollah are working to keep them out and thus avoid the Syrian civil war from spilling over into Lebanon; even the Shia–Sunni conflict and sectarianism that is part of many of the conflicts in the Arab Middle East not being present in the Palestinian camps. Most of the violence is related to the ongoing socio-economic deprivation of the Palestinian refugee camps.[22] Thus the biggest threat of violence and destabilization in Lebanon does not stem from the Salafi jihadists – although there of course is a threat from them – but from socio-economic problems in the Palestinian camps and Palestinian informal gatherings, as well as the increasing problems of handling the Syrian refugees, who increasingly face greater challenges in living conditions and whose numbers are on the rise.

That said, the threat of so-called radicalization and terrorism rooted in the increasingly dire social and living conditions of refugees in Lebanon, especially in the Palestinian camps, is of great concern to Western states and the international donor community, which increasingly insists on building in so-called "countering violent extremism" (CVE) programs into their human aid and development activities. CVEs, also called counter-radicalization programs, build on the idea that terrorism can be countered by spotting early signs of radicalization that, through different kinds of actions such as counter-narratives, exit programs, and building up resilience in local societies, will prevent radicalized individuals crossing the invisible line between extremist ideologies and militant actions. In order to identify early signs of radicalization among individuals, programs are set up to create increased awareness in so-called "in-risk societies" in order to enable social workers, local leaders etc. to spot radicalization and report their worries to the authorities, who can then take action in preventing radicalization turning into violent extremism. These CVE programs are being drawn up in countries such as Denmark, Holland, Belgium, the UK, and lately also the USA and are targeted at individuals whom the authorities see as being at risk of becoming terrorists.

The overall problem with CVE is the lack of any clear and solid definition of the concept of radicalization, making it extremely difficult to establish a consensus over what should be identified as early signs of radicalization. Still CVE programs are being developed by intelligence agencies in cooperation with law enforcement and social services and implemented in a large number of Western states. In Denmark the first government CVE action plan was initiated in January 2009, and several have followed since. The plans raise a whole range of unanswered questions, such as the incongruity between identifying the root causes of political violence and social unrest in the social and political contexts of communities and the individual approach

of the CVE programs, but the most urgent question is how "at-risk societies" or local communities respond to being exposed to CVE programs. The problem here is exactly the individual approach in CVE that tends to ignore the social and political contexts of so-called radicalization, which leads to the politics being taken out of the reasons for extremism: reactions to marginalization, exclusion from the labor market, problems with integration into host societies, social problems etc. are sidelined in search of vulnerable individuals at risk of being absorbed into a so-called radicalization process.[23] Beside of these socio-economic root causes for extremism and militancy in Lebanon there is a general opposition towards the Israeli policy that rejects incorporating AR 194 in the negotiations with the Palestinians, which is a mobilization and recruitment basis for militant Palestinian groups that promote a militant strategy against Israel.

If this criticism of the implementation of CVE in Western societies is valid – that is, where social services and institutions, as well as general standards of welfare, are much better developed, including cooperation between different public agencies in government and municipalities, than in the Lebanon – it should be obvious that this problem becomes amplified many times over when CVE models are transferred from, for example, Denmark to Lebanon. The Palestinians in the camps apprehend their problems as being related to a social and political situation that needs to be addressed, and they reject the perception that their camps are nests of radicalization and terrorism in the way Western and Middle Eastern governments understand it. Thus CVE programs are met with great suspicion: the Palestinians in the camps reject being perceived as potentially radicalized individuals or terrorists. They acknowledge the presence of extremists and the risk of individuals being recruited to violence, but reject any narrative that portrays the camps and their communities as nests of terrorism. However, this was exactly the exaggerated story in the international media after the Nahr al-Bared camp episode in 2007, when journalists looking for a chilling news story made the pilgrimage to Ain al-Hilweh camp especially, followed by researchers who wanted to conduct fieldwork in their attempts to explain the Sunni Salafi-jihadi phenomenon.[24] Today the Palestinians in the camps treat journalists and researchers with great suspicion, which I also experienced when doing my fieldwork in Burj Barajneh. The inhabitants in the camps worry that NGOs are becoming instruments in the authorities´ surveillance and intelligence gathering operations. The focus on CVE thus seems counterproductive when implementing projects among refugees and in the Palestinian camps, where people simply consider themselves to be the victims of particular social and political processes, domestic as well as international, as well as wars, conflicts, and the impotence of the international community in solving their problems, rather than potential terrorists.

CONCLUSION

This report has focused on the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and its implications for the Palestinian and Palestine refugees living in Lebanon.

In the first year of the crisis, Lebanon expected that the situation in Syria would soon be stabilized and the refugees thus be able to return to Syria. Due to the history of relations between Syria and Lebanon, with almost open borders between them, Lebanon experienced the fastest growth of the Syrian population of the three main receiving countries in the Middle East, namely Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. In the autumn of 2014 the Lebanese parliament placed restrictions on Syrians' access, and from 2015 the entry of Syrians into Lebanon was severely restricted, by making them register with GSO in order to obtain a legal permit to stay in Lebanon. As an increasing number of Syrians are not able to pay the registration fee, they stay unregistered in Lebanon, hiding themselves from the authorities in the poorest areas of the country or in the Palestinian refugee camps. This situation has resulted in extra pressure on the labor market, as they take on underpaid jobs, often in conflict with labor market regulations, and often for even lower pay than the Palestinians or poor Lebanese citizens who used to take these jobs, thus leading to social dumping.

It is estimated that around 1.5 million Syrians are living in Lebanon today, with serious consequences for Lebanese society and economy: housing prices have increased to a very high level, the pressure on infrastructure is high – especially in poorer areas, but also in the bigger cities, including Beirut – the black market for labor has grown, tensions between poor Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees, who sometimes receive more help from UNHCR than the poor receive from the state, are increasing, and as Lebanon has opened it schools to refugee children, the pressure on education is also growing. Nonetheless it is estimated that between 250,000 and 300,000 children do not attend school.

Beside the registration fee, the refugees are supposed to pay all the costs of living in Lebanon themselves, including housing, food, and health services. This is only possible through the aid provided by international donors, by taking jobs of any kind, and by begging on the streets. Despite the humanitarian aid from donors coordinated especially by UNHCR, many Syrians are living in very poor conditions in primitive tent camps, in the poorer areas of the country, or in the Palestinian camps. All this affects the PRL: Living conditions are worsened; access to labor market even more difficult than before the Syrian crisis, services from UNRWA worse, space and facilities in the camps under pressure, and – maybe most serious – a general marginalization of their political situation.

Approximately 53,000 of the Syrian refugees are Palestinians. They are registered and depend on the services provided by UNRWA. Many of these Palestinian refugees from Syria are living in the camps, with severe consequences for the poor power and water supply, the inefficient disposal of garbage, and very limited space. UNRWA has for years been struggling with budgetary constraints, which in Lebanon have become a still greater problem, as expenses for housing, running schools, and providing health care have grown due to the refugee crisis.

The younger generations are especially conscious of this bad situation and have low expectations of the future. Even if they keep a piece of Palestine in their hearts and long for the day they will be able to return to their homeland, the most obvious solution for their desire for a real future, with prospects of education, a job, a family life, protection for human and social rights, and welfare, is to move out of the region, which presumably is also the desire of the ever-growing number of Syrians now living in Lebanon, many of them unregistered.

It is impossible to predict what will happen if their situation continues to become worse and at the same time they are forced to stay where they are. Human suffering is, of course, an unavoidable consequence, but whether the social unrest will increase and eventually lead to a serious destabilization of Lebanon, though not inevitable, is certainly a serious risk.

Compared with the CVE programs, humanitarian aid is probably not a sustainable way to counter this risk. Much more, including protection of the human, social, and political rights of both the Palestinians and the Syrian refugees is needed. If new waves of refugees and more human suffering is to be avoided, much greater efforts must be made to protect refugees – including the forgotten Palestinians – in the conflict zones of the Middle East.

NOTES

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2 This report is based on a field study in Lebanon April and May 2016, which was made possible by my institute, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), which paid my salary and some expenses while I was in Lebanon, and a generous grant from The Danish Institute in Damascus. Thanks to Professor Paul Tabar, Director of the Institute for Migration Studies, who invited me to be affiliated at Lebanese American University (LAU) in Beirut while I was in Lebanon. The study is based on academic literature and reports from Donors, UN agencies (UNWRA, UNHCR, etc.), Think Tanks and interviews with academics, diplomats, donors, UN Agencies, and interviews in Refugee Camps, especially in Burj Barajneh in Beirut and El Buss (al-Bass) in Sour in South Lebanon. In the camps I interviewed UNWRA staff, spoke persons from different Palestinian factions, families both PRL and PRS, NGO's, and others. This would not have been possible without the assistance from Kholoud Hussein in Burj Barajneh and UNWRA Chief Area Officer for the South Fawzi Kassab in El Buss. I am grateful to both Kholoud and Fawzi! I am thankful to many others who helped me in different ways: Giulia El Dardiry, Imad Mansour, Rania Masri, Maj Navntoft, Christina Markus Lassen, Matthias Schmale, Abel Piqueras, Perla Issa, Maria Lindhardt, Anne og Leila Kanafani, Anders Tang Friborg, Leila Stockmarr, Rabih Salah, and my good driver Imad Maged.

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10 http://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/eligibility-registration

11 Kagan, op. cit.

12 Anicée Van Engeland, "1st ED: International Refugees law and the Palestinian issues, Palestine Return Centre, http://www.prc.org.uk/portal/index.php/publications/jprs/1301-; UNRWA zones refers to the zones where UNRWA operates: Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank, and Gaza.

13 It is fair to say that the following discussion slightly differ in analysis and conclusion from Kagan.

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