

Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

Civil and Social Rights

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Background Information

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) defines a Palestine refugee as “any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost their home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict”. UNRWA's services are available to all those living in its area of operations who meet this definition, who are registered with the Agency and who need assistance. UNRWA's definition of a refugee also covers the descendants of persons who became refugees in 1948. UNRWA's five field of operations are: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Gaza and the West Bank. The Lebanese Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) estimate that there are around 415,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (Palestinian Human Rights Organization: 2002)

Lebanon Map and Palestinian Refugee Camps' Locations below



Reprinted from UNRWA (www.unrwa.org) Lebanon Refugee Camp Profiles.

Some 450, 000 refugees are registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, with many living in the country's 12 refugee camps.

Palestine refugees represent an estimated ten per cent of the population of Lebanon. They do not enjoy several important rights; for example, they cannot work in as many as 20 professions. Because they are not formally citizens of another state, Palestine refugees are unable to claim the same rights as other foreigners living and working in Lebanon. Restrictions on employment exacerbate poverty; indeed among the five UNRWA fields, Lebanon has the highest percentage of Palestine refugees living in abject poverty.

Around 53 per cent of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon live in the 12 recognized Palestine refugee camps, all of which suffer from serious problems, including poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, poor housing conditions and lack of infrastructure. Three other camps were destroyed during the course of the Lebanese Civil War, while a fourth was evacuated many years ago, intensifying the overcrowding in existing camps.

Additionally, ongoing conflict in Syria has forced many Palestine refugees from that country, including men, women and children, to flee to Lebanon in search of safety. UNRWA is working to adjust to their numbers and their needs - including for education, health care, shelter and relief.

REFUGEE CAMPS IN LEBANON

UNRWA provides services in 12 Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon. UNRWA does not administer or police the camps, as this is the responsibility of the host authorities.

1. Beddawi	4. Dbayeh	7. Wavel	10. Rashidieh
2. Nahr el-Bared	5. Mar Elias	8. Ein El Hilwh	11. Burj Shemali
3. Burj Barajneh	6. Shatila	9. Mieh Mieh	12. El Buss

Historical Background

The Sykes-Picot Agreement (Officially 1916) was a secret agreement reached during World War I between the British and French governments pertaining to the partition of the Ottoman Empire among the Allied Powers. Russia was also privy to the discussions. According to the agreement, Palestine was under mandate and colonization of England, which used all its resources and power in preparing and achieving their Prime Minister Lord Arthur Balfour promise. The Balfour Declaration was sent as a 67-word statement contained within the short letter addressed to the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour on November 2, 1917. The declaration acknowledged the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. This set the stage for the displacement of Palestinians, post WWII, coincident to the founding of the state of Israel.

In 1948, Palestinians from the areas of the North of Palestine: Haifa, Acre, Safad and the Galilee region, were forced to leave their homes, due to Israeli military forces attacks. Many villages were destroyed in that area and these Palestinians fled over the border with Lebanon. They numbered around 100,000 (Peteet, 1997), which is about 14% of the Palestinian refugees who fled Palestine in 1948. Those who were economically well-off travelled directly to the big cities; while the majority remained in the border areas. In 1949 UN Resolution 302 established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (EMHRN Mission, 2000: 11). In 1950 UNRWA began operations. In 1953, it was decided to exchange the tents with semi-permanent shelters. UNRWA originally established 16 camps, of which 3 were destroyed (Tel-El-Zaater, Nabatiyeh and Jisr-El-Basha) and one was evacuated (Gauroud) (UNRWA, 2002). UNRWA schools were established in the remaining camps.

From 1959 onwards, Israel persistently refused to implement UN General Assembly Resolution 194 'that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their 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 the loss or damage to property which, under principles of international law and in equity,

should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible.” The initial outbreak of civil war in the mid-1970s, the Syrian and Israeli intervention of the late 1970s, led to the escalation of the PLO-Israeli conflict in the early 1980s; the 1976 war against Telzaatar, Jisr-El-Basha and other Palestinian camps, the 1978 and 1982 Israeli Army invasions of Lebanon and also 1986 war against camps led to either partial or total destruction of some Palestinian camps such as Tel-El-Zaater, Nabatiyeh and Jisr-El-Basha camps. Consequently, the Lebanese civil war which continued from 1975 till 1990 has persistently negative impacts and consequences on the life of the Palestinian refugees till these days.¹

The Palestinian community in Lebanon does not have Lebanese citizenship and therefore does not have Lebanese identity cards, is legally barred from owning property and from entering a list of desirable occupations. They do not enjoy several important rights; for example, they cannot work in as many as 20 professions. Moreover, the minister of Labor has recently issued a law that the Palestinians need a work permit to work with International and National Registered Non-Governmental Organizations and when they apply for work permit with NGOs, they are either delay to be given the permit or even not given at all.

Moreover, Palestinian refugees are prevented from bringing construction materials to the camps to rehabilitate or build their shelters unless after obtaining a permit from the Lebanese army, and they are prevented from owning an apartment outside the boundaries of the camp. A Lebanese law preventing Palestinians from owning property in Lebanon was passed in March 2001, and stated that “It is not allowed to own a property of any kind for any person who does not carry a citizenship issued by a recognized state or for any person if the property was incompatible with constitutional provisions pertaining to refusal of settlement [of Palestinian refugees].”

Thousands of Palestinians have tried to circumvent the law by registering their deeds in the name of a Lebanese friend or a Palestinian relative who holds a foreign citizenship, however a law was issued punishing with imprisonment for six months, and fining ten times the price of the property for the notary who registers properties for Palestinians, and whatever the situation.

Concerning the Palestinian who dies, his Palestinian heirs have no right to register the real estate in their names; they have only the right to sell the properties. Then, the Real estate registry offices started to prevent all Palestinians from owning properties apply for work permit they are either delay to be given the permit or even not given at all.

¹ See <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/palestinian-refugees-in-lebanon/fmo018.pdf>.

Issue: Palestinians' Right to Work in Lebanon

The history of Palestinian refugees' interactions with restrictive employment policies in Lebanon dates back to the period preceding the Lebanese Civil War. In 1964, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs proposed Ministerial Decree No. 17561 in order to organize the participation of foreigners in the Lebanese labor market. As a consequence of the changes implemented, Palestinians became classified as foreigners and were required to obtain a work permit prior to employment (El-Natour and Yassine, 2007). Lebanese labor law pertaining to foreign workers then centered around two main principles – the principle of reciprocity of treatment in Lebanon, and the requirement to obtain a work permit prior to employment. The reciprocity of treatment policy stipulated that foreign workers in Lebanon could not obtain work permits or social security benefits unless their countries of origin granted those same benefits to Lebanese workers. The statelessness of Palestinians was not taken into consideration. In addition to the work permit requirement, Palestinians were prevented altogether from practicing such professions as medicine or law, given that only the Lebanese could join professional syndicates. Furthermore, the small proportion of Palestinians who worked with formal contracts was not allowed to benefit from the social security system, though they were required to contribute to it. In 1982, shortly after the departure of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from Lebanon, Ministerial Decree No. 1/289 further restricted the list of professions open to Palestinians, depriving them from working in over 70 commercial and administrative professions (El-Natour and Yassine, 2007). In addition to the restriction on employment in syndicated professions, the new restrictions practically left only the construction and farming sectors open to Palestinians.

Lebanese authorities are dealing with Palestinian refugees from security perspective although the Palestinians are strengthening the Lebanese economy cycle where Palestinians' Labors are spending their money in Lebanon. Also UNRWA spends money monthly on their Palestinian Staff, its services and projects holding in the camps. Moreover, PLO and other political factions, Local and International NGOs send money monthly to Lebanon and spend them in the Palestinian camps. Moreover, the Palestinians who live abroad send money to their parents in Lebanon. Thus, approximately 6 million dollars enters Lebanon per month, sent to Palestinian refugees who spend these dollars there in Lebanon, contributing to the economy.

Scenario

A group of young educated leaders have started to plan a peaceful campaign that focused on attaining the Palestinians' refugees their right to work. These young leaders have distributing leaflets, organized peaceful demonstrations and sit-ins, given speeches and statements, and circulated their political platform on social media. These young educated persons graduated from different universities and hold different specializations in engineering, pharmacy, medication and others. But unfortunately, they were completely disappointed that they could not find jobs in Lebanon just because they are Palestinians' refugees. These leaders are currently unemployed.

Many teens say they were frustrated and hopeless to continue their education where they see other unemployed graduate youth who are not allowed to work in their professions because they are Palestinian refugees.

There is concern that high unemployment amongst the educated Palestinian refugees could be problematic in the long run, reducing their integration into society, and promoting their isolation, deepening their grievances.

A group of these young educated leaders gave themselves a group name "Our Tomorrow". They are highlighting on the issue of right to work and bringing attention to Lebanese Government and Lebanese political parties of the importance of giving the Palestinian refugees their rights to work or else part of Palestinian youth are going to immigrate illegally and others will resort to isolation. Then, they will become as a real security threat to Lebanese community and Palestinian people themselves.

This "Our Tomorrow" youth group has recently created their facebook page and posted "Dealing with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon just from security perspective and depriving them from their civil rights especially right to work is a big mistake. This will open the way for youth to resort to illegal immigration and isolation. Giving the Palestinians their social and civil rights does not mean naturalization in Lebanon where they have the right to live a decent life and in dignity till they return to their homeland Palestine."

Because "Our Tomorrow" youth group loves Lebanon and its people, they want to highlight on the issue of unemployment among Palestinian youth which leads to disappointment, psychological disorders, exploitation and consequently, increasing threats to security."

Moreover, " Our Tomorrow" youth group sends letters and memorandums to the international community and United Nations through their embassies in Beirut asking them to increase their donations to UNRWA services, including increasing the employment opportunities inside this agency for Palestinian refugees, where shortages and cuts in its services affect the life of Palestinian refugees negatively and consequently, lead to disappointment, exploitation, chaos and conflict. "Our Tomorrow" group doesn't have main office. They meet each time in one of youth centers in the camps. Their demonstrations and sit-ins will be held peacefully inside the camps.

Players

For this "Our Tomorrow" Group Game, there are 5 primary player teams which are:

1. UNRWA

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Nearest East: Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programs for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950. UNRWA's five field of operations are: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Gaza and the West Bank. The Agency's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict.

UNRWA will be worried and concerned of any shortage in donations to its budget and this will be reflected negatively on its services to refugees; consequently refugees would be concerned that services will be reduced and this could, in turn, lead to demonstrations and sit-ins by Palestinian refugees. So, UNRWA will be worried in case of closure of schools, health clinics or any of its installations inside the camps. UNRWA seeks to meet all stakeholders inside the camps. It will meet with "Our Tomorrow" youth group. Generally, UNRWA supports any request to increase the donations of international community to its budget in order to enhance its services.

2. International World (Especially USA and European Countries)

UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States especially United States of America and European Countries. In 2015, with a funding shortfall of \$101m, UNRWA threatened to delay the new academic year at the schools it runs in refugee camps across the region. UNRWA funds crisis always worries Palestinian refugees because shortage and cuts in services will affect negatively on the life of Palestinian refugees, especially in Lebanon where Palestinian refugees depend mainly on the services provided by UNRWA. In case USA, EU and other countries do not donate or stop their donation to UNRWA, the crisis will happen where services including employment of refugees in UNRWA will be affected and for sure this will be reflected negatively on the life of Palestinian refugees and their surroundings. The Palestinian refugees consider the international community is historically responsible to what happened to them. Concerning the scenario, the International world especially USA and European countries will be concerned about the services' delivery of UNRWA and how the shortage in these services will be reflected negatively on the life of Palestinian refugees and thus leads to conflict.

3. PLO

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established in 1964 and has been the embodiment of the Palestinian national movement. It is a broad national front, or an umbrella organization, comprised of numerous organizations of the resistance movement, political parties, popular organizations, and independent personalities and figures from all sectors of life. The Arab Summit in 1974 recognized the PLO as the “sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” and since then the PLO has represented Palestine at the United Nations, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and in many other fora.

The Palestinian Factions and the Palestinian Political Leadership are concerned about rights, suffering of Palestinian refugees and any of potential conflict. Generally, the Palestinian factions support the demands of their people to get civil rights and also they are against any shortage or cuts in UNRWA services where they always ask the international community to increase its donations to UNRWA. They will seek to meet with "Our Tomorrow" youth group, UNRWA, and Lebanese authorities.

4. Lebanese Government

Lebanon's ethnic and religious diversity has had an enormous impact on its governmental system. Traditionally the president of the country is a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament a Shiite Muslim. The country is governed under the constitution of 1926 as amended. Under the constitution, the president, who is the head of state and wields real power, is elected by the legislature for a six-year term and cannot serve consecutive terms. The government is headed by the prime minister who is appointed by the president after his consultations with Parliament members to nominate the prime minister. The unicameral legislature consists of the 128-seat National Assembly, whose members are elected by popular vote on the basis of sectarian proportional representation for four-year terms.

Lebanon is a small country where they have Palestinian refugees since 1948 and recently more than 1 million Syrian refugees fled to Lebanon from war in Syria. The Lebanese government is concerned about Lebanese economy which lies under pressure in wake of Syrian refugee influx to its territories. Syrian refugees have already started opening businesses in Lebanon to help themselves, but this elevated the anxiety of the Lebanese and led the government to take measures to protect Lebanese workers and businesses from the competition.

Concerning the scenario, the Lebanese authority will meet with Palestinian factions and UNRWA. They will ask about this "Our Tomorrow" youth group campaign. Generally, the Lebanese government supports any request to increase the donations of international community to UNRWA budget in order to enhance its services.

5. NGOs

There are International and Local Non Governmental Organizations working in Lebanon. International NGOs such UNICEF, UNDP, ILO, UNHCR, DRC, NRC and others that mainly work with refugees and host community and Lebanese and Palestinian Local NGOs in which most of them are affiliated with Lebanese and Palestinian political parties.

Although International and national NGOs prefer to recruit the graduated and qualified Palestinian refugees among its staff especially in their projects implemented inside the Palestinian camps and gatherings, but these international and National NGOs have started to avoid recruiting Palestinian refugees because of the recent decision of the Lebanese minister of Labor who has recently issued a law that the Palestinians need a work permit to work with International and National Registered Non-Governmental Organizations and when they apply for work permit with NGOs, they are either delay to be given the permit or even not given at all.

International NGOs and Local NGOs are worried about the sustainability of their projects inside the camps without recruiting refugees residing in these camps themselves. Palestinian NGOs should meet with "Our Tomorrow" youth group and then altogether to meet with International and Lebanese NGOs to open a dialogue with Lebanese government especially minister of labor to allow Palestinian refugees to work for the benefit of both Palestinian and Lebanese community.

Learning Goals

The first Goal: to explore and learn about the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon through this game simulation. When students are actively engaged with a game, their minds are experiencing the pleasure of grappling with (and coming to understand) the real situation.

The second Goal: to understand the importance and needs of civil rights to the Palestinian refugees where role- players have to use integrative negotiation as a way of resolving disputes.

The Third Goal: to develop their skills in problem-solving through collaborating and debate in this simulation game. When collaborating, each person in the conflict works to uncover the other person's underlying concerns so that everyone understands what is really behind the conflict and the resolution can address (if not all) of both Parties' concerns. Common communication tools used in collaboration are: active listening, questioning that reveals a willingness to understand expressing your own concerns without being overly emotional, sticking to the issue at hand and taking responsibility for your role in the conflict. The goal of the role playing exercise is to get the other party to move past his or her position, and into collaboration. To achieve that, they will need to discover the concerns that are fueling the conflict.

Assignment of Game Moves:

Condition 1 and Move 1: (discussion 20 minutes)

"Our Tomorrow" has indicated that they are planning a peaceful march, and set of public demonstrations, beginning in 5 days. In this first move, consider your interests, and plan your initial move or moves and be ready to explain these, as well as justify them.

Condition 2 and Move 2 :(discussion 20 minutes)

The UN, which provides the annual funding for UNRWA, has indicated that there could be severe budget cuts, in the next annual cycle. Of course, these potential cuts come at a time when the refugees are in increasing need. The Lebanese government has indicated that they are not able to make up the differences if there would be cuts. Design your short term strategy for responding to this possible scenario that might involve significant cuts to UNRWA.

Condition 3 and Move 3 :(discussion 20 minutes)

Despite the fact that students are enrolled and participating in secondary education, and indeed graduation rates remain high, there is a growing concern because the scholarship allocation for refugees is falling. This coming year, given the economic recession, more than 50% of the students who would want to attend the university will not be able to do so. Thus there is an increasing number of high school graduates who recognize they do not have a future.

Each group to be given 5-7 minutes to give a brief (total: 30 minutes conclusion)