

Universal Periodic Review – Lebanon
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Joint submission to non-governmental human rights organizations
and networks on human rights violations against Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

Supported and submitted jointly by:

Palestinian Human Rights Organization **PHRO**, International Federation for Human Rights **FIDH**, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network **EuroMed Rights**, Centre libanais des droits humains **CLDH**, Act for Human Rights **ALEF**, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies **CIHRS**, Arab NGO Network for Development **ANND**, Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Strategic studies & Human development **TATWIR**, Developmental Action Without Borders **NABAA**, Palestinian Association for Human Rights **Witness**, Human Development Center, Khiam Rehabilitation center for Victims of torture **KRC**, Joint Christian committee for Social service **JCC**, Women Humanitarian Organization **PWHO**



Emphasizing the important role that civil society aspires to in the process of enforcing and monitoring human rights conventions, stakeholder organizations and networks have taken this opportunity to provide comments and contribute to the universal periodic review process, to highlight and increase participation in the processes necessary to implement human rights and ensure its enjoyment by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Information and contact of the parties submitting and supporting the report Annex 1

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PHRO is an independent non-governmental organization, established in 1997, recognized in Lebanon under registration no. 36/AD and works for promoting, protecting and defending the Human Rights of the Palestinian Refugees in MENA region. **PHRO** is a member of the International Federation for Human Rights (**FIDH**) and the **EuroMED Rights** and the Arab Organization for Human Rights (**AOHR**)



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report was prepared in partnership and cooperation with international and regional organizations, networks, and Palestinian and Lebanese associations¹ concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights and social development for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The report aims to review the human rights progress and violations related to Palestinian refugees, and to enhance it through advocacy. Thus, highlighting the extent to which the Lebanese state fulfills the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR): 37/2021 session; 23/2015 session; and 09/2010 session, and its commitment to the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) and the international conventions that Lebanon has signed and ratified. This report is released at a time when Lebanon's 2019 economic crisis persists and deepens in the wake of the devastating aftermath of October 7, 2023. The compounded impact has severely affected Lebanon, Palestinian refugees, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has long struggled with financial constraints and now faces the threat of being dismantled. Meanwhile, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon remain deprived of their most basic social, economic, and civil rights. Despite Lebanon's commitments to improve their conditions following recommendations made during previous UPR sessions, no meaningful progress had been achieved at the time this report was prepared.
- 1.2 The Lebanese legislator has yet to any action to address the unjust laws, despite Lebanese currently presenting its fourth review of the UPR. Instead of expanding rights protections, Lebanon has tightened its control over them, joining the increasingly restricted civic space across the region. Notably, the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, which operates under the Council of Ministers, issued a document titled "*A Unified Lebanese Vision Towards Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*²." While the document includes recommendations concerning a legal definition of settlement and refugee status, as well as proposals for improving conditions, it continues to treat Palestinian refugees through an administrative classification system that divides them into three categories³. An additional fourth category—Palestinian refugees from Syria, who fled due to the civil war and ongoing insecurity—is also included. However, this population continues to be treated primarily through a political-security lense within the jurisdictions of Lebanon's security agencies, rather than through a rights-based, civilian lens. This approach results in discriminatory and inconsistent treatment that leaves these refugees outside any meaningful protection framework and denies them access to their full human rights⁴.

¹ Palestinian Human Rights Organization **PHRO**, International Federation for Human Rights **FIDH**, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network **EuroMed Rights**, Centre libanais des droits humains **CLDH**, Act for Human Rights **ALEF**, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies **CIHRS**, Arab NGO Network for Development **ANND**, Cedar Centre for Legal Studies, Strategic studies & Human development **TATWIR**, Developmental Action Without Borders **NABAA** Palestinian Association for Human Rights **Witness**, Human Development Center, Khiam Rehabilitation center for Victims of torture **KRC**, Joint Christian committee for Social service **JCC**, Women Humanitarian Organization **PWHO**

² <http://www.lpd.gov.lb/archive/a-unified-lebanese-vision-for-the-palestinian-refu/424/en>

³ Refugees registered with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees (UNRWA); Refugees registered with the Directorate of Political Affairs but not registered with UNRWA; Refugees not registered with the Lebanese government and UNRWA (losing identity papers)

⁴ It is worth noting that the preamble to the Lebanese Constitution, paragraph (b), stipulates that "Lebanon is a founding and active member of the United Nations and is committed to its charters and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," and Article 2 of the Lebanese Code of Civil Procedure stipulates that "when the provisions of international treaties conflict with the provisions of ordinary law, the former shall take precedence in the field of application over the latter."

- 1.3 Lebanon, which considers itself a transit country rather than a country of asylum for refugees, continues in ignoring the demands and recommendations calling for improving the conditions of Palestinian refugees, in service of the racial exclusion policies⁵ and practices that drive continued migration (often through the form of irregular migration). The features of which are evident through the shrinking numbers of refugees, as highlighted by the “*General Census of Population and Housing in Palestinian Communities and Camps in Lebanon*,” an exercise led by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. The census highlighted that the number of Palestinian refugees present in Lebanon as of the end of 2017 was reportedly 174,422⁶. However, while official Lebanese sources state that the number exceeds 500,000 Palestinian refugees. Meanwhile the latest update from UNRWA, the number of registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is approximately 500,000, of whom approximately 250,000 are currently residing in Lebanon, including approximately 27,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria. The multiplicity of figures and sources result in increased manipulation of the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, often serving security and political discourses in the country⁷.
- 1.4 It is essential to prevent the continued exploitation of the multiple crises facing Lebanon as a means for the government to once again evade its human rights obligations, this has a disproportionate impact on Palestinian refugees, who remain a marginalized and vulnerable group living in a permanent state of exception. This pattern has been evident in previous cycles: during the 9th session in 2010, Lebanon failed to implement the recommendations it had accepted; in the 23rd session in 2015, it used the presence of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees to deflect pressure; and in the 37th session in 2021, it cited the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic to justify inaction. It’s time to stop prolonging the suffering of Palestinian refugees, which can be resolved while addressing the Lebanese fears and concerns through a simple and clear legislation that promotes the principles of equality and non-discrimination in enjoying human and humanitarian rights. Through the new era, we look forward to activating the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee and working to adopt and/or establish a parallel advisory committee that includes competent Lebanese and Palestinian civil society leaders, particularly from human rights associations and strategic studies centers
- 1.5 This report highlights a range of persistent violations endured by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon—issues that were also raised in submissions to the previous three UPR sessions on Lebanon’s human rights record⁸. These include violations of the right to legal personality; freedom of movement, residence, and travel; the right to work and access liberal professions; the right to own property; the right to adequate housing; access to social services and benefits; the right to protection and a fair trial; and the right to freedom of opinion, expression, and association. These violations have had a cumulative and deeply damaging impact on the civil, economic, and social lives of Palestinian refugees, as well as on their mental health. Persisting for over 77 years, these systemic abuses represent a form of protracted suffering that stands in clear contradiction to international human rights standards and Lebanon’s obligations under instruments such as the UN treaty bodies, particularly (HRC) and the (CESCR), have issued general comments addressing discrimination against non-citizens. These general comments emphasize that while some rights in (ICCPR) and other treaties are explicitly for citizens, the general rule is that most

⁵ The migration of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon <http://www.palhumanrights.org/PalRefugeesMigration.pdf>

⁶ <https://lpdc.gov.lb/?s=General+Census+of+Population+and+Housing+in+Palestinian+Communities+and+Camps+in+Lebanon>

⁷ <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

⁸ <https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2013-09/phropalestinianhumanrightsorganizationjs.pdf> - https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2015-10/js12_upr23_lbn_e_main.pdf - https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021-08/js23_upr37_lbn_e_main.pdf

rights apply equally to citizens and non-citizens, without discrimination based on nationality⁹, and emphasized that: CEDAW, CERD, and UNCAT.

- 1.6 Lebanon has accepted one of the two recommendations that directly mentioned Palestinian refugees, 150 (22) related to people with disabilities, and took note of the second recommendation, 150 (277) related to the right to work and own property for Palestinian refugees. However, other recommendations that affect Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, referred to in the WG Report A/HRC/47/5¹⁰, should also be addressed. Lebanon had taken note of the recommendations related to Palestinian refugees \ These issues were also raised in the previous report of the relevant working group (A/HRC/DEC/31/102) dated April 6, 2016, particularly through the recommendations¹¹ addressed there in. It is important to recall that Lebanon had accepted recommendations related to Palestinian refugees during the 9th session in 2010. Therefore, its use of the phrase “taken note of” in subsequent sessions does not absolve it of the commitments it had explicitly accepted¹². While the government claimed that these recommendations were being implemented or had already been fulfilled¹³, in practice, no substantial progress had been achieved by the time this report was prepared.

2. Right to Legal Personality

2.1 Lack of clarity regarding the legal personality of a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon

As of the date of submission of this report, the Lebanese legislature has not enacted the law identifying Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, nor has it specified their rights and duties. The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities has proceeded in assigning the General Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees to handle the Palestinian refugee files by registering marriages, births, and deaths, as well as individual and family civil status records, in addition to issuing their own personal identification cards, which are not computerized and are completed by hand. The General Directorate of General Security (DGGs) which also reports to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, treats Palestinian refugees through a special category. This facilitated the refugees’ access to biometric travel documents since 2016. However, law 296/2001, deprived refugees of property ownership, described them as stateless without directly naming them. The first time Palestinian refugees were mentioned in legislation was only in the amendments to Labor Law 129/2010 and Social Security Law 128/2010. In these texts they were considered similarly to all other foreigners. This multiple categorizations, recognition and non-recognition, results in a fragmented legal personality in Lebanon and discretionary treatment by each public institution and agency.

2.2 Unsustainability of solution regarding legal personality of non-ID Palestinians

In 2008, Lebanon began issuing one-year identification papers for approximately 5,000 Non-ID Palestinian refugees¹⁴. However, only a limited number benefited from this measure, Lebanon cited this initiative as an achievement during the 9th UPR session in 2010, even though it failed to respond to a related recommendation (Recommendation 84.11). Although the documents required to issue or renew identification cards are still available on the Public General Security

⁹<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CMW/GC5/MigrationTeam.pdf#:~:text=15%20Likewise%2C%20the%20Committee%20on%20Economic%2C%20Social,prohibited%20ground%20of%20discrimination%20under%20international%20law>

¹⁰ Supported 150 (269 - 106 - 158 - 171 - 172 - 243 - 272) Partial support 150 (215 - 289) Noted 150 (206 - 216 - 237 - 256 - 278)

¹¹ 132 (40 - 162 - 167 - 203 - 211 - 215)

¹² Recommendations that Lebanon supported in the “Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review” A/HRC/16/18 dated March 16 2011 are: 80 (1-2-3-4-5-6-11), concerning signing and / or ratifying international conventions, and not abiding by them.

¹³ Recommendations that Lebanon claimed to be under implementation or implemented in the “Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review” A/HRC/16/18 dated March 2011 are: 81 (6), which Lebanon considered to be implemented by issuing the law 164/2011 “Punishment for the Crime of Trafficking in Persons”. Lebanon also considered that recommendations 81 (1-2-10-14-15-17-25-26) under implementation and ignored recommendations 81 (4-7-8-9-13-16-21)

¹⁴ http://www.palhumanrights.org/rep/ENG/phro_report_non-id.pdf

link¹⁵. However, it is complex and limits the number of individuals able to obtain it. It has been almost suspended since before the 23rd/2015 session, and no recommendation was mentioned at that time or in the 37th/2021 session. Members of this group are still deprived of their most basic human rights¹⁶.

2.3 The Lebanese State doesn't recognize the legal personality of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (Palestinian Refugee from Syria) as Refugees

The Lebanese state did not treat Palestinian refugees from Syria as refugees fleeing a dangerous country, due to the lack of clarity regarding the implementation mechanism in the memorandums and decisions issued and the large number of relevant circulars, their treatment varied between settlements as internally displaced refugees and as foreigners coming for tourism who must meet the conditions for residence in Lebanon. A policy of expulsion has been practiced against them through arbitrariness in renewing residency and entry procedures, and Some have their identity documents confiscated and are only returned to them upon exit at border crossings following a settlement and payment of accrued fines.

2.4 Restrictions and obstacles on registering and obtaining documents for newborn children of Palestinian refugee parents from Syria

The Lebanese state obstructs the registration of newborns and the completion of issuing identity documents to them if the parents do not have a valid residence permit, and tightens procedures with those who have reached the age of 15 years¹⁷, It also applies fees and fines, that has increased recently, on all legal transactions related to refugees from Syria including the Palestinian, based on treating them like any foreigner or tourist, without taking into account their status as refugees who fled a country of civil war, this approach deprives them of adequate legal status. They were also not included in plans for the voluntary return of displaced Syrians to Syria, prior to the issuance of the latest decision on July 1, 2025¹⁸. Their return or departure from Lebanon was required a settlement that included the payment of accumulated fines.

2.5 Denying Palestinian refugee women their right to pass on their legal status to their children

The law in Lebanon discriminates against Lebanese women, and it's heightened against Palestinian refugee women. Women married to Palestinians classified as Non-IDs are denied the right to register the births of their children. Additionally, Palestinian refugee women registered in Lebanon who is married to a Palestinian refugee registered in another country are deprived of obtaining a courtesy residency for her children, similar to a Lebanese mother. They are also denied the ability to secure annual residence permits for their spouses, a right that is afforded to Palestinian refugee men. A Palestinian refugee woman from Syria who is married to a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon is prevented from transferring registration to the General Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees and to obtaining identification papers. She is forced to obtain annual residency.

2.6 Restrictions and obstacles hinder the procedures granting citizenship to PRW married to Lebanese husband

Lebanon's personal status laws treat Palestinian refugees married to Lebanese men—including those born in Lebanon—as foreigners, subjecting them to arbitrary restrictions and obstacles in the process of acquiring citizenship. This contradicts Article 5 of the Lebanese Nationality Law, as amended in 1960, which sets a legal path to citizenship based on the

¹⁵ <https://www.general-security.gov.lb/en/posts/90>

¹⁶ Such as the right to health, especially hospitalization, education, especially university, work, and registration of marriage contracts, and thus the impossibility of registering births.

¹⁷ to obtain residency, required obtaining identity card from Syria that requires presence the child with his/her guardian in order to take fingerprints, or obtaining a passport that can be issued by the Syrian embassy in Lebanon at a high cost, and this is an difficult process almost impossible

¹⁸ <https://www.general-security.gov.lb/ar/posts/490>

presence of a child and a residency period of 3 to 5 years. Despite this, discriminatory practices and inconsistencies persist. Lebanon only partially accepted Recommendation 150 (298) and merely took note of nine others recommendations¹⁹ related to women's rights to equality and non-discrimination during the 37th session in 2021. This is despite its earlier acceptance of Recommendation 80 (24) in the 9th UPR session in 2010 and Recommendations 132 (82, 85, and 86) in the 23rd session in 2015, all of which called for concrete measures to eliminate discrimination against women and uphold their rights. *These obligations are directly relevant to the issues raised above in paragraph 2.5.*

2.7 Recommendation: 1:

Adopt the recommendations related to the definition of Palestinian refugees and their non-resettlement status, as outlined in the document issued by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee²⁰. These should be enshrined in clear and unambiguous legislation that guarantees Palestinian refugees their civil, economic, and social rights, and ensures their right to live in dignity.

2.8 Recommendation: 2:

Issue the necessary implementing decrees and work to digitize the files and records of Palestinian refugees held by the Directorate General for Political Affairs, so that all related documentation becomes fully digitized.

2.9 Recommendation: 3:

Issue official, viable identification documents that guarantee the third category of Refugees (NON IDs) a legal personality and preserve their dignity and equate them with Palestinian Refugee.

2.10 Recommendation: 4:

Recognize the legal status of Palestinian Refugee from Syria in Lebanon as Refugees due to the armed conflict in Syria.

2.11 Recommendation: 5:

Register and issue identification documents for newborn Palestinian Refugee from Syria, in accordance with the International Conventions Lebanon has ratified.

2.12 Recommendation: 6:

Remove the reservations to Article 9 and 12 of CEDAW and amend all relevant national legislations and sensitize the situation of Palestinian women.

3. Right to freedom of movement, travel and residence

3.1 Isolating PR camps by building concrete walls and erecting iron

Most of the PR camps in Lebanon suffer from severe security measures, surrounded by security cordon and military checkpoints, and since 2016 the security containment has intensified further, especially around the camps in South Lebanon, in-particularly Ein El-Hilweh in Saida, which has been isolated by concrete walls, iron gates and control towers, that hinder the freedom of movement of PR living in camps and increase psychological pressure on them.

3.2 Restrictions on freedom of movement of PR

The imposition of heightened security measures around certain Palestinian refugee camps—particularly in southern Lebanon and, more recently, in the north—has resulted in significant restrictions on the freedom of movement of camp residents, with direct adverse effects on their daily lives. These measures include night-time traffic controls, inspection checkpoints at camp entrances, and, at times, restrictions during the day. While the authorities justify these practices on security grounds, they impose disproportionate burdens on Palestinian refugees and hinder their access to essential rights and services, including education, employment, and healthcare. Such restrictions constitute a violation of the right to freedom of movement

¹⁹ 150 (36, 39, 70, 71, 216, 286, 287, 288, and 290) 37th session in 2021

²⁰ "Unified Vision..." document, previously mentioned source

and compromise the dignity and safety of affected individuals. In emergency situations, such as during outbreaks of violence or urgent medical needs, the inability to move freely poses a direct threat to the physical integrity and well-being of camp residents. This is further exacerbated by the classification of Palestinian refugees as “foreigners,” which results in their exclusion from border areas in the South without prior authorization from military intelligence—an approach that contravenes international human rights standards, particularly those related to non-discrimination and the right to freedom of movement.

3.3 Discrimination against PR in regards to travel documents and their validity and travel opportunities

Lebanon issues biometric travel documents to Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA, valid for up to five years. For those not registered with UNRWA, the travel document is valid for three years. In contrast, Non-ID Palestinian refugees may be granted a *laissez-passer* only in exceptional cases. The General Directorate of General Security (DGGS) also imposes additional restrictions on Palestinian refugees from Lebanon who obtain a Palestinian Authority passport for travel purposes. Despite lacking a national identification number and not allowing entry into Palestinian territories, holders of this passport must undergo a settlement process with Lebanese authorities that includes paying a fine. This process can also place limitations on their ability to return to Lebanon.

3.4 Restrictions on Palestinian Refugee from Syria from entering Lebanon

Since the onset of the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese government has obstructed the entry of Palestinian refugees from Syria fleeing the ongoing civil war, subjecting them to degrading treatment, intimidation, coercion to return to areas of danger, and the fragmentation of family unity by allowing entry to some family members while denying it to others. Since 2015, their entry into Lebanon has become virtually impossible and is left to the discretion of individual border officials. Entry is permitted only under narrow conditions, such as having a medical appointment, a scheduled embassy interview, transit for onward travel, or university enrollment in Lebanon.

3.5 Restrictions on the right to movement of Palestinian Refugee from Syria and ill-treatment violating their human dignity

Lebanon imposes on Palestinian Refugee from Syria residing in Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon to obtain permits from the military intelligence to enable them to leave and return to the camps where they live. These permits are renewed every six months and require a valid residency permit, and don’t allow them entering another camp which need another permit that is almost impossible to obtain. Palestinian Refugee from Syria are subjected to intimidation, humiliation, and sometimes arbitrary detention by security forces especially at camps entrance checkpoints. They are also subjected to the same violations by political parties, municipal police and even individuals in some Lebanese regions that restrict movement of Refugees from Syria after certain hours. This continues despite the Lebanese state’s accepting the following recommendations 150 (272) in the 37/2021 session, and recommendations²¹, and before that, recommendations²², related to the Convention Against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, *and this also applies to Paragraph 3.4 above.*

3.6 Recommendation 7:

Lebanon should reconsider the security procedures and measures followed around the Palestinian camps, especially those that affect the freedom of movement and increase pressures on the residents. The review should be carried out with the aim of reducing its negative impacts on the daily lives of refugees. We recommend to adopt approach that balance between ensuring the responsiveness requirements of security and stability, and respecting the human rights of refugees, by adopting the concept of "human security", which focuses on protecting individuals and guaranteeing their dignity.

²¹ 132 (34 - 35 - 36 - 56 - 57 - 58 - 59 - 60 - 111 - 113 - 114 - 115 - 116 - 117 - 118 - 119 - 120) of 23/2015 UPR session

²² 80 (13-14-14-16-16) in the 9/2010 UPR session

3.7 Recommendation: 8:

Equity between all Palestinian Refugee categories by granting the non-registered within UNRWA and NON IDs a biometric travel documents valid up to five years similar to the registered Refugees, and to stop dealing with them with discriminatory exceptions that limit their movement to and from Lebanon.

3.8 Recommendation: 9:

Respect the right to seek asylum for Palestinian refugees from Syria by reducing entry restrictions, ensuring their right to freedom of movement, and protecting them from discrimination, humiliation, and arbitrary detention. Adopt a mechanism for determining place of residence and legal identity that upholds human dignity and rights, with the aim of abolishing the permit system currently imposed on their entry into Palestinian refugee camps.

4. Right to work and economic social protection

4.1 The working conditions for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have not improved despite the amendments made to the Labor Law in 2010. As several challenges still limit the implementation of the amendments, including the absence of the regulating decrees and frequent changes issued through ministerial decisions. This reality has restricted refugees access to legally protected and regulated employment opportunities. These challenges coincide with the continuing deterioration in economic conditions in Lebanon, which has increased poverty and unemployment rates among Palestinian refugees. UNRWA data indicate that the poverty rate among Palestinian refugees has reached 90%, while approximately 80% of the families have become primarily dependent on UNRWA aid as a source of income. These conditions also contributed to high school dropout rates, and children's attempts to enter the labor market early in the absence of legal protection, this makes them vulnerable and exposed to exploitation of various violations. In the 37th session (2021), Lebanon merely took note of Recommendation 150 (277), and also been content to take note in previous sessions of recommendations that called for improving working conditions²³

4.2 Restrictions on PR to enter the Lebanese labor market

Lebanese labor law remains incompatible with the specific situation of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon for more than seven decades, as it continues to treat them within the framework of laws designated for foreign workers. Despite the amendment introduced by Law No. 129/2010 to Article 59, which exempted them from the reciprocity requirement and work permit fees. However, maintaining the requirement to obtain an annually renewable work permit has kept their situation vulnerable to professional and legal instability. And in the absence of implementing decrees to date, the implementation of this amendment has remained subject to varying interpretations by successive ministers. In this context, the Palestinian refugees faced increasing challenges in the labor market. This was clearly evident during the implementation of the plan to reduce irregular foreign labor, which was launched in 2019, and aimed to regulate the labor market and ensure compliance with the law, this and the absence of complementary measures that take into account the situation of the refugees and provide them with more sustainable legal protection pathways²⁴, has contributed to deepening the vulnerability of Palestinian refugees and increased their opportunities for exploitation in the informal labor market, even-though Lebanon has ratified ILO Convention No. 111 (on discrimination in employment)²⁵

4.3 Deprive Palestinian Refugees from working in professions requiring joining a syndicate

"Liberal professions" that require syndicate affiliation, as the laws governing these professions impose and/or prefer Lebanese citizenship. For example, anyone practicing the legal profession is supposed to be Lebanese for more than ten years (Law No. 8/70), and in other professions reciprocity and practice of the profession are required in the country of origin, such

²³ as well as Recommendations 132 (162, 203, and 215) from the 23rd session (2015), all of which called for improving the working conditions of Palestinian refugees. While Lebanon accepted Recommendation 80 (32) on this matter, it failed to respond to Recommendation 84 (10) from the 9th session (2010), suggesting—without clear evidence—that some of these demands had already been addressed

²⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CMW/GC5/MigrationTeam.pdf#:~:text=15%20Likewise%2C%20the%20Committee%20on%20Economic%2C%20Social,prohibited%20ground%20of%20discrimination%20under%20international%20law>

²⁵ https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312256

as the Physicians Syndicate (Decree No. 1659 of 1979). Although the amended Labor Law (129/2010) exempted the PR from the condition of reciprocity, the failure to amend the laws and/or regulations of free trade syndicates in line with the amendments to the Labor Law - prevents Refugees from being affiliated with unions and deprives them of practicing the profession, knowing that Free trade syndicates offer the exception, if they want or need.²⁶

4.4 Depriving PR workers from benefiting from social security services

Article 9 of Social Security Law No. 128/2010 was amended to abolish the reciprocity requirement. However, this amendment did not grant Palestinian refugees access to health insurance or family benefits, including maternity benefits. Although Palestinian workers registered with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) contribute the full required amount—25.5% of their salary, with 3% deducted from the employee, as is the case for Lebanese citizens—they are only entitled to end-of-service indemnities, which represent just 8.5% of the total contributions²⁷. As a result, many are compelled to rely on private health insurance or bear additional financial burdens themselves or through their employers. This exclusion limits their employment opportunities and pushes many Palestinian refugees into informal and unprotected labor, often under exploitative conditions and with low wages.

4.5 Imposing additional discriminatory economic burdens on Palestinian refugees

Recently, Lebanon increased the cost of all official administrative fees by introducing two separate pricing systems: one for citizens and another for foreigners. This institutionalizes the treatment of Palestinian refugees as foreigners. For example, the cost of obtaining a criminal record certificate for a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon has risen to 2 million Lebanese lira, compared to 500,000 lira for Lebanese citizens. This document is required for numerous essential procedures, such as issuing a passport, obtaining a work permit, acquiring a driver's license, enrolling in some universities, and applying for visas at certain embassies. Furthermore, the certificate is considered invalid if more than three months have passed since its issuance, requiring frequent renewal. This discriminatory treatment fails to acknowledge the unique legal and historical status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Rather than recognizing them as stateless refugees with specific protection needs, the state treats them as foreigners who have voluntarily chosen to reside in Lebanon. This constitutes a clear violation of the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law, as guaranteed under international human rights law. Moreover, most foreigner-related administrative procedures must be completed in Beirut, forcing Palestinian refugees living in the South, North, or Beqaa to make multiple expensive and time-consuming trips to the capital—even for basic personal documentation. This places an additional financial and logistical burden on refugees and significantly limits their access to rights and services, in clear violation of the principles of equal opportunity and procedural fairness.

4.6 Recommendation 10:

Amend Law 129/2010 by cancelling the work permits and granting PR the right to practice the so-called “Liberal professions”, and issue decrees to ensure implementation of the law.

4.7 Recommendation 11:

Amend Social Security Law No. 128/2010 to allow Palestinian refugee workers to fully enjoy their rights under the National Social Security system, in particular by ensuring access to maternity benefits for employed Palestinian refugee women, and issue the necessary implementing decrees.

²⁶ For example, Palestinian nurses, due to necessity, are allowed to work in the nursing profession after obtaining a license to practice the profession from the Ministry of Health and submitting a work permit application. They are only required to obtain a registration number from the Ministry of Labor and be registered in the union's special records. This is a temporary, exceptional procedure that keeps the situation suspended, preventing them from joining the union and benefiting from benefits and privileges. This requires repeating all procedures annually

²⁷ <https://www.cnss.gov.lb/index.php/pubcirculards/pubcirc0437>

4.8 Recommendation 12:

End discrimination against Palestinian refugees and ensure equal treatment with Lebanese citizens with regard to access to benefits, administrative facilitation, completion of essential personal civil status procedures, and the payment of fees, in order to safeguard their economic and social rights.

5. Right to own property

5.1 Depriving Palestinian Refugee of owning real estate

The amendment to the Law on the Acquisition of Property by Foreigners (Law No. 296/2001) effectively barred Palestinian refugees in Lebanon from owning real estate, on the grounds that they do not hold citizenship from a recognized state. This restriction was justified by the authorities as consistent with the Lebanese Constitution's rejection of permanent resettlement.

5.2 Expropriation of the property of PR who owned property prior to 2001 but did not complete the registration of their properties at the respective directory

Properties purchased through pre-registration sale deeds and fully paid for, but not formally registered before the amendment of Law No. 296/2001—which does not include retroactive provisions—can no longer be registered at the Directorate of Cadaster and Real Estate. This misapplication of the law, which lacks legal justification, places Palestinian refugee property owners at serious risk, particularly given that surveyed sale contracts carry only a customary validity period of ten years. In addition, the transfer of inherited property to Palestinian refugees—despite being acquired through valid religious court rulings—is being systematically obstructed by the Directorate, even though Law 296/2001 imposes no restrictions on inheritance transfers. This discriminatory practice has forced many affected individuals to seek judicial remedies, resulting in additional financial hardship. It is also worth noting that the resolution of such cases is often subject to the discretion of individual judges, further undermining legal predictability and equal treatment.

5.3 Restrictive procedures in registering property for foreigners married to PR

For foreigners, the real estate registration procedures require the possession of a “statement of non-ownership”. This procedure considers the family as a unit (husband, wife, and children under 18). If the wife or the husband is a PR, the registration will be shelved, and mostly returned, in violation of the law, this requires judicial recourse and adds a lot of financial and nonfinancial burdens.

5.4 Recommendation 13:

End discrimination against Palestinian Refugees by issuing a law or reamending Law 296/2001PR to restore their right to own real estate.

5.5 Recommendation 14:

End arbitrary measures that prevent the registration of real estate purchased prior to the enactment of Law No. 296/2001 and that obstruct the transfer of inherited real property. Suspend the application of the statute of limitations on surveyed sale contracts concluded before 2001 until a fair and lasting solution is adopted.

5.6 Recommendation 15:

End discriminatory actions which hinder foreigners married to PR from owning property.

6. Right to adequate housing and shelter

6.1 Depriving PR from adequate housing

Palestinian refugees continue to endure inadequate housing conditions in camps whose geographic footprint has remained unchanged since their establishment in 1950, despite significant population growth. This has led to extreme overcrowding and the proliferation of poorly constructed, tightly packed vertical buildings with little to no ventilation, limited access to sunlight, and persistently high humidity levels inside homes. Narrow alleys dominate the camp layout, while wide roads, green spaces, and recreational areas are virtually nonexistent. The infrastructure is severely deteriorated, contributing to a fragile social and security

environment prone to collapse, the spread of disease, and the emergence of social problems. These living conditions constitute a violation of human dignity, pose a serious threat to health and life, and deny residents their right to privacy—both between households and within individual families. The situation is further exacerbated by chronic problems related to drinking water, sewage, and unsafe, makeshift electricity networks, which have resulted in numerous electrocution incidents, including fatalities.

6.2 Restrictions on entry of construction materials, tools and sanitation supplies to the camps

Security regulations surrounding Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon continue to include restrictions on the entry of construction and sanitation materials, which may only be brought in with prior authorization from the relevant security agencies. These restrictions are based on a decision issued by the Council of Ministers in late 1996, followed by an executive directive in January 1997. This policy significantly impedes the ability of residents to carry out essential maintenance and rehabilitation of their homes, thereby increasing the risk of structural collapse and endangering the safety and well-being of inhabitants. According to UNRWA data, only 1,500 out of 5,500 homes in need of repair have been restored—figures that do not include homes damaged or destroyed during armed clashes, which often go unaddressed. These limitations have contributed to the emergence of informal and unregulated markets for building materials, resulting in inflated costs that burden already vulnerable refugee households. In the absence of any municipal oversight or role within camp areas, residents are left without institutional support to meet basic housing needs. Since 2023, a more stringent enforcement mechanism has been applied to refugees who attempt to construct additional living space within their homes in the camps. In several cases, individuals have reportedly been arrested, detained, fined, and compelled to demolish newly built structures.

6.3 Incomplete reconstruction of Nahr Al-Bared camp

900 refugees families of Nahr al-Bared camp continue suffering, they are not rehoused in the camp despite the passage of 18 years since its destruction (2007), due to the bureaucracy of the procedures and the scarcity of funding, wort to mention the suffering of 2,800 families, known as the new camp residents, whose homes UNRWA did not undertake to rebuild, as UNRWA considered it outside the camp's boundaries, Approximately 1,600 families have yet to receive any compensation for buildings, furniture, or vehicles, and are now in debt, awaiting donor fulfillment of their promises. Approximately 80 families remain displaced, unable to rebuild, and are not receiving any housing allowances.

6.4 Recommendation 16:

Develop a comprehensive plan that upholds and promotes the right to adequate housing within Palestinian refugee camps.

6.5 Recommendation 17:

Revoke the 1996–1997 decisions restricting the entry of construction materials and supplies into Palestinian refugee camps. It should lift all related limitations and establish clear, transparent procedures that facilitate the maintenance, reconstruction, and restoration of homes and camp infrastructure, in line with the right to adequate housing and human dignity.

6.6 Recommendation 18:

Intensify the efforts to complete reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp, including its adjacent area (commonly referred to as the "new camp"), and ensure the prompt, safe, and dignified return of the remaining displaced residents.

7. Deprivation of social services and benefits

7.1 Depriving Palestinian refugees of public medical care and hospitalization

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon continue to be excluded from public health services, including access to free hospitalization and medications for chronic and life-threatening illnesses, even during emergencies and public health crises. While this exclusion has persisted for decades, it

has become increasingly visible in recent years due to the reduction in UNRWA services resulting from ongoing financial constraints. The absence of a national safety net for refugees poses serious risks to their right to health and well-being and raises urgent concerns about the potential humanitarian impact should UNRWA's operations be further reduced or discontinued.

7.2 The risk of depriving Palestinian refugee children of education

If UNRWA's operations are discontinued, thousands of Palestinian refugee children risk losing access to education due to existing restrictions on their enrollment in Lebanon's public schools. As they are classified as foreigners, they are subject to the principle of reciprocity and must compete for limited spots within the quota allocated to non-Lebanese students. This framework significantly limits their access to free, inclusive, and quality education, and jeopardizes their fundamental right to education as guaranteed under international human rights law.

7.3 Depriving PR from a healthy environment

Palestinian refugee camps, as well as some gatherings outside the camps, continue to suffer from inadequate and deteriorating infrastructure. In many areas, drinking water is contaminated by sewage, and housing conditions are marked by poor ventilation, high humidity, water leakage, limited access to sunlight, and proximity to waste collection sites. These environmental conditions contribute to a heightened risk of respiratory infections, chronic illnesses, and other serious health concerns. Preventive healthcare services are largely unavailable, while access to medical and health assistance remains limited, increasing the vulnerability of residents—particularly during disease outbreaks. Additionally, the absence of infrastructure to support access to essential services for older persons and persons with disabilities further undermines their rights to health, dignity, and equal participation in daily life

7.4 Depriving Palestinian refugees with disabilities of the services and privileges stipulated by law

Palestinian refugee with a disability do not benefit from these rights that Lebanese disabled people enjoy, despite the fact that Law 220/2000 does not exclude them from these rights because it mentions "a disabled person" and not a Lebanese disabled person, while the national mechanism distinguishes between them and deprives the disabled PR from benefiting from Services provided by law. Despite the Lebanese state's acceptance of Recommendation: 150 (22) of the same nature in the 37/2021 session and before that although Lebanon accepted recommendations²⁸ in 23/2016 UPR session relating to persons with Disabilities, and before that the recommendations²⁹ in 9/2010 UPR session.

7.5 Recommendation 19:

Ensure that Palestinian refugees have access to free social services and public benefits, particularly those offered by the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Education, including access to public schools.

7.6 Recommendation 20:

Take measures to improve the health and environmental conditions in Palestinian refugee camps and gatherings by ensuring their integration into municipal service frameworks and public infrastructure systems.

7.7 Recommendation 21:

Take steps to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities among the Palestinian refugee population by ensuring their equal access to the rights and benefits outlined in Law No. 220/2000. This includes issuing disability identification cards to Palestinian refugees with disabilities on an equal basis with Lebanese citizens.

²⁸ 132 (183 – 184 – 185 – 186 – 187 – 189 – 190 – 191 – 192 - 193), in the 23/2015 UPR Session

²⁹ 80 (1- 2-3-4-5) in the 9/2010 UPR session in response to recommendation 80 (21) regarding the creation of additional national mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights of vulnerable groups, especially women, children, and people with disabilities,

8. Right to protection and fair trial

8.1 Arbitrary detention and depriving PR from the minimum conditions of fair trial

Palestinian refugees residing in camps in Lebanon are often subjected to security and intelligence-based procedures in cases of suspicion, arrest, and trial, without adequate differentiation based on the nature of the alleged offense. This practice contravenes fundamental fair trial guarantees, as individuals may be prosecuted or detained solely on the basis of suspicion or unverified information, often by security or intelligence agencies rather than judicial authorities. In such cases, the presumption of innocence is frequently disregarded, and some individuals are reportedly subjected to coercion, intimidation, or pressure to serve as informants. Concerns have also been raised regarding instances of arbitrary detention, incommunicado detention, and ill-treatment during interrogation, including denial of adequate legal assistance and the inability to properly prepare a defense. Discrimination in access to legal aid further exacerbates these violations. After enduring such treatment, suspects are sometimes transferred to the competent judicial authority, but prolonged detention without charge or trial remains a concern. Illustrative of this is the situation of individuals detained following the 2007 conflict in Nahr al-Bared camp, where some Palestinian refugees continue to be held without trial. These practices persist despite Lebanon's acceptance of key recommendations during the 37th UPR session in 2021 (Recommendations 150.16, 150.48, 150.49, 150.56, 150.195, and 150.124) related to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as earlier recommendations accepted in the 23rd (2015) and 9th (2010) sessions, (*The recommendations mentioned in Reference* ²¹ *also apply to it.*)

8.2 Barriers to women's access to justice

Law No. 293/2014 on the "Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence" offers partial legal protection for women in Lebanon. However, refugee women, including Palestinian refugees, face significant barriers in accessing justice and enjoying effective protection from domestic violence. These challenges stem from weaknesses in Lebanon's procedural justice system and the near-total absence of formal legal mechanisms within the refugee camps, where cases are often handled by informal popular or security committees lacking legal training and accountability. The absence of human rights-sensitive systems within camps—especially gender-sensitive mechanisms—combined with the influence of restrictive customs and traditions, further hinders the ability of refugee women to seek protection or redress. These structural and social obstacles contribute to an environment where survivors are left unprotected and violence often goes unreported or unaddressed. These gaps persist despite Lebanon's acceptance of Recommendations 132 (86, 129) during the 23rd UPR session in 2015, which called for measures to combat and criminalize domestic violence, and its prior support for Recommendations 80 (22, 23, 24) in the 9th session in 2010 addressing similar concerns.

8.3 Early marriages and sexual abuse

In the absence of a unified civil personal status law in Lebanon, Palestinian refugee girls—particularly those from Syria—remain at risk of early marriage and its associated serious health and psychological consequences. These risks are exacerbated by poverty and the lack of legal protection, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. Despite the severity of these concerns, Lebanon has not accepted UPR recommendations related to marriage, divorce, and child custody in previous review cycles, citing the exclusive jurisdiction of religious courts over such matters. And as Lebanon has accustomed us in the two previous sessions 2010/9 and 2015/23, in the 2021/37 did not accept any recommendation related to matters of marriage, divorce and child custody, as they are confined to the religious courts. Lebanon was satisfied with partial acceptance of one recommendation.150 (249) and took note of some other recommendations.

8.4 Human trafficking and exploitation of vulnerability

The lack of a comprehensive protection framework and the absence of clear legal accountability mechanisms have contributed to the continued exploitation of Palestinian refugees, particularly among the four most vulnerable categories of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Traffickers have capitalized on their precarious legal status and socio-economic marginalization. Following the gradual disappearance of organized smuggling routes—once used to transport Palestinian refugees by land and air through multiple countries in exchange for large sums—many traffickers, including travel agency owners and brokers, disappeared with the victims' funds. As a result, dangerous "death marches" and sea journeys have resurged. Desperate to flee, refugees have been forced to sell all their possessions, including informal shelters within camps that they do not legally own and which fall under UNRWA's purview, to finance their smuggling. These journeys expose them to severe risks, including human rights violations and, in some cases, the tragic death of entire families³⁰. Despite Lebanon's acceptance of several recommendations related to combating human trafficking and protecting victims—most recently Recommendations 150 (168 -169 -170 -171) during the 37th session in 2021, and previously Recommendations³¹ in the 23rd session 2015, and Recommendations³² 80 (18–20) in the 9th session (2010)—serious gaps remain. Lebanon also claimed that Recommendations 81 (7–13) were either in the process of being implemented or had already been fulfilled; however, the lived reality of Palestinian refugees suggests otherwise.

8.5 Recommendation 22:

End all forms of inhumane treatment of Palestinian refugees by intelligence and security forces and uphold the principles of due process and the rule of law. It should expedite the judicial proceedings of the Nahr al-Bared detainees, ensure that all trials meet fair trial standards, and release those found to be unlawfully or arbitrarily detained.

8.6 Recommendation 23:

Strengthen procedural justice, include camps, and provide protection for Palestinian refugee women who resort to justice.

8.7 Recommendation 24:

Raise the age of marriage to 18, criminalizing early marriage and punishing the perpetrators, and provide protection for vulnerable women and girls from being sexually exploited, as well as giving married minors and their children the necessary attention, protection and guidance necessary to ensure that their health and psychological status does not deteriorate and reduce the deaths of minors and their children.

8.8 Recommendation 25:

Seriously pursue human traffickers and amend Law 164/2011 to protect victims of human trafficking, exempt them from criminal liability, and sensitized Palestinian refugees without discrimination, in accordance with international standards in this area.

9. Right to freedom of opinion and expression and Right to freedom of association

9.1 Restrictions and obstacles prevent Palestinian refugees from organizing demonstrations

The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities Decision 352 "Paragraph 3 Article 1" (20/2/2006) limits the right to organize demonstrations only to Lebanese, which deprives the Palestinians of this right and pushes them to use the Lebanese, as sponsors of protests, to organize the demonstration outside the camps. This is often exploited by certain Lebanese groups involved in organizing the movements, by imposing political positions on Palestinian demands and exploiting them for internal alignment by sending messages to other Lebanese groups.

³⁰ The migration of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon <http://www.palhumanrights.org/PalRefugeesMigration.pdf>

³¹ 132 (142- 143- 144- 145- 146- 147- 148) in the 23rd UPR session 2015

³² 80 (18-19-20) of the 9/2010 session, and claimed that recommendations 81 (7-13) were being implemented

9.2 Depriving PR of the right to publish publications and leaflets

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are effectively denied the right to formally publish periodicals due to the restrictive provisions of the Lebanese Publications Law of 1948. Article 4 of the law stipulates that the owner of a periodical must be Lebanese, and if a foreign national, must obtain approval from both the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Interior, in addition to the requirement of reciprocal treatment between Lebanon and the person's country of nationality. This poses a particular barrier for Palestinian refugees, who are stateless and do not possess a recognized nationality or a state capable of establishing reciprocal arrangements with Lebanon. As a result, they are structurally excluded from the legal framework governing media ownership and publishing, which significantly restricts their right to freedom of expression, limits their ability to contribute to public discourse, and prevents them from independently documenting and amplifying issues affecting their communities.

9.3 Depriving Palestinian Refugee from the right to form associations and restrict their membership in Lebanese associations

Palestinian Refugee, being classified as special category and other times as foreigners, are prohibited from establishing associations and restrictions are imposed on their participation in Lebanese associations. Articles of the law, executive procedures, and related decisions are not sensitive to the special situation of PR; for every association "is actually run by foreigners or has either foreign management members or at least a quarter of its members are foreigners", the foreign association is subject to Resolution No. 369 LR issued on December 21, 1939. A foreign association can only be created by a special decree issued by Lebanese Government.

9.4 Recommendation 26:

Issuing a decision that allows Palestinian Refugee to express their opinion through gathering and peaceful demonstrations, without any hindrance.

9.5 Recommendation 27:

Recognize the specific legal and humanitarian status of Palestinian refugees and refrain from treating them as foreign nationals with regard to the issuance of media publications. It should amend the Publications Law to allow them to exercise their right to freedom of expression and publishing within a legal framework that is fair and responsive to their stateless refugee status.

9.6 Recommendation 28:

Amend the Associations Formation Law to allow Palestinian refugees to register their own associations, which would contribute to institutionalizing, democratizing, and developing governance within these associations.

Annex A:

Information and the contact of the parties submitting and supporting the report

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***FIDH** (International Federation for Human Rights) is an international human rights NGO federating 188 organisations from 116 countries. Since 1922, **FIDH** has been defending all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*



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*Since 1997, **EuroMed Rights** has united 68 organisations from 30 countries to promote and defend human rights and democracy across the Euro-Mediterranean region.*



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