

Spring 2015

# Lebanon: A permanent home for Syrian Civil War refugees

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Lebanon: A Permanent Home for Syrian Civil War Refugees

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An Honors Program Project Presented to  
the Faculty of the Undergraduate  
College of Arts and Letters  
James Madison University

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by Marko Popovic

May 2015

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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of History, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at the National Council on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) on 4/16/2015.

## **Dedication**

*To Matjuš, Škomi and Majočka, without whose support and encouragement it would not have been possible to write this thesis.*

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## Acknowledgements

The following is a set of people without whom this project truly would not have been possible.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor:

**Dr. Timothy Fitzgerald:** who has had a tremendous influence on my passion for history since I came to JMU my freshman year, a time when I could not even have imagined writing such a long paper! Moreover, he has provided great guidance to me on how to conduct research for my thesis and, of course, writing it, while also always giving me honest and helpful feedback on every draft I would send his way.

Also, I would like to thank the readers on my committee:

**Dr. Shah Mahmoud Hanifi:** who always offered me genuine encouragement and help with ideas or problems I encountered in my research. Additionally, his extensive knowledge of sectarian tensions in the Middle East served as an inspiration for my interest in the thesis topic.

**Dr. Danielle Widmann Abraham:** whose knowledge on Islam and of religion in the Middle East likewise provided me with a greater appreciation for the current situation in the region.

Additionally, thanks to the **Honors Program** and **James Madison University** for granting me the opportunity to work on such a large project, and to the **Department of History**, where my love for history was nurtured.

Of course, I would like to thank my family – my parents, **Miodrag and Maja Popović**, and my brother **Mateja Popović**, whose constant love and support helped me get through the long process of compiling my thesis. Lastly, a special thanks goes to my dear friend **Eldar Lončarević**, whose honors thesis inspired me to pursue my own!

## **Abstract**

Relations between Syria and Lebanon in the past 40 years have been tense due to events such as the Lebanese Civil War, the subsequent Syrian occupation of Lebanon, and the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, which remains unsolved. Though the occupation of Lebanon has officially ended, tensions have surfaced again due to the influx of refugees from the Syrian Civil War that began as a result of the recent Arab Spring. Millions of Syrians have been forced out of their homes and have fled to neighboring countries, including Lebanon, where currently over a million refugees are estimated to have relocated. By all accounts, the situation of these refugees grows ever more precarious, and the stability of Lebanon itself is now threatened. Through an analysis of various sources, including local newspaper reports, official UN records, and personal interviews with refugees and those in contact with them, this paper looks to document the recent history of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. It will chart their diverse makeup, describe their varied conditions, and analyze how they, and their Lebanese “hosts”, perceive their situation. An over-arching aim will be to break down the monolithic category of “Syrian refugee in Lebanon” by trying to expose the complex reality of actual experience on the ground. In the course of this study, connections will be made to the history of Syrian-Lebanese relations and the current geopolitics of the region. Finally, a comment on prospects for the future of these refugees, and for Lebanon, will be offered.

## Neighbors in One Land

The events of the Arab Spring in 2011 have been widely accepted as positive in changing the status quo of the political situation in each of the countries affected by the revolutions taking place. While this can be said for countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, Syria did not follow the same route, and instead a largely sectarian civil war erupted between the government, led by Bashar al-Assad, and his opponents, composed of various rebel groups, including the Free Syrian Army and the Islamic Front to name a few. As a result of the conflict, Syrian refugees have fled their homeland over the past few years, being displaced in neighboring countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey to name a few. According to official statistics from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), there are more than three million registered refugees from Syria, of which over 1 million of these have been displaced in Lebanon, the highest number of any country with a sizeable Syrian refugee population.<sup>1</sup>

Due to the recent history between the Syrian and Lebanese governments, the presence of Syrian refugees throughout Lebanon has presented tensions between the host Lebanese communities, due to apparent international favoritism towards the displaced Syrians, while also heightening sectarian tensions pertinent to Lebanon. Through an analysis of various sources, ranging from UN records and official statistics, local media reports and personal interviews with Syrian refugees and those in touch with them, this paper will document the recent history of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. First, it will examine recent events in and between Syria and Lebanon in order to better understand traditional relations between the two. Then, the paper will focus on the change in relations between the refugees and Lebanese host communities in

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<sup>1</sup> True as of October 23, 2011. For more information, see <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

Lebanon, emphasizing the extent to which the conflict in Syria has affected the region overall. Finally, this paper will comment on the potential future of the refugees.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Scholars consider the Arab Spring to have been the turning point in mobilizing the start of the Syrian civil war. For more information, see Maryam Jamshidi, *The Future of the Arab Spring* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2014); Carlo Panara & Gary Wilson, *The Arab Spring: New Patterns for Democracy and International Law* (Leiden: Nijhoff Publishers, 2013). Scholars have indicated that the Syrian civil war officially began the moment the Free Syrian Army branched off from the army in opposition to the government. For more information on the origins of the war, refer to Fouad Ajami, *The Syrian Rebellion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012). The source provides great background detail on the conflict's beginning though, having been published in 2012, is not up to date on the most recent events in the conflict, namely the emergence of the Islamic State. For more information on the conflict thus far, see Reese Erlich, *Inside Syria; The Backstory of their Civil War and What the World Can Expect* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2014). The conflict has subsequently led to a mass exodus of Syrians from their own homes, and even from their own country. For additional scholarship on the refugees, see *Examining the Syrian Refugee Crisis: Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress, First Session, September 19, 2013*. (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 2013); Roger Zetter & Heloise Ruaudel, "Development and Protection Challenges of the Syrian Refugee Crisis," *Forced Migration Review* 47 (September 2014): 6-10. Syria's somewhat tense history with Lebanon is due to events that took place during the Lebanese Civil War, namely the Syrian occupation of Lebanon during this time period. For more information on the Lebanese Civil War, see Jonathan Marshall, *Lebanese Connection: Corruption, Civil War, and the International Drug Traffic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Fisk's book provides some of his actual firsthand experiences covering the conflict in Lebanon during various stays he had in the nation covering the war. For more information on Syrian occupation of Lebanon, see David M. Wight, "Kissinger's Levantine Dilemma: The Ford Administration and the Syrian Occupation of Lebanon," *Diplomatic History* 37, no.1: 144-177. For more detail on Lebanon's sectarian history, see Ussama Makdisi, "The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon: Reconstructing the Nation-State," *Middle East Report* 26, no.200. For a more detailed examination into the lives of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, see Marwan M. Refaat & Kamel Mohanna, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Facts and Solutions," *The Lancet* 382, no.9894: 763-764.



## Syrian Occupation of Lebanon

In order to understand the reasons for tensions between Syria and Lebanon, it is worth examining the Lebanese Civil War, and the subsequent Syrian occupation of Lebanon. Much like Syria, probably even more so, Lebanon is a largely sectarian country in nature, due to a variety of religious and ethnic groups throughout the Levant region. In distinguishing sectarianism in Lebanon, it is likewise essential to provide a definition for it. Historian Ussama Makdisi of Rice University refers to sectarianism in Lebanon as an “atavistic tendency among Lebanon’s various religious communities that undermines patriotism,” which has led to “intercommunal massacres... that occurred between 1975 and 1990.”<sup>3</sup> That is to say, the various religious and ethnic communities of Lebanon have been so greatly divided throughout Lebanese history that violence has often been a result of conflict between such communities.

Among such groups are the two main Islamic sects, Sunni and Shia Muslims, as well as various Christian groups, such as Orthodox and Maronite, Jewish, Palestinian refugees from the mass exodus upon the creation of the State of Israel and the Six Day War of 1967, and Armenian minorities who have lived in the region for centuries.<sup>4</sup> The last documented Lebanese census report took place in 1932, while the National Pact of 1943 laid out the following rules for the country: the President would always be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister is a Sunni Muslim, the President of the National Assembly is Shia, Deputy of Speaker of Parliament has to be Greek Orthodox, and there must be a 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims in Parliament.<sup>5</sup> This was done possibly to ensure that the sectarian nature of the country, as well as its population,

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<sup>3</sup> Makdisi, “Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon.”

<sup>4</sup> Rania Maktabi, “The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited: Who Are the Lebanese?” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no.2 (Nov. 1999): 220.

<sup>5</sup> The National Pact also ensured Lebanon of its independence from French colonial rule.

would not influence politics. However, in hindsight, the fact that such various demographic groups in Lebanon lived among each other, especially ones with longstanding regional tensions such as Sunni and Shia Muslims, along with the various Christian sects, was evidence enough that these various sects would soon provide a source of conflict within Lebanon.

Despite the lack of census data, and the seemingly well-organized nature of Lebanese politics, not all would turn out smoothly for Lebanon over the coming decades. Lebanon accepted over 100,000 Palestinian refugees after the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, causing some economic distress for a nation whose population was not even 1.5 million at the time.<sup>6</sup> While there were no immediate tensions between the refugees and the Lebanese community, these would grow over time, particularly after the influx of even more Palestinians after the Six Day War of 1967.<sup>7</sup> The Palestinians at the time, as well as those still in Lebanon and surrounding countries today, felt that their social and economic conditions were incredibly subpar compared to the rest of the population, creating greater social friction between the refugees and the host community.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the US military intervention in Lebanon in 1958 under President Camille Chamoun highlighted preexisting tensions between the Maronite Christians and Muslims in Lebanon, as well as tensions between the pro-Western Lebanese government and other nations in the Arab League, mainly Egypt and its pro-Arab president, Gamal Abdel Nasser.<sup>9</sup> These frictions in Lebanon would only intensify in the years leading up to the civil war.

Since most of the incoming Palestinian refugees from the 1948 and 1967 conflicts were Muslim, the overall approval for Sunni Muslim politicians and political groups greatly

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<sup>6</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1985): 34-35.

<sup>7</sup> Rabinovich, *War For Lebanon*: 35.

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

<sup>9</sup> Adeed I. Dawisha, "Syria in Lebanon. Assad's Vietnam?" *Foreign Policy*, no.33 (Winter, 1978-1979): 136.

increased.<sup>10</sup> This also meant that there was an increase in militant activity within the Palestinian camp; the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) influence in Lebanon was more prominent after the Six Day War and in early 1975, some fighting began between the Lebanese Army and the PLO, with various religious and ethnic groups joining either side of the conflict.<sup>11</sup> Soon, the war would become a conflict between Christians and Muslims, which would lead to foreign intervention.

The sectarian tensions throughout the Lebanese civil war are arguably the main reason Syria became involved in Lebanon, namely through their occupation of their neighbor under Hafez al-Assad's regime.<sup>12</sup> Many have viewed this moment in the war to be very controversial; allegedly, the Syrians only intervened in the war to calm down the conflict after Christians in rural Lebanese settings appealed for international assistance, after the Lebanese Muslim Community attacked them.<sup>13</sup> Troops from the Arab League, an Arab nationalist organization dominated greatly by Syria and Egypt alike, were to keep the peace on all sides of the conflict and to implement a ceasefire. However, given Egypt's attempt to negotiate a peace treaty with Israel, they refused to provide any of their troops to help with the war situation.<sup>14</sup> Instead, due to Syria's equally large influence in the Arab League, Syrian troops were sent in large quantities to Lebanon on behalf of the Arab League, allowing Syria to essentially invade Lebanon.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Dawisha, "Syria in Lebanon": 138.

<sup>11</sup> William Harris, "Syria in Lebanon," *MERIP Reports* no.134 (Jul.-Aug. 1985):9.

<sup>12</sup> Hafez al-Assad is the father of current leader of Syria Bashar al-Assad, and his predecessor.

<sup>13</sup> Fred H. Lawson, "Syria's Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1976: A Domestic Conflict Explanation," *International Organization* 38, 3 (1984): 451.

<sup>14</sup> While officially Egypt only signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 under President Anwar Sadat, this was fairly soon after the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The lack of Egyptian troop deployment emphasizes Sadat's desire to maintain a peace with Israel in years to come.

<sup>15</sup> Robert M. Bosco, "The Assassination of Rafik Hariri: Foreign Policy Perspectives," *International Political Science Review* 30, 4 (2009): 351.

It was not, however, all simple for Syria in asserting their authority in Lebanon, as they would have to face off with their Israeli counterparts. Israeli involvement in South Lebanon began in around 1978, with a full-scale Israeli invasion taking place in 1982 when the Israeli army looked to expel the PLO and establish a pro-Israeli regime.<sup>16</sup> This entailed great fighting with Syrian forces that allowed them to take control of the Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. Yet following the Israeli-Lebanese agreement of 1983, Syria supported the Islamic and Lebanese national resistance against Israeli occupation, and eventually, Israeli troops withdrew from their South Lebanon territory, and Beirut, allowing Syria to reclaim their dominance over Lebanon, and continue with its occupation of its neighbor. This whole episode between Syria and Israel in the struggle for authority and influence in Lebanon only increased tensions between the two nations.

Syrian occupation was not publically opposed by the Lebanese population until after Hafez al-Assad's death in 2000, due to their great influence over Lebanon's politics and political structure.<sup>17</sup> For example, Syria was the main player in arranging the Ta'if Agreement, the treaty that effectively ended the civil war, while also establishing a new Lebanese governmental system, where the previous 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims in Parliament was changed to 1:1, in addition to that the treaty also provided greater powers to the Muslim Prime Minister.<sup>18</sup> Yet the Syrians were also very intent on ensuring that Israeli influence in the parts of Lebanon that it had previously occupied would be minimal, or rather non-existent if possible and, unlike Egypt, had a much firmer stance and were more aggressive towards Israel. As a result, Syrian occupation in Lebanon was incredibly controversial, both on a domestic and international scale

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<sup>16</sup> Volker Perthes, "Syria's Involvement in Lebanon", *Middle East Report* 203 (Spring 1997): 18.

<sup>17</sup> Many privately opposed, yet few publically opposed Syrian involvement. For more information, see Daniel Pipes, "We Don't Need Syria in Lebanon," *Middle East Quarterly* 7, no.3 (Sept. 2000): 21-27.

<sup>18</sup> Perthes, "Syria's Involvement in Lebanon": 18.

for imposing its own rule in a foreign region. Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri's death in early 2005 changed the political dynamics of Lebanon greatly, as many speculated the various possibilities of how his death came about, and for what possible reasons his assassination took place.<sup>19</sup> It was widely speculated in Lebanon that the Syrian government under the former Assad's son Bashar played a role in his death, and it was with great international pressure that Syria withdrew its troops from Lebanon.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Hassan M. Fattah, "Last Syrian Units Pack to Pull out of Lebanon," *New York Times* April 25, 2005; accessed November 27, 2014, [http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/NewsDetailsPage/NewsDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&prodId=BIC1&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&display-query=&mode=view&displayGroupName=News&limiter=&currPage=&disableHighlighting=false&displayGroups=&sortBy=&search\\_within\\_results=&p=BIC1&action=e&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CA131847600&source=Bookmark&u=viva\\_jmu&jsid=22070ad4c5d6301e9391486b0896479a](http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/NewsDetailsPage/NewsDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&prodId=BIC1&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&display-query=&mode=view&displayGroupName=News&limiter=&currPage=&disableHighlighting=false&displayGroups=&sortBy=&search_within_results=&p=BIC1&action=e&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CA131847600&source=Bookmark&u=viva_jmu&jsid=22070ad4c5d6301e9391486b0896479a)

<sup>20</sup> Despite the suspicion that the Syrian government had a hand in Rafic Hariri's death, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, in the Netherlands, is currently investigating whether or not this is actually the case.

## Syrian Civil War (2011-present)

While Syrian occupation ended in Lebanon, overall regional controversy did not end there. The Arab Spring, beginning in 2010, started with a series of revolutions across various Arab nations, first with Tunisia and Egypt, and then spreading to other areas, such as Syria, Kuwait and Libya among other places. Though many of these nations had a revolution ousting the leader of the nation at the time, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad was not ousted, and a civil war began after many of Assad's army officers defected and began their own militia known as the Free Syrian Army. They soon gained a great amount of support from other anti-governmental groups, most of which are religious in nature, such as the Sunni-oriented Mujahedeen. On the other hand, Assad, himself an Alawite, and his regime have been supported by groups with a more Shia ideology, such as the Hezbollah and Iranian government, yet have also received support from Russia in terms of technical and tactical assistance.<sup>21</sup> A small minority in the Kurdish population of Syria has also formed its own militia in the war, in an effort to claim Kurdish-majority areas and unite them with an unofficial Kurdistan.<sup>22</sup> The conflict has received great attention for its sectarian nature, much the same as was the case with the Lebanese civil war, where the various sides of the conflict are being supported based on their religious or ethnic ideology.

The Syrian civil war was not an issue that gained sudden attention; the conflict had received considerable attention from the beginning, not only because of the conflict itself but also because of its effects regionally due to the ongoing Arab Spring. Yet arguably the most eye-

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<sup>21</sup> The Assad family are Alawites, a sect of Shia Islam. While the current leader Assad is a largely secular leader, he has been supported by ideologically Shia groups nonetheless.

<sup>22</sup> Gareth Stansfield, "The Islamic State, the Kurdistan Region and the Future of Iraq: Assessing UK Policy Options," *International Affairs* 90, no.6 (Oct. 2014): 1329-1330.

opening moment throughout the conflict has been the use of chemical weapons on civilians in 2013. The first case of such an attack was the Khan al-Assal attack in Aleppo in March 2013, killing at least 30 people, with numerous other critical injuries.<sup>23</sup> This caused great outrage not only for its death toll but for the nature of the attack, as those who died were all innocent civilians who were in no apparent way related to the conflict at all. To this day, it is still unknown whether or not the Assad regime is to blame for the attack, or the rebel opposition, and has become a great point for debate and controversy.

The other major chemical-based attack, one which was to spark even greater international debate, particularly among the United States and Russia, was the Ghouta Attack outside of Damascus in August of 2013, where death tolls range from as few as 300 to as many as over 1000, with around 724 of these victims having been identified with registered names.<sup>24</sup> While this specific attack gained great attention for its death toll range, it sparked even greater international debate over who was really to blame for the attack; a United Nations team sent to investigate the attack concluded that Assad's troops were more likely to be able to access the weapons, with great support for this claim coming from the United States and United Kingdom, while Russia and Iran remain adamant that the rebels were responsible for the attack.<sup>25</sup> This specific incident during the Syrian civil war showed the tension not only domestically among the rebels and government alike, but the way in which the international community reacted to the

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<sup>23</sup> Barbara Surk, "Syrian Army Launches Assault on Northern Village That Was Site of Alleged Chemical Attack," *The Canadian Press* July 31 2013, accessed November 29 2014, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?sid=3100adca-2843-46df-81b7-f340f1f09976%40sessionmgr4001&vid=1&hid=4102&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLGNvb2tpZSx1cmwvY3BpZCcx1aWQmY3VzdGlkPXM4ODYzMTM3JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d>

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Attacks on Ghouta: Analysis of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2013): 14.

<sup>25</sup> Louis Charbonneau & Michelle Nichols, "UN Confirms Syrians used Chemical Weapons repeatedly," *The Age* (Melbourne), Dec. 14, 2013.

situation, as the overall opinion surrounding the attacks is very polarizing in that both sides have large support globally.

Another aspect of the conflict that has factored into a Syrian exodus from Syria has been the fairly recent development of the Islamic State since the beginning of 2014. It seems that not only is there a regional influence, but also an international threat, which many, particularly the US government, claim they pose.<sup>26</sup> Regionally, they have had considerable influence in Iraq by claiming a great portion of their territory, as well as a large chunk of northeastern Syria, and have become a legitimate player in the Syrian civil war, in opposition to both the government's opposition and the government itself.<sup>27</sup> Domestically in Syria, many Muslims and non-Muslims alike are in stark opposition to this Islamic movement, a sentiment shared by the international community, with many having condemned their actions. Professor Gareth Stansfield of the University of Exeter notes that the Islamic State began an "ethnic cleansing of minority religious populations of Yezidis and Christians in the (Iraqi) province of Nineveh," prompting the "US government to launch air attacks in a last-ditch attempt to limit the advance of the Islamic State."<sup>28</sup> Stansfield clearly emphasizes the need for action in his description of their acts towards other religious groups as "ethnic cleansing," but halting the advance of the Islamic State into Syria appears to be another concern for the West, as it appears that it could seriously damage the situation in Syria.

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<sup>26</sup> Jeff Schogol, "Pentagon Warns Employees about Islamic State Threats," *USA Today* October 31, 2014, accessed November 28 2014, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/10/29/pentagon-warns-employees-about-islamic-state-threats/18130549/>

<sup>27</sup> For civil war divisions, see Appendix i.

<sup>28</sup> Stansfield, "Islamic State," 1329-1330.



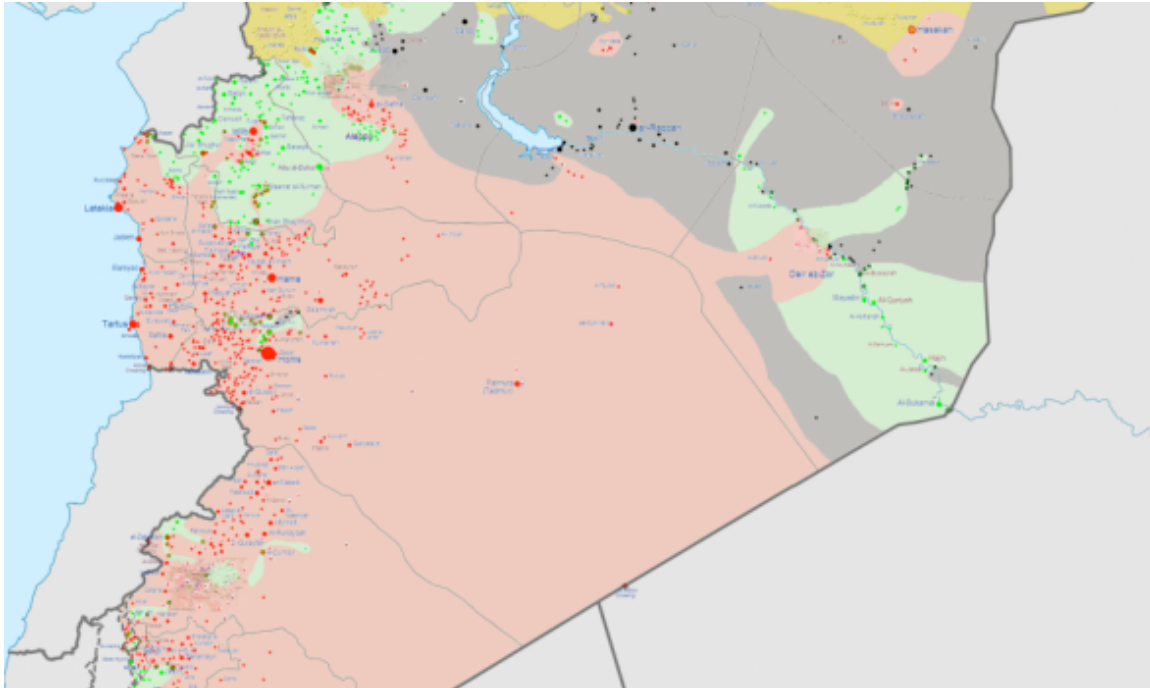


Figure 1: May 2014 Map of Syria; Red highlights government-controlled territory; dark grey highlights Islamic State controlled territory; green highlights rebel territory; and yellow highlights Kurdish territory.<sup>29</sup>

The conflict in Syria is clearly more than just a civil war between two sides both looking to assert their dominance on Syria’s political scene. There are many different players, all of whom have great domestic, regional and international influence as they all have supporters in and outside the region. Firstly, the two dominant sides from the beginning of the conflict, Assad and his opposition, have both been responsible for great civilian casualties. The use of chemical warfare in the conflict, while using ordinary, innocent Syrian citizens has gained considerable international attention on the conflict, as well as emphasizing clearly how serious the war has become. All of these issues in the war have been important in highlighting the dire situation for

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<sup>29</sup> Ilan Ben Zion, “Radical Islamists Take Hammer to Syrian Artifacts,” *The Times of Israel* May 22 2014, accessed November 29, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/radical-islamists-take-hammer-to-syrian-artifacts/>

Syrian citizens, and the need for them to figure out a solution for themselves to be safe, and to lead more stable lives again.

## Current Situation for Syrian Refugees

While of course the conflict overall has had some clear immediate effects on the Syrian population, they have also had long-term influence, as a great number of Syrians are constantly searching for ways to flee the nation. Many Syrians have also been searching for means to leave the country, but are currently unable to do so due to the high number of them already fleeing the country each day; this forces them to resort to doing so via illegal means. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the total number of displaced Syrians has reached as many as six million, while just under three and a half million of these are actual refugees, many of whom are living in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan among other countries.<sup>30</sup> This statistic is highly influenced through the conflict, as well as the overall trend for Syrians to leave their nation in the midst of crisis in search of a better life elsewhere, in a neighboring country or a more distant one.

When examining Syrian refugees, it is vital to understand the term ‘refugee’, and its significance in the context of displaced Syrians both in and outside of Syria. UNICEF defines a refugee as “someone who has been forced to leave their country because they are unable to live in their home or they fear they will be harmed.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, “(t)his can be due to a number of reasons, including fighting or natural disasters, like earthquakes and floods.”<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that there is usually an implication of sorts that those considered refugees will be unable to return home for the foreseeable future, as seems to be the case with the Syrians at the moment in

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<sup>30</sup> Many Syrians are also in Turkey and Jordan, yet this paper will focus more on Lebanon. For more information on the total number of refugees, see: UNHCR, “Syria Regional Refugee Response,” *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, Last updated: 11/29/2014, Last viewed: 11/29/2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>31</sup> L. W. Marshall, “Toward a New Definition of ‘Refugee’: Is the 1951 Convention Out of Date?” *European Journal of Trauma and Emergency Surgery* 37, no.1: 62. For more information on possible definitions for a refugee, see this article.

<sup>32</sup> Marshall, “Toward a New Definition,”: 62.

countries such as Lebanon. There are Syrians in Syria who have been forced to flee from their homes, although unable to leave the country thus far. This group of people cannot be referred to as refugees, however, for this exact reason; they have still been unable to leave their country of origin, and therefore could not be considered for this category.

To envision the treatment that Syrian refugees are facing in the neighboring countries where they are fleeing to, it is necessary to understand the circumstances and realities in which they are forced to live. The highest total number of Syrian refugees in a nation is in Lebanon, with an approximate number of 1.13 million<sup>33</sup> people registered in the country, according to the UNHCR, just over 1 million are found in Turkey<sup>34</sup>, while other reports seem to indicate that there are just over 600,000<sup>35</sup> in Jordan. The reality is that these are just the statistics for the registered refugee communities in each country; the number for total refugees in these three countries alone, including unregistered individuals, has been estimated to be at least 3 million people, with an even higher number when all refugees are considered. Both economic and social conditions for refugees appear to be tough, with job opportunities being very scarce for the average refugee, while also being placed in refugee communities, making it hard for them to feel integrated within the wider host community.<sup>36</sup> The fact that they are seen as temporary residents of a new host country ruins chances at finding longer-term jobs, while short term jobs are hard to

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<sup>33</sup> UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response," *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, Last Updated: 11/29/2014, Last Viewed: 11/29/2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

<sup>34</sup> UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response," *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, Last Updated: 11/29/2014, Last Viewed: 11/29/2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response," *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, Last Updated: 11/29/2014, Last Viewed: 11/29/2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>

<sup>36</sup> The term 'host community' here, and throughout other parts of this work, is meant to encompass the Lebanese communities that come into direct contact or relations with the refugee communities. This could either mean the government, or even the various sects of Lebanese society whom the refugees may live among throughout Lebanon.

encounter due to the large competition among all other refugees in the region.<sup>37</sup> The economic conditions also impact the social ones, as this entails that refugee families will be more desperate in order to obtain anything necessary to survive in a new environment.

As far as studies on refugees are concerned, there has been a great deal of information and scholarship done on refugee studies, such that there is a journal named after entries of such academic work in the field.<sup>38</sup> Many refugee crises have taken place within the past century in the region, namely with Palestinian refugees leaving Israel in 1948 after the creation of Israel and the Six Day War, along with Iraqi refugees due to the conflict in Iraq within the previous ten years. Through these experiences, many of these countries accepting refugees, such as Lebanon and Jordan, have had mixed population statistics, ones which have significantly changed the religious demographics of each nation. For example, the influx of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon highly increased the Sunni Muslim population in the nation, both after 1948 and the wars of 1967 and 1973, therefore posing a certain threat or challenge to other religious communities in Lebanon, such as the Christians.

The problem for these new host countries is that there have already been various other regional conflicts in recent decades, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict that has displaced many Palestinians from their homes, and even the Iraqi War of the past decade that has brought Iraqi refugees to various other countries in the region.<sup>39</sup> The addition of more refugees from Syria brings more pressure and tension to a region which already has so much going on in it due to recent conflicts. The job competition, along with the overall competition for living standards

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<sup>37</sup> Roger Zetter and Heloi'se Ruadel, "Development and protection Challenges in the Syrian Refugee Crisis," *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Sept. 2014): 6.

<sup>38</sup> This journal is known as the *Journal of Refugee Studies*.

<sup>39</sup> Leah Morrison, "The Vulnerability of Palestinian Refugees from Syria," *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Sept. 2014): 41.

among individuals and families alike, is also likely to increase due to a greater number of people in each country needing more economic support and stability from their new governments. Omar Dahi, a professor of economics at Hampshire College, writes “host countries have an incentive to provide refugees with a decent living so as to avoid the social problems that will arise from extreme poverty and destitution.” This could possibly indicate that it is a necessity for host governments to act as soon as refugees enter their country and provide opportunities for them to support themselves and a possible new life outside of their homelands.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, it seems that living conditions for all refugees are very poor as it appears that they are not properly accommodated, possibly due to a lack of infrastructure in accommodating the high number of refugees that have fled to the country in recent years. In a study done by Master’s student Jumanah Zabaneh, and professors Catherine O’Donnell and Graham Watt, all of the University of Glasgow, they found that Palestinian refugees living in unofficial camps in Lebanon were living in the worst conditions possible. In one instance, they found that “children under 15 years of age were more likely to be living in overcrowded conditions and... in housing that was unheated.”<sup>41</sup>

While one may suggest that this is solely the situation in unofficial camps, the official camps also suffer from similar conditions such as overcrowding, particularly due to the high number of unregistered refugees. Also, though this was a study done on Palestinian refugees six years ago, Lebanon is still facing similar, if not worse, economic and social conditions, as its annual GDP growth rate dropped from 8.5% to 1.4%, and has therefore been struggling much

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<sup>40</sup> Omar Dahi, “The Refugee Crisis in Lebanon and Jordan: The Need for Economic Development Spending”, *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Sept. 2014): 13.

<sup>41</sup> Jumanah Zabaneh, Catherine O’Donnell & Graham Watt, “Evidence-based public health policy and practice: Living and health conditions of Palestinian refugees in an unofficial camp in the Lebanon: a cross-sectional survey,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 62, no.2 (2008): 95.

more in accommodating the Syrian refugees.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, given that many of the Syrian refugees who have entered and are still entering Lebanon, and other neighboring countries are unregistered, the likelihood of them living under similar circumstances is highly likely; the camp conditions will have remained similar, if not the same, as how they were during the preceding influx of Palestinians. These new host countries, Lebanon in particular, have already had to deal with various periods of refugees entering the nation and accommodating them, and should therefore be somewhat more experienced and knowledgeable on how to do the same with Syrians.

It is apparent that the war has complicated matters for the average Syrian citizen, and that as a result, many of them are being displaced from their homes, or even forced to flee the country in order to find stability and stay safe. In most cases, it seems to be difficult to integrate the refugees into ordinary society due to infrastructural issues in accommodating the high number of overall refugees, not only ones from Syria. Also, the fact that constant conflicts seem to be providing issues in housing new sets of refugees in such a short space of time has begun to prove too much to handle for some of the nations in the region. To add to the overall distress of the situation, it is no better that they are forced to flee to nearby countries whose economies are only suffering even more because of the influx of refugees. In Lebanon, unlike in the other major host nations for Syrian refugees such as Turkey and Jordan, there has been a recent history of great tension between the two nations and their people, and so it has become an important topic in understanding whether or not greater tensions between the Lebanese and Syrians will surface.

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<sup>42</sup> Dahi, "Refugee Crisis," 11.

## Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

In terms of the Syrian refugees' background and social class, their demographics and other characteristics in Lebanon are highly varied. Some of the Syrians classified as 'refugees' lived comfortable lives back home in Syria, and relocated to Lebanon to be closer to other family members during wartime crisis.<sup>43</sup> Yet there are also Syrians who, despite living in more desirable circumstances in Syria, also came to Lebanon only to be placed in a refugee settlement or a less preferred living location. Roughly half of the refugees are men, yet arguably the most shocking statistic is that 57.2% of all refugees are aged 17 or under, indicating that many of the refugees, as the youth population, need to be more ready and mature to lead those among whom they live, especially since many of these younger refugees live without any leadership at home, such as parents or other family members.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, the refugee population in Lebanon is highly crucial relative to the entire Lebanese population, as Syrian refugees alone compose approximately 20-25% of the total population, a statistic greatly changed since the outbreak of civil war in Syria.<sup>45</sup>

Many Syrian refugees find life in a refugee camp similar to life in a detention center, owing to the fact that there are strict regulations and rules in place regarding life conduct, for example the insistence of curfews and the strict checkpoints around each camp. Such is the case with Za'atari, a large refugee camp in Jordan with a population of 120,000, all refugees. Owing to the refugee population, it has also become Jordan's fourth-largest city, and has promoted the

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<sup>43</sup> Many Syrians have family in Lebanon, a demographic which has shifted greatly since the Lebanese Civil War, during which many Syrians came to Lebanon.

<sup>44</sup> The statistic for male refugees, according to the UNHCR in Lebanon, is 47.2%. For more information, refer to UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response," *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, Last updated: 2/24/2015, Last viewed: 2/24/2015, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>45</sup> Marwan M. Refaat & Kamel Mohanna, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Facts and Solutions," *The Lancet* 382, no. 9894: 743.



idea that many of these neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees are instead becoming host states for the Syrian refugee community, rather than functioning as independent states.<sup>46</sup> Of course, since Lebanon has no official refugee camps, it is hard to compare the refugee settlement situation in Lebanon with that of Jordan. Yet, it is apparent that the extremity of the situation is grave in both countries, and the Za'atari camp emphasizes this seriousness as it is currently the fourth-most inhabited area of Jordan, despite it being a refugee community.

### *Living Conditions for Syrians*

As is the case for many groups of minorities and refugees worldwide, Syrians in Lebanon face many political, social and economic challenges which challenge their place in Lebanon. As a result, Syrians in Lebanon have recently felt highly abandoned in some respects by the Lebanese government and people. Many nations throughout the Middle East have found it difficult to accommodating refugees from various conflicts in recent decades, and further find it difficult in adapting to new situations where new refugee influxes occur in their countries. In other words, throughout recent decades, new host nations have found it difficult to accept an influx of refugees and accommodate them, while the refugees have a tough time assimilating into a new culture, especially given that they were essentially forced out of their former countries, let alone homes. The same history for the overall refugees issue in the Middle East is equally applicable to Syrians in Lebanon, as they have clearly found it hard to settle in their new host nation, as well as other new host nations in the region, namely Syria and Turkey.

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<sup>46</sup> "The Zaatari Refugee Camp." *Scholastic Scope* 63, no. 5: 8. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed February 25, 2015).

An example of the hardships of Syrian families in Lebanon exists with Dalaal, 43, and her family. She arrived in Lebanon in 2013, with her husband and seven children, after having left the city of Homs in Western Syria, and after having witnessed the murder of her cousin at a checkpoint between Lebanon and Syria.<sup>47</sup> On the differences between Lebanon and Syria, she notes that “It’s safer here than in Syria, but the problem here is poverty,” as she and her family collectively make a total of roughly \$1.50 daily through collecting plastic in Rajab, their host town.<sup>48</sup> Regarding the low wage her family receives, Dalaal’s husband jokes: “We got in an argument the other day and I thought for a moment about divorcing her... but then I realized I don’t have any money for that.”<sup>49</sup>

Dalaal and her family’s story is certainly only one of many similar situations for Syrians currently trying to find their way in Lebanon, a country stacked with an exponentially increasing number of refugees as the Syrian civil war escalates into a more regional conflict, rather than merely a civil one. Many other families from Syria have been displaced because of the war, including people of many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Ana, a 60 year old Syrian woman of Armenian descent, was forced into moving to an eastern suburb of Beirut, Burj Hammud, with her three children, one of whom is handicapped, while her husband, a Syrian statesman, remained in Syria to work. The family notes the differences between the more poverty-stricken Lebanon and the (formerly) better off Syria, saying “We have seen many hospitals... The treatment is poor, even for able-bodied people.”<sup>50</sup> Ana’s family is unable to return to Syria to visit her husband out of fear that the conditions are not safe, and the funds they

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<sup>47</sup> Claire Duffett, “Five Syrian Women, Five Different Origins, One Common Destiny,” last modified 9/9/2013, accessed January 28, 2015, <http://www.focusonsyria.org/five-syrian-women-five-different-origins-one-common-destiny/>

<sup>48</sup> Duffett, “Five Syrian Women.”

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

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*,

receive from the Armenian Orthodox Church are barely enough for them to live off of, but not nearly enough to pay for her one child's medical treatments. The lack of jobs for her and others in her community in Burj Hammud is similar to Dalaal's situation, and further shows the lack of religious or ethnic affiliations in terms of treatment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

The conditions in which the refugees commonly live have also gained controversy over the accommodation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon specifically as, along with the poor hospital descriptions which Ana's family gave, there have been complaints over a lack of clean water, a lack of assistance in registering the refugees and providing them with nourishment and economic opportunities.<sup>51</sup> Kamal and Samar, a Syrian couple in their forties, left their Aleppo suburb for Qubb Elias, an unofficial camp near the town of Chtoura in central Lebanon. In this camp, they live in a large tent, and share it with another family, while Kamal occasionally finds work around the Lebanese countryside in order to support his family. Like Ana, they too have three children with them, one of whom is also handicapped. Kamal notes the seriousness of the poverty around their camp:

We would at least like to get some vouchers to purchase rice and bread. Our children here in the camp are often sick. The water is polluted, they have stomachaches, they vomit. We can't even bring them to the hospital, because it's too expensive here.<sup>52</sup>

The fact that their one handicapped daughter, a thirteen year old with impaired hearing and an inability to speak, is untreated in Lebanon illustrates the urgency the

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<sup>51</sup> The official United Nations statistics are inaccurate not only because of the increasing number of Syrian refugees, but because many of the refugees fear that this will bar them from ever being able to return to Syria. For more information, see Stephanie Nebehay, "Syrian Refugees Top 3 Million, Half of All Syrians Displaced: UN," last modified 8/29/2014, last accessed 1/29/2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/29/us-syria-crisis-refugees-idUSKBN0GT0AX20140829>

<sup>52</sup> Stella Morgana, "Kamal and Samar: A Hasty Escape from Syria, a Hard Life in Lebanon," last modified 9/8/2013, last accessed 1/29/2015, <http://www.focusonsyria.org/kamal-and-samar-a-hasty-escape-from-syria-a-hard-life-in-lebanon/>

Lebanese government faces in order to properly assist in Syrian refugees into settling in a new country, such as Lebanon. Furthermore, residents of Qubb Elias are not sending their children to school as a result of the hardships in the town, a place where “(t)hose who are employed as agricultural workers earn about 7,000 Lebanese pounds, just 5 dollars a day.”<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps a somewhat surprising aspect of the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon is that, despite previous waves of refugee migration into Lebanon, particularly with the Palestinians around the time of the civil war, the government continues to struggle in assisting refugees with settling in a new country. This can be seen as startling given that many more Syrians are being dislocated and forced into leaving their homes because of the severity of the conflict at home, increasing the list of issues for the Lebanese government in creating new jobs and general economic opportunities for the displaced population living in Lebanon, both legally and illegally. The seemingly increasing tensions between the Syrian and Lebanese communities are clearly a consequence of a constant influx of Syrians into a weak economy and infrastructural system, which in turn is unable to properly support the incoming Syrian refugee community, all the while making matters worse for the host Lebanese communities throughout the country.

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<sup>53</sup> Morgana, “Kamal and Samar.”

## *Lebanese Attitudes towards Syrian Refugees*

The impact of the refugees' influx into Lebanon has clearly become a major national issue, yet it seems that because of the regional influence that the Syrian war has gained in recent months, it is arguable that the mass dislocation of Syrians has become a regional problem additionally to a solely Lebanese one. Since Syrians in Lebanon appear to be somewhat vocal regarding their opinions on the Lebanese government and infrastructure, perhaps the same can be said of the Lebanese population having an opinion on the Syrian settlements in their country, even after the controversial Syrian occupation of Lebanon during and after the Lebanese civil war. Given the lack of scholarship or historiography on the subject of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, a great amount of the information on this specific demographic comes from those who are living in such an environment, or around it. For this reason, it is imperative and necessary to examine relatively recent depictions of the refugees and the Lebanese host community in the media, coming from more regionally based periodical sources as well as non-local sources, or rather foreign and international sources.

Periodicals have been helpful in showing the views of not only the general Lebanese population's views on Syria and Syrian refugees in Lebanon, but additionally have been useful as a means of understanding the views of those throughout the Middle East in general.<sup>54</sup> Doha Shams, a writer for *Al-Akhbar*, did a piece in January of 2013 where she went to Akkar, an Alawi-dominated community in North Lebanon, and interviewed various residents of the community, both Syrians and Lebanese individuals. One Sunni Lebanese resident jokes: "We are now in Syria... politically speaking, of course," while driving and introducing Shams to Akkar, a

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<sup>54</sup> *Al-Akhbar*, literally "The News" in Arabic, is a Lebanese newspaper in both English and Arabic, with both news articles and opinionated pieces.

region of Lebanon whose demographics have shifted significantly since the beginning of the Syrian war.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Syrians had not long ago still been occupying these lands, and so the Syrian presence in the region still exists, albeit under different circumstances.

The presence of Alawites in Lebanon has been significant in that, since the Alawites' base is in Syria, they have become a major representative of Syrian culture and of Syrians in general, in Lebanon. This is highly implied in the Akkar resident's remark that they were driving through Syria, as it indicates the heavy Syrian influence entering Lebanon. The Alawi presence is further highly representative of the tensions between the Assad regime and Lebanon, as the elder Assad, Hafez, was in power in Syria at the time the Syrian occupation of Lebanon initially began. It is for this reason that one should also not forget that, should a country with as great sectarian tensions as Lebanon, experience a population increase within one demographic, it could increase hostilities between communities, especially since other demographic groups might feel somewhat threatened by an increase in a rival group's influence. The Alawi presence in Akkar seems to display this particular increase in tensions, specifically because of the Alawi relationship with the leadership in Syria, especially the leadership within the previous decades of Syrian occupation in Lebanon.

While perhaps this is not the first wave of Syrian influence in Lebanon in recent years, it is the first time that this Syrian influence comes in the form of ordinary citizens from Syria, and not the military, as had been the case during the years of the civil war and after. According to Robert Abdallah of *Al-Akhbar*, "locals in Akkar's Christian villages express conflicting views about the refugees in their midst," where some side with the refugees coming in and look to help,

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<sup>55</sup> Doha Shams, "A World of Outsiders in Lebanon's Akkar," *Al-Akhbar*, January 3, 2013, accessed January 31, 2015, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/world-outsiders-lebanons-akkar>.

whereas many are distrustful of the refugees, as a majority of them are Muslim.<sup>56</sup> In a six-month gap between Abdallah and Shams' articles, the locals' view of Syrian refugees in their area remains largely the same in that there is no unified opinion towards these people. Yet this also presents a wider issue in that the sectarian nature of Lebanese society is displayed here; the Christian and Muslim communities in Lebanon remain largely skeptical of one another, even if this Muslim community technically is not one based in Lebanon, but is rather a Syrian one.

Yet it appears that not all Lebanese locals in Akkar view Syrian refugees with doubt.

Abdul-Hamid Sakr, mayor of Tal Bireh in Akkar, notes that:

There are two kinds of refugees: civilians who fled because of the fighting between the two sides in Syria; and fugitives who have found a safe haven in which to hide until they receive their orders from Lebanese officials such as MP Khaled al-Daher and former MP Talal al-Mehrebi. To us, those people are a ticking time bomb.<sup>57</sup>

Sakr himself is a Lebanese Muslim, yet does not seem to fear the Alawites or other Syrian sectarian groups present around his village in Akkar. Instead, he speaks of his real fear in the conflict, saying “we neither intimidate our neighbors nor they us. Our actual fear is from the outsiders.”<sup>58</sup> In this sense, Sakr indicates that he fears non-regional intervention into the Syrian conflict, which he feels would make matters worse for his village and other similar ones around his. He further argues, “(I)f the battles spread here, then whoever wants to assault us will not have his way,” potentially sending out a

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<sup>56</sup> Robert Abdallah, “Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Mixed Welcome in Akkar,” *Al-Akhbar*, July 26, 2012, accessed February 1, 2015, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/syrian-refugees-lebanon-mixed-welcome-akkar>

<sup>57</sup> Shams, “A World of Outsiders.”

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*,

warning signal to any potential opponents, regional or international.<sup>59</sup> This further has a connotation that Sakr is unwilling to allow any potential Syrian takeover in his village.<sup>60</sup>

Given that *Al-Akhbar* is a Lebanese-based news source, with correspondents throughout Lebanon, in refugee-dominated areas and Lebanese areas, there could be greater bias towards a Lebanese perspective, rather than one coming from the outside. However, it appears that the opinions in these sources seem to be advocating for a better and overall improved solution to the refugee problem in Lebanon. The fact that Abdul-Hamid Sakr even mentions war due to the refugees pouring into Lebanon indicates that, in areas with a fairly high Syrian population, the Lebanese are somewhat skeptical of the influx of refugees.

Additionally, the Sunni-Lebanese resident referring to the possibility of Akkar containing a large number of Syrians, enough to nickname the region ‘Syria’, is another indicator that perhaps the Lebanese population of Lebanon is slightly hostile towards the refugee percentage of the population. This could be said especially given that the Syrian influx has been steadily rising in the previous couple of years since the Syrian conflict began, but one must also remember that the Syrians are considered a minority group in the country, and the Lebanese might not want to feel threatened by a minority group in their own country.

On the other hand, the Syrian refugees do not feel in any way that they are, or are even capable of, carrying out an rebellion of any sort on any part of Lebanon. If anything,

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>60</sup> Whether it is a military takeover, a rebel takeover, or even a non-physical takeover, such as a cultural one, Sakr is willing to ensure that Syrian refugees do not overtake his village, despite the proximity of Tal Bireh to the border with Syria and its potential hazards being located so close to Syria.



the refugees find themselves constantly lost as they are displaced from their newfound homes in Lebanon; many of these refugees have even gone on and become homeless. Mohieddine Q, a Syrian refugee and father of seven, remarks, “We were displaced from our own country and now we are displaced in Lebanon.”<sup>61</sup> He clearly laments the situation of war in his homeland, but further laments that he is unable to find a solution to his own circumstances in Lebanon. In 2012, about a year after the Syrian conflict had begun, the Lebanese education minister, Hassan Diab, decided to expel all refugees from Lebanese public schools, forcing them to enroll in local non-government schools or some form of private schooling.<sup>62</sup> This decision has further displaced these Syrian families, most of whom are relying on a public education for their children, since most of these families cannot afford non-governmental schooling in most cases, effectively also ruining potential futures of the Syrian refugee children.

To make matters worse for the refugees, a recent harsh winter season has affected the entire Lebanese population, and has hit the refugee population even harder. When speaking to the *Daily Star*, a Lebanese newspaper, Asma, an 8 year old Syrian refugee in Bekaa Valley, says it is so cold that “(s)ometimes I do not feel my feet and (she) is scared.”<sup>63</sup> This further emphasizes the harsh conditions which Syrians are practically forced to live in, as they are not being adequately assisted in the roughest of conditions, even though such instances affect the entire population, not just the refugee minorities. In other words, this particular incident emphasizes the strong lack of effort in adequately

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<sup>61</sup> Afif Diab, “Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Shelterless Once Again,” *Al-Akhbar*, August 26, 2012, accessed January 30, 2015, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/syrian-refugees-lebanon-shelterless-once-again>

<sup>62</sup> Non-government schools can include private schools, but here instead refer to schools or educational programs set up through non-governmental organizations.

<sup>63</sup> Doctors Without Borders, “Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: The Crisis Cannot Be Forgotten,” *The Daily Star* January 31, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-31/285925-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-this-crisis-cannot-be-forgotten.ashx>

providing care and assistance to the refugee population in Lebanon, and therefore perhaps, as a Lebanese periodical, sends a message to those necessary to provide more efforts in helping the refugees in their situation.

While the opinion in such a piece depicting the seriously harsh conditions for refugees living in Lebanon greatly varies from the ones previously discussed in *Al-Akhbar* stories, this shows the great differences of opinion in Lebanon. It is becoming clearer that the Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugee communities have had their relations shift significantly since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, especially since issues such as the expulsion of all refugees from Lebanese public schools has occurred. Yet through public statements implying protection of Syrian refugees from any aggressors, the Lebanese government has also shown an intent to make sure the Syrians are safe in Lebanon. Therefore, it appears that the Lebanese government has a firm stance based on making sure the Syrians do not assimilate with Lebanese society and culture; rather, it is their goal to make sure that their status as refugees truly is temporary, and that any more permanent hope of settlement for these refugees does not take place. While this has been the stance from the start of the refugee influx into Lebanon, the refugees seem to now have a greater understanding in that there is little that can be done for them and their dire situation, and therefore little is being done for them in these times.

*Harsh Realities for Syrian Families in Lebanon*

*Al Jazeera* writer Ben Gilbert provides a somewhat harsh criticism of the Lebanese population, and in the process a more sympathetic view of Syrian refugees, particularly street children throughout Lebanon. Regarding Syrians in Lebanon, there are over 1 million documented Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and according to *Al Jazeera*, over 400,000 of these are children, which is logical given that over half of the Syrian refugees are between the ages of birth and 17.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, given that these younger generations will grow up in Lebanon, they could be considered Lebanese by some, in addition to being of Syrian descent, possibly furthering tensions between Syrians and Lebanese individuals.

Jihad, a young Syrian boy living as a refugee in Beirut, is forced to sell flowers in wealthier neighborhoods of Beirut in order to provide for his family.<sup>65</sup> Many point to cases such as this one as being incredibly harsh towards the refugee population entering Lebanon.<sup>66</sup> Yet one must acknowledge the fact that, while child labor has been an ongoing problem in Lebanon for many years, it has greatly escalated since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, and has given a specific type of reputation to these Syrian children living in urban street settings. Of the Syrian refugees overall, a middle-aged Lebanese man says:

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<sup>64</sup> Ben Gilbert, "To Be Young, Syrian and a Refugee in the Streets of Beirut," *Al Jazeera* July 18, 2014, accessed February 24, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/18/to-be-young-syrianandarefugeeinthestreetsofbeirut.html>

<sup>65</sup> Gilbert, "To Be Young."

<sup>66</sup> Many see this as a means through which Syrians are not meant to feel assimilated into Lebanese society and culture, and are, in fact, meant to feel very separate from the Lebanese communities.

There are (more than 1 million Syrians) in Lebanon, and they are ruining this country's image.<sup>67</sup>

It should further be noted that the Lebanese man who made the above claim interjected in an *Al Jazeera* interview with Jihad, eventually causing an argument between the two in which the man yelled some obscenities at Jihad. While more regional sources have portrayed the Lebanese to view the Syrians with indifference over any other type of opinion, this article clearly suggests that there is a less favorable view among the Lebanese population regarding Syrian refugees, at least in Beirut, compared to the rest of the country.

To further validate this general opinion, Khaled, a fifteen-year old from Daraa, Syria, shines shoes on a popular street in a better-off section of Beirut, and is frequently verbally abused and assaulted by the local Lebanese population. In fact, he even claims that he has been arrested 13 times in the two years prior to the publishing date of the article.<sup>68</sup> Because of this Lebanese view that appears to be more anti-Syrian, or rather apparently the view in the media, that is, at least in Beirut, it seems that the prospect of reconciliation between the two nationalities in Lebanon anytime soon should be regarded as impossible, particularly because there has been little improvement in the refugees' lives, while the living standard for the average Lebanese citizen appears to have decreased greatly.

In the countryside, however, there seems to still be a form of community between the Syrian refugees and Lebanese citizens, even from the beginning of the Syrian civil war. For example, much like in Beirut or other major Lebanese cities, the Syrian refugees are grouped together and live among one another, yet in the rural areas of Lebanon, there

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Gilbert, "To Be Young."

is greater land space which can house more refugees than in the cities. Abu Mohammad, a farmer and landowner near Baalbak, a city in the Bekaa Valley, provides his land in allowing refugees to stay in larger groups, such as larger families, on his property.<sup>69</sup> While he does benefit from being able to pay Syrian workers lower wages for working on his farm, he also looks to provide assistance to incoming Syrian groups looking to establish some sort of a decent life in a new host country. Some may see such an act as Abu Mohammad endorsing forced child labor, yet he claims more that it is necessary, as:

It's a way to help to get bread, food... They came with nothing. They get basically nothing from the U.N., and there's not much help for them elsewhere. So it helps them when the children work, to pay for some expenses.<sup>70</sup>

### *Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*

While Abu Mohammad's case may be a one-off study, many Palestinians who have come to Lebanon as refugees since 1948 have felt similarly to modern refugees from Syria.<sup>71</sup> Like Syrian refugees and the Lebanese hosts, there have been tensions among the Palestinian refugees and Lebanese locals, yet given the longevity of the Palestinians' stay in Lebanon, relations have considerably improved since their initial migration into Lebanon in 1948.

This is evident through marital relations between Palestinians and Lebanese individuals; Daniel Meier, an independent scholar, focused on how marital relations between Palestinians and Lebanese are viewed locally in Lebanon. A major part of his

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<sup>69</sup> Ben Gilbert, "Syrian Refugee Children Forced to Work to Support Refugee Families in Lebanon," *Al Jazeera* February 22, 2014, accessed February 26, 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/2/22/syrian-refugee-childrenforcedtoworktosupportfamiliesinlebanon.html>

<sup>70</sup> Gilbert, "Syrian Refugee Children."

<sup>71</sup> 1948 was the year the State of Israel was officially created, and a large Palestinian exodus ensued to neighboring nations, including Lebanon.

investigation revolved around examining various sectarian groups, such as Lebanese Sunni, Shi'a, Christians, along with Muslim and Christian Palestinians. This is because of the major sectarian nature of the region, particularly in Lebanon, and how these groups may cause possible tensions for marriage among Palestinians and Lebanese people. In 2003, Yahya, a Palestinian Muslim man married to a Lebanese Muslim woman, notes that tensions between communities are a generational thing:

The problem is our parents' generation: our generation does not have much of a problem with mixed marriages but having lived through the war it's different for them.<sup>72</sup>

Granted, Yahya says this over 50 years after the major Palestinian exodus in 1948, while the Syrian refugee exodus really only began in 2011. However, at least with marital relations, there appears to be a sense of Lebanese acceptance of Palestinian refugees in the nation, particularly after they had been there for so long, suggesting that something similar may occur with the Syrians.

In fact, the comparison between Palestinian and Syrian refugees appears to certainly be a realistic and accurate one, given the conflicts that began in order for a large emigration to take place. *Al Jazeera* contributing author Michael Pizzi argues that the Palestinian refugee influx into Lebanon both post-World War II and pre-Lebanese civil war were both instrumental periods in shifting Lebanon's sectarian balance to favor Sunnis more in the nation. Further, he writes that:

Shias and many Christians in Lebanon worry that Sunnis, who mostly oppose Assad, could exploit the influx of more than a million Sunni Syrians to disrupt the country's delicate sectarian balance.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Daniel Meier, "Matrimonial Strategies and Identity Relations between Palestinian Refugees and Lebanese After the Lebanese Civil War," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no.2: 125.

The ‘delicate sectarian balance’ Pizzi writes of came years after Lebanon had a relatively Christian-dominated government, and was highly under the influence of sectarian groups such as the Maronites. The shift in Lebanon’s sectarian demographics has come after major waves of refugee migration into Lebanon, and has further signified the shift in Lebanon’s political balance, both as far as Syrian and Palestinian refugee influxes are concerned.

Overall, the international portrayal of relations between the Lebanese people and Syrian refugees seems to lean more towards an argument in which non-regional writers feel more sympathy towards the refugees than the Lebanese population. This is in part due to poor refugee treatment in addition to overall infrastructural issues which the refugees have aggravated with their presence in Lebanon. Moreover, given the demographic shifts in Lebanon, beginning with the influx of Palestinian refugees in the late 1940s, many individuals in Lebanon are worried about their futures as a result of demographic and sectarian changes in the nation. It even seems that, as the Syrian civil war has continued, the international media has made it seem that relations between Syrians and Lebanese communities in Lebanon have soured, particularly as more and more Syrians arrive in Lebanon each year in search of a new and improved life.

While perhaps non-local news sources seem to not have as much information on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, they also appear to concur entirely with regional periodicals’ views on the treatment of refugees. For example, an article on *CNN* focuses on the civil war in Syria and conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq, and asks for potential donations

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<sup>73</sup> Michael Pizzi, “In Syria’s War Refugees, Lebanon Sees Echoes of Palestinian Crisis,” *Al Jazeera* January 6, 2015, accessed February 26, 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/6/lebanon-syria-refugees.html>

from readers if possible in the future.<sup>74</sup> This particular piece varies greatly from many of the entries found on *Al-Akhbar* and the *Daily Star*, where not many efforts to promote support for the communities in question are found, and where instead more opinion-based articles are found.

Yet it is also important to make use of, and value, the international news agencies for their potentially less biased views of the conflict in the Middle East, while also being aware of the subsequent problems that come with it. Many of the stronger and overall more effective articles documenting Syrian refugee situations in Lebanon come from *Al Jazeera*, a Qatari-based news agency with considerable international connections as it has become a more international and globally based network. For example, Matt Sandy of *Al Jazeera* wrote about Syrian refugees in Brazil, noting:

Brazil took in 1,400 refugees from Syria in 2014, according to the country's National Center for Refugees, making them the country's largest refugee population.<sup>75</sup>

This specific statistic of there being over one thousand refugees in a country nowhere near the origin of the conflict is impressive, especially given that the largest refugee population in the country comes from Syria. While this specific article does not necessarily concern the refugees in Lebanon, it is still an indicator of the displaced Syrians and their struggle to accustom themselves to new, unfamiliar surroundings after having practically been forced from their homes.

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<sup>74</sup> CNN Staff, "Help Syrian and Iraqi Refugees Survive the War," *CNN* January 6, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/06/world/iyw-syria-resource-list/index.html>

<sup>75</sup> Matt Sandy, "Syrians Find Safety, Hospitality in Sao Paolo," *Al Jazeera* January 22, 2015, accessed February 5, 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/22/Syrian-refugees-in-Sao-Paulo-Brazil.html>



## Government Response to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

The Syrian population in Lebanon, and in the other neighboring countries such as Jordan and Turkey, have clearly created all kinds of problems for the host nations in accommodating them. Yet unlike in Jordan and Turkey, Lebanon is a country whose recent history with Syria, involving multiple ethnic and political tensions due to the Lebanese civil war and subsequent Syrian military occupation of Lebanon, has been incredibly tense, and is now looking to help the country and its people who had technically taken over their country for an extended period of time. Lebanon is also a country whose demographics have changed in recent years because of the mass displacement of Syrian refugees from their homes and into various new territories, areas which they are not accustomed to. Therefore it is crucial to understand the reaction to the influx of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon specifically, as it gives those interested in the conflict an improved understanding of the severity of the Syrian conflict, and how exactly it spreads elsewhere.

It is apparent that a good proportion of Lebanese citizens in Lebanon feel somewhat skeptical about the Syrians entering Lebanon. Some, such as Abdul-Hamid Sakr and the man who interrupted an *Al Jazeera* interview with the young Syrian boy Jihad, feel more negatively about Syrian refugees for ruining the country's image, or even for potentially bringing the conflict to Lebanon. Others, such as the Sunni-Lebanese man driving Doha Shams through Akkar, feel that Syrian refugees are potentially going to have to remain in Lebanon for a long time, in large numbers, are through this create their own new territory in the nation. While the Lebanese government continues to publicly support Syrian refugees, Lina Fakhreddine of *Assafir* news in Lebanon writes

that “the Lebanese government tightened its measures on its borders, along land crossings with Syria as well as Beirut’s international airport.”<sup>76</sup> This action has been enforced to ensure that the influx of Syrian refugees will decrease, and not add to the list of Lebanon’s problems in dealing with their population crisis. Yet Fakhreddine also seems to indicate that she feels Lebanon and the government is being cheated by foreign aid donors; she writes that “Lebanon was only given empty promises” by foreign investors and potential donors, many of which were Western nations such as the United States and Germany.<sup>77</sup>

However, the main aim of her piece is that she writes all of this to gain support for the Syrian refugees, whom she claims “will suffer the threat of suffering from hunger since the World Food Programme decided to suspend its support, as it did last December due to a lack of aid.”<sup>78</sup> She believes that rather than simply not trying to help the Syrian refugees, the Lebanese government is doing everything it can, including attending and hosting various aid conferences, in order to secure funds to assist the oncoming Syrian refugees. Of course, there is bias in the fact that she is writing an article for a Lebanese publication, yet, likewise, it is very likely that she is using this article as a plea in trying to obtain international support for her nation’s government in support of the refugee crisis taking place in Syria. In any case, it is evident from Lina Fakhreddine’s point of view that she feels there is more that can be done for the Syrian refugees, but that the Lebanese government is limited in terms of resources and what it can do to help the population in question.

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<sup>76</sup> Lina Fakhreddine, “International Aid Lags for Lebanon’s Displaced,” *Assafir* January 12, 2015, accessed February 6, 2015, <http://assafir.com/Article/396150/Archive>

<sup>77</sup> Fakhreddine, “International Aid.”

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*,

To add to Fakhreddine's support for Syrians in Lebanon, the Lebanese Interior Minister Nouhad Machnouk has been very vocal about the government support for the refugees, especially given that the Islamic State's advancements into Syria have caused a great deal more displacement of Syrian citizens. For instance, in response to ISIS members killing some of the non-Muslim Syrians, he has said that:

No one should think that we would remain as spectators if a Lebanese soldier or citizen was killed or executed, but at the same time we will also preserve the presence of Syrians in Lebanon.<sup>79</sup>

This heavily implies that the Lebanese the government and people have a strong moral and civil obligation to protect the Syrians, whose temporary nationality is arguably Lebanese due to their domestic displacement. Furthermore, since their lives have become endangered and more complex due to extraneous factors over which they had very little control, this provides greater argument for the need to protect the Syrians. Machnouk continued that:

(ISIS) should remember that they are placing the lives of one and a half million Syrians in Lebanon in danger because of their actions and threats.<sup>80</sup>

Of course, these two quotes might simply have been said in such a way to rally support for himself and the government, especially given the government's overall failure to obtain support in adequately dealing with the refugee issue. Yet the intent is there to help the Syrian refugees, who, especially now after the harsh 2014-15 winter season, are in desperate need of help from the government.

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<sup>79</sup> Daily Star, "Militants Risking Lives of Syrian Refugees: Lebanon Minister," *Lebanon Daily Star* August 30, 2014, accessed February 6, 2015, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Aug-30/269054-militants-risking-lives-of-syrian-refugees-lebanon-minister.ashx>

<sup>80</sup> Daily Star, "Militants Risking Lives."

Though perhaps the inter-community relationship between the various Syrian communities across the country, and the Lebanese host communities among them, have seemingly deteriorated since the start of the conflict, the Lebanese government seems to be willing to provide a form of security for the refugees in their immediate struggles for survival in Lebanon. Therefore, it seems clear that Lebanon seems to be accommodating, rather than looking to assimilate, the refugees into their culture, and ensuring that their stay in Lebanon is purely temporary and does not turn into a longer period of seeking refuge in a new country. Perhaps the government's goal of not assimilating the Syrians into Lebanese society are because of perceived longevity of the previous Palestinian refugees into Lebanese culture. Given how long this process took and how even newer generations of Palestinians in Lebanon only now assimilating more into Lebanese culture, perhaps it is the government's goal not to repeat this process with Syrians, therefore pushing for a solution which would not require Syrian permanence in Lebanon.

## International Response to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

Overall international response and interest in the Syrian refugees' case has come as a result of the chemical attacks, which came at the cost of many innocent Syrian lives. As a result, many organizations and international bodies have been assisting the Syrian refugees' situation after having been displaced from their own country, due to events such as the chemical attacks. A large part of this international response to the Syrian Refugees has been through attempting to provide foreign aid directly to the Syrian refugees through the international organizations with some branches working with the refugees in Lebanon. Currently, for the year 2015, UNHCR has been looking to allocate a total of approximately USD 556.8 million towards the budget in helping Lebanon deal with the Syrian refugee issue, while this figure stood at a mere 13.7 million in 2011, at the start of the Syrian conflict.<sup>81</sup>

There has been a great amount of foreign aid in the form of social workers, compared to actual sent money to assist in the development and the relocation of the Syrian families into Lebanon.<sup>82</sup> Yet there has also been a good deal of lobbying and political support in the European Parliament on behalf of European Union (EU) representatives to the Lebanese Republic. Angelina Eickhorst, the EU Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic, is one such representative who advocates foreign support in helping the refugee population of Lebanon, which has now increased to 26.20% of the entire

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<sup>81</sup> UNHCR, "2015 UNHCR Country Operations Profile," UNHCR January 1, 2015, last viewed February 28, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486676.html>

<sup>82</sup> Groups assisting in the process of providing aid include *Doctors Without Borders*, the *Red Cross*, *UNICEF*, the *World Food Programme* and *UNHCR* to name a few. For an extended list of profit and non-profit organizations assisting the lives of Syrian refugees, or for more information on providing contributions to the Syrian refugees' cause, see Christopher Dawson, "How to Help Syrian Refugees," *CNN* September 10, 2013, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/06/world/iyw-how-to-help-syrian-refugees/>

Lebanese population, as of December 2014.<sup>83</sup> Ghassan Rifi of *Assafir* notes how Eickhorst recently “came under a barrage of questions about Lebanon’s ability to continue as a nation and state in light of such a large number of displaced Syrians in the country.”<sup>84</sup>

Instead of offering a plan for the current Lebanese administration in attempting to handle the Syrian refugee problem in Lebanon, Eickhorst simply states that:

The solution for the refugee issues is to end the war in Syria so that they can return to their country. There is a country called Syria, and Syrians ought to return there.<sup>85</sup>

Clearly, she believes that the real root of the problem is in Syria, and that that is the only place realistically where the issues for Lebanon in regards to Syrian refugees can end, as it is ultimately the homeland and place of origin of those who fled to Lebanon and other neighboring countries. Furthermore, she also believes in a greater need for unity among all parties and people in the country, claiming that there is a need to “share responsibility between all parties, through unified visions and goals.”<sup>86</sup> The sectarian nature of the country clearly remains an issue as it gets in the way of having problems get solved, but now it is clearly evident that unity is the necessary way in dealing with the refugee crisis in Lebanon.

To add to Eickhorst’s testimony that more unity will be necessary in Lebanon to adequately deal with the refugee crisis, Stephanie Nebehay of *Reuters* claims that Syrian refugees are “scattered in 1,700 poor communities across Lebanon,” and in many cases

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<sup>83</sup> Fakhreddine, “International Aid.”

<sup>84</sup> Ghassan Rifi, “EU Ambassador: Lebanon in Need of Development Solutions,” *Assafir* September 12, 2014, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://assafir.com/Article/372024/Archive>

<sup>85</sup> Rifi, “EU Ambassador.”

<sup>86</sup> Rifi, “EU Ambassador.”

even taking Lebanese citizens' jobs as they are willing to be paid less to work the same jobs.<sup>87</sup> She feels that it is necessary for the Lebanese government to find a balance and equilibrium between "myriad political and sectarian actors," as the sectarianism in the country has been a crucial factor in understanding the Lebanese population.<sup>88</sup> By reiterating Eickhorst's point of view in that unity is absolutely necessary to achieve any sort of progression in Lebanon, Nebehay presents the issue of how sectarianism, further divided with the influx of Syrians into Lebanon, influences Lebanese politics and government decisions.

The international view seems quite clearly to suggest that Lebanon's problems can be solved with greater unity in the country, yet also that because of Lebanon's tricky demographical situation, foreign support has been significantly delayed and is inconsistent in looking to assist the refugee population in Lebanon. It is surely also difficult for many of these internationally influential countries, and representatives of these countries, to convey an argument supporting the refugee population, while also looking in from the outside.

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<sup>87</sup> Stephanie Nebehay, "U.N.: Syrian Refugees, sectarian tensions endanger Lebanon," *Al Arabiya* July 14, 2014, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/14/U-N-Syrian-refugees-sectarian-tensions-endanger-Lebanon-.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Nebehay, "U.N.: Syrian Refugees."

## Hope for the Future?

In recent years, the conflict in Syria has progressively worsened, and as a result has greatly influenced regional demographics due to the high number of Syrians fleeing the country. While it does not help the Syrian refugees that Lebanon is unable to properly accommodate this specific demographic within the wider Lebanese population, the truth is that the outcome of what is to happen to Syrians in Lebanon in the future greatly depends on the situation in Syria. The fact remains that Syrian refugees are fleeing their country at an exponential rate, not to mention the number of displaced Syrians in Syria.<sup>89</sup> It is certain that there is more that can be done to assist the refugees in living adequate lives in various new host countries, not just in Lebanon. Yet it would be highly one-sided and biased to entirely blame the Lebanese government in not adequately assisting the Syrian refugees, and possibly ruining Syrian-Lebanese relations in Lebanon; certainly when international help from various non-governmental organizations as well as political groups are unable to adequately assist in the situation. Therefore the question regarding the refugees should focus less on how the Lebanese, and neighboring countries with high Syrian refugee populations (Turkey and Jordan, namely), should look to take care of the refugees; instead, it should focus more on how the conflict in Syria can finally come to a conclusion after what have been four seemingly long years, with apparently little hope for any form of resolution in the near future.

Another factor that has become clear, solely due to the conflict, is the progression of various militant groups, even countries, appearing and taking sides in the Syrian

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<sup>89</sup> While it may be the case that the exponential rate has been decreasing, it should still be noted that the number of displaced Syrians outside of Syria is steadily increasing, along with those still in Syria.



conflict. Some, such as the Islamic State, have been claiming their own side in the conflict, but there have also been many coalition groups, both supporting and opposing Assad, formed within recent years, some of which have religious extremist elements in them. Yet with the international community also involving itself in the conflict, specifically through choosing sides in the civil war, the issue has become far more global, as opposed to regional, than one would have anticipated four years ago at the start of the Arab Spring. This has further influenced the displacement and subsequent relocation for the Syrian people into Lebanon and other neighboring countries, resulting in the spread of some of these coalition groups from the conflict in Syria to Lebanon among other nearby destinations. In a sense, many Lebanese citizens feel threatened, not only because of the prospect of losing employment, but also because of the prospect of forced involvement in possibly fighting against Syrian wartime factions in Lebanon, where the conflict should not even be taking place. As a result, it is clear how tensions exist between the Syrian refugee community and the local Lebanese community.

Specifically regarding Syrian-Lebanese relations in Lebanon, there does appear to be hope in mending these ties, at least on a personal, non-political level. That is to say, it would be harder to judge Syrian-Lebanese governmental relations, although one could assume longer-term tensions due to events in the last 40 years. Of course, one could argue that the Syrian refugees and the Lebanese host communities they live around are not exactly friendly, in fact far from it. If we look back to Abdul-Hamid's testimony about having to defend himself and fellow Lebanese citizens from potential Syrian aggressors from the Syrian civil war, one can clearly sense passion in the words he says. However, from more recent periodical articles, both regional and international, there

appears to be an increasing number of advocates attempting to pressure the government in doing more for the refugees' situation. There has been a good deal of support, both locally and publically in periodicals in support of the refugees, especially recently after the harsh winter season and its adverse effects on the refugee community. Yet this certainly would be the case if there was a lack of improvement in the refugees' situation, as well as the country's general situation, after years of conflict in Syria. Therefore, it is arguable that while relations are somewhat improving in terms of Lebanese people advocating for greater support for the refugee problem in Lebanon, general Syrian-Lebanese relations between people in Lebanon have not exactly been improving, simply because there has been no improvement in the refugees' situation.

A large issue in these tensions possibly deteriorating over time comes from the fact that it was almost impossible to predict how severe the Syrian civil war was at the time of its beginning, as well as how it would turn out in the long run. While many of the Syrians living in Lebanon may not have felt that they would be returning to Syria any time in the near future, they certainly were not thinking of taking up permanent refuge in Lebanon; as affairs currently stand, there is no exact telling as to when the Syrians in Lebanon will have the opportunity to return to Syria. As the war continues, it is clear that there cannot be a temporary solution, as many of these refugees have remained in Lebanon, and additional surrounding countries such as Turkey and Jordan, for 2 to 3 years, if not more. It seems increasingly likely that there will be a need for a permanent solution to a situation that has been ongoing for a considerable amount of time, especially given that the conflict is progressively getting worse, with no solution available anytime soon. Yet it should also be noted that with a more permanent solution, and more aid, for

the refugees, these tensions may possibly begin to cease because of there being a compromise by which both sets of populations might feel more secure about their position in Lebanese society.

## **Conclusion**

With regards to a shift in demographics and a change in lifestyle, the Arab Spring of 2010-11 was the turning point for many countries in the Arab world. The revolutions that began in Tunisia spread everywhere, and were felt by many countries throughout the region. Syria was one of these many countries, one where anti-government demonstrations were taking place, yet factors such as sectarianism and government allegiance were decisive in showing various divides in Syria, and inadvertently helping a civil war begin in Syria. The problems due to the war became more serious, and a mass exodus began taking place in Syria; many citizens have been fleeing the nation in large numbers, and have been classified internationally as refugees.

The Syrian Civil War has resulted in the regional relocation of over 3 million Syrians, with millions more displaced from their homes and hometowns in Syria alone. The highest number of these Syrian refugees has fled to neighboring Lebanon, a country with whom Syria has had tense relations in recent years, but many have also fled to other nearby states, such as Turkey and Jordan. As is the problem with various groups of refugees, Syrian refugees in Lebanon are not adequately cared for, partly due to a lack of international funding allocated to the Lebanese government, but also because of a lack of overall infrastructure in place to accommodate a large population, one that has increased to 20% of Lebanon's overall population since the beginning of the war. This, along with the Syrian government's alleged role in Lebanon during their civil war, and the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri's assassination, have created great tensions among the Lebanese population and Syrian refugee population throughout Lebanon. Additionally, the lack of progress in agreeing upon a ceasefire or any other form of end to the Syrian Civil War, moreover the addition of various sectarian groups in the conflict, has

greatly influenced the need for the refugees to stay in Lebanon, and could result in a need to find a more permanent solution to their individual refugee problems.

In recent years, it appears that, while there are many Lebanese citizens looking to help the Syrians' situation in Lebanon, a large amount of Lebanese people also seem to have grown frustrated with the constant refugee entrance into their nation in large numbers, with no apparent way of stopping this flow into Lebanon. The refugees have been an issue in accommodating, especially since many of the Syrian refugees are taking Lebanese citizens' jobs due to lower wages, and so they are also heavily influencing the Lebanese population's ability to function and find some sort of remedy to the problem. It is for this reason, among others, that Lebanese individuals would rather seek a solution for the refugees' situation, yet this is proving to be more difficult each year given the constant increase in Syrians entering Lebanon. Of course, it is absolutely arguable that Syrians certainly need better living conditions and that this should be the Lebanese government's primary concern; in fact, this should undoubtedly be a necessity. Yet, it would arguably be better if a solution should be found through which the Lebanese and Syrian populations, respectively, can both benefit, rather than only improving conditions for the Syrian refugees.

Though it will be necessary to upgrade Lebanon's infrastructure in order to accommodate the Syrian refugees and move the country forward, this will have to come at a high cost, much of which will come from unstable and insecure international donors. Much of the future of the refugees' relations with the Lebanese population will depend on the outcome of the civil war, and whether or not the refugees will have the possibility of even returning home. It seems that, while the Lebanese government is indeed somewhat to blame for the refugees' rather currently hopeless situation, it is also apparent that there is only so much which the government can do for their

population. For this reason, the blame should be more evenly distributed among various other parties responsible for the direction of the conflict in Syria, as well as the refugees' well-being. Syrian-Lebanese relations between Syrians and Lebanese communities in Lebanon, though perhaps not ideal before the Syrian conflict, have been deteriorating since the initial stages of the Syrians' refuge-seeking, while improvement has been hard to come by as the overall situation in Lebanon constantly worsens. For the time being, Syrian refugees throughout the world, let alone those stuck in Lebanon, will have to accept their host countries as their new homes, as the war in their homeland continues without any positive sign of a near end.

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## **Secondary Sources**

Ajami, Fouad. *The Syrian Rebellion*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

*This book covers a large period of Syrian history, ranging from Hafez al-Assad's reign as Syrian president to the present, in explaining how and why the Syrian rebellion was able to take place.*

Ben Zion, Ilan. "Radical Islamists Take Hammer to Syrian Artifacts." *The Times of Israel* May 22 2014, accessed November 29, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/radical-islamists-take-hammer-to-syrian-artifacts/>

*This source primarily looks at the Islamic State and its recent confiscation and subsequent destruction of Syrian antiquities from the times of Ancient Mesopotamia. It further details the Islamic State's conquest of Syria and Iraq, and presents various Middle Eastern scholars' points of view on the Islamic State and the recent attention surrounding it.*

Bosco, Robert M. "The Assassination of Rafik Hariri: Foreign Policy Perspectives." *International Political Science Review* 30, 4 (2009): 349-361.

*This article examines the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri's assassination, and the controversy surrounding it, as well as the opening of an international tribunal to find out who was behind the assassination.*

Calestini, Luciano. "Innovation for Equity in Lebanon." *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Sept. 2014): 21-23.

*An article examining hardships in Lebanon caused by the refugee population in recent years, along with specific plans in the works to help alleviate the country of such economic and social issues.*

Charbonneau, Louis & Michelle Nichols. "UN Confirms Syrians used Chemical Weapons repeatedly." *The Age* (Melbourne), Dec. 14, 2013.

*Australian newspaper article documenting the Syrian chemical weapons controversy, commenting on how the perpetrator behind the attacks is still unknown and could be either a government faction or a rebel faction.*

CNN Staff. "Help Syrian and Iraqi Refugees Survive the War." *CNN* January 6, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/06/world/iyw-syria-resource-list/index.html>

*Short CNN article providing information on organizations assisting the refugee situations in Lebanon through the harsh Lebanese winter.*

Dahi, Omar. "The Refugee Crisis in Lebanon and Jordan: The Need for Economic Development Spending." *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Sept. 2014): 11-13.

*Secondary source arguing that the best way to alleviate Lebanon and Jordan of their difficulties in accommodating their refugee populations is through forcing more public spending in improving infrastructure and creating jobs for the refugee populations.*

Dawisha, Adeed I. "Syria in Lebanon. Assad's Vietnam?" *Foreign Policy*, no.33 (Winter, 1978-1979): 135-150.

*This article examines Lebanon during the civil war, under Syrian occupation during Hafez al-Assad's reign as Syrian president, arguing that Lebanon was similar to Vietnam during the Vietnam War due to there being a large stalemate with Israel and Lebanon during the war.*

Dawson, Christopher. "How to Help Syrian Refugees." *CNN* September 10, 2013, accessed February 7, 2015.

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/06/world/iyw-how-to-help-syrian-refugees/>

*An informational webpage displaying a list of organizations assisting Syrian refugees worldwide, particularly in the Middle East, in living lives under more desirable conditions. The webpage provides some information on each of the organizations involved and how to contact each one and send a donation.*

Fakhreddine, Lina. "International Aid Lags for Lebanon's Displaced." *Assafir* January 12, 2015, accessed February 6, 2015. <http://assafir.com/Article/396150/Archive>

*Article claiming that the Lebanese border patrol has tightened due to the Lebanese government's recent measures regarding Syrian refugees, who have been entering the country in large numbers at once. Further, it examines the international community's inability to send aid promptly to Lebanon in order to properly assist with accommodating the refugee population.*

Harris, William. "Syria in Lebanon." *MERIP Reports* no.134 (Jul.-Aug. 1985): 9-14.

*An article describing Syria's presence in Lebanon, and its potential effects on the Lebanese war and potential regional consequences.*

Human Rights Watch. *Attacks on Ghouta: Analysis of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2013.

*An investigation into the alleged Ghouta chemical weapons attacks that took place in 2013, and whether or not the Syrian government or the opposition to the government caused these attacks to take place.*

Jamshidi, Maryam. *The Future of the Arab Spring*. Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2014.

*This book provides a great overview on the whole Arab Spring, while also looking towards the future and the consequences of the overall rebellion throughout Middle Eastern nations.*

Lawson, Fred H. "Syria's Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1976: A Domestic Conflict Explanation." *International Organization* 38, 3 (1984): 451-480.

*This scholarly article examines Syria's intervention in the Lebanese Civil War and looks to understand the reasons for doing this on Syria's part. It also provides an overview on the conflict and some background on how the war came to become an actual conflict.*

Mackreath, Helen. "The Impact of Host Communities in North Lebanon." *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Sept. 2014): 19-21.

*An examination of how Syrian refugees fleeing to northern Lebanon are being accommodated by the host communities, despite the government lacking in its assistance towards the refugees in this particular part of Lebanon. It compares the current Syrian refugee case in Lebanon to the 1999 Kosovo Crisis, where half a million Kosovar Albanians fled to Albania, where they were assisted by the local Albanian population in the process.*

Maktabi, Rania. "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited: Who Are the Lebanese?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no.2 (Nov. 1999): 219-241.

*This study examines the significance of the 1932 census – the last Lebanese census to have taken place – on today's political structure in Lebanon, as well as its impact on overall sectarian tensions in the nation. This piece was used extensively to gain an understanding on the different sects living in Lebanon throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

Makdisi, Ussama. "The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon: Reconstructing the Nation-State." *Middle East Report* 26, no.200.

*Makdisi presents a definition and a working understanding of sectarianism and the role it has played throughout Lebanese history, as well as its regional influence. The article goes back through Lebanese history, even to the colonial periods of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and how it has been a negative yet integral part of Lebanese history.*

Meier, Daniel. "Matrimonial Strategies and Identity Relations between Palestinian Refugees and Lebanese After the Lebanese Civil War." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no.2: 111-133.

*This study examines the marital relations, as well as the overall relationship, between Palestinian refugees and the host Lebanese population after the Lebanese civil war, which actually ended up proving that the Lebanese and Palestinian communities actually had less tensions than one might have imagined.*

Morrison, Leah. "The Vulnerability of Palestinian Refugees from Syria." *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Sept. 2014): 41-42.

*Argues that Palestinian refugees have a much more difficult and complex situation because they will not have a homeland to return to anytime soon, while Syrians might have a chance of returning home sooner than Palestinians.*

Nebehay, Stephanie. "Syrian Refugees Top 3 Million, Half of All Syrians Displaced: UN." Last modified 8/29/2014, last accessed 1/29/2015.  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/29/us-syria-crisis-refugees-idUSKBN0GT0AX20140829>

*A statistic-based article reporting the total number of Syrian refugees worldwide being over 3 million, while half of the total number of Syrians are officially displaced from their homes, in and outside of Syria.*

Nebehay, Stephanie. "U.N.: Syrian Refugees, sectarian tensions endanger Lebanon." *Al Arabiya* July 14, 2014, accessed February 7, 2015.  
[http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle\\_east/2014/07/14/U-N-Syrian-refugees-sectarian-tensions-endanger-Lebanon-.html](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle_east/2014/07/14/U-N-Syrian-refugees-sectarian-tensions-endanger-Lebanon-.html).

*A report on Syrian refugees furthering sectarian tensions in Lebanon with their mass exodus from Syria since the beginning of the Syrian conflict.*

Panara, Carlo & Gary Wilson. *The Arab Spring: New Patterns for Democracy and International Law*. Leiden: Nijhoff Publishers, 2013.

*This book examines the Arab Spring and its overall impact on the Middle East, given that many countries in the region had rebellions at the same time, and successively. Furthermore, it offers a plan of action as to how stability might be more easily maintained in the region in the future.*

Perthes, Volker. "Syria's Involvement in Lebanon." *Middle East Report* 203 (Spring 1997): 18.

*This article examines the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and what the overall Lebanese opinion was of the occupation.*

Pipes, Daniel. "We Don't Need Syria in Lebanon." *Middle East Quarterly* 7, no.3 (Sept. 2000): 21-27.

*A scholarly article which examines Syria's occupation of Lebanon, and why it would be bad to continue this occupation on a domestic, regional and international level. Pipes argues that no party would benefit from the occupation in the long run, and that therefore the Syrian government should look to cease any plans to continue occupation of Lebanon.*

Pizzi, Michael. "In Syria's War Refugees, Lebanon Sees Echoes of Palestinian Crisis." *Al Jazeera* January 6, 2015, accessed February 26, 2015.  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/6/lebanon-syria-refugees.html>

*This opinion-based article in Al Jazeera notes how Lebanese border control is much tighter regarding Syrians entering, as they are now required to have a visa, and therefore many are denied entry to Lebanon at the border and are further lost after having been displaced.*

Rabinovich, Itamar. *The War for Lebanon*. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1985.

*Rabinovich's book argues that many different parties have population interest in Lebanon, and that rather than it being a civil war between various Lebanese sectarian factions in the nation, it is more of a regional conflict with various states each having their claim in Lebanon.*

Refaat, Marwan M. & Kamel Mohanna. "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Facts and Solutions." *The Lancet* 382, no.9894: 763-764.

*Some statistical information regarding Syrian refugees in Lebanon, namely with their health care and the difficulties behind accommodating the refugees, while also being accommodated by the state.*

Sandy, Matt. "Syrians Find Safety, Hospitality in Sao Paulo." *Al Jazeera* January 22, 2015, accessed February 5, 2015.  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/22/Syrian-refugees-in-Sao-Paulo-Brazil.html>

*An article that documents the small Syrian refugee community of roughly 1,500 people living in Sao Paulo, Brazil, thousands of miles away from home. Currently, they are Brazil's largest refugee population, despite being a considerably smaller number in Brazil than in other countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey.*

Schogol, Jeff. "Pentagon Warns Employees about Islamic State Threats." *USA Today* October 31, 2014, accessed November 28 2014.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/10/29/pentagon-warns-employees-about-islamic-state-threats/18130549/>

*A news article informing on recent Islamic State threats towards the United States government. While the focus of this investigation was not the Islamic State, it was necessary to document its recent significance in the development of the Syrian civil war, and its subsequent impact on Syrian refugees living in Lebanon.*

Stansfield, Gareth. "The Islamic State, the Kurdistan Region and the Future of Iraq: Assessing UK Policy Options." *International Affairs* 90, no.6 (Oct. 2014): 1329-1350.

*This article examines the Islamic State and the scale of its potential threat on a global scale. It further examines Western policy options, from the perspective of the United Kingdom, in combatting any necessary threat from the Islamic State.*

Surk, Barbara. "Syrian Army Launches Assault on Northern Village That Was Site of Alleged Chemical Attack." *The Canadian Press* July 31 2013, accessed November 29 2014, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?sid=3100adca-2843-46df-81b7f340f1f09976%40sessionmgr4001&vid=1&hid=4102&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLGNvb2tpZSxmwsY3BpZCxlYWQmY3VzdGlkPXM4ODYzMTM3JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmcNvcGU9c2l0ZQ3d%3d>

*This article is on the Syrian army allegedly attacking villages in Syria with various lethal chemicals, despite there being no evidence explicitly pointing to either the army or Syrian rebels having been able to carry out the attack.*

Wight, David M. "Kissinger's Levantine Dilemma: The Ford Administration and the Syrian Occupation of Lebanon." *Diplomatic History* 37, no.1: 144-177.

*This article examines the possibility of whether or not the United States lured Hafez al-Assad into occupying Lebanon, or whether Assad actually proposed the plan to the West and secretly received support from the US in doing so. Though it makes use of some US government records, it primarily sticks with using more secondary sources in its approach to understanding US policy action upon seeing the occupation as negative.*

Zabaneh, Jumanah, Catherine O'Donnell & Graham Watt. "Evidence-based public health policy and practice: Living and health conditions of Palestinian refugees in an unofficial camp in the



Lebanon: a cross-sectional survey.” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 62, no.2 (2008): 91-97.

*An academic study done to determine the overall health of Palestinian refugees living in an unofficial refugee camp in Lebanon. The study concluded that the refugees were living very unhealthy lives, not least supported by their unhealthy and unsanitary living conditions which they were almost forced to live in. This study was used as a base to understand the terrible living conditions under which Syrians live in Lebanon, and how this would have affected their health during the harsh winter season at the end of the 2014 calendar year.*

Zetter, Roger and Heloi'se Ruaudel. “Development and protection challenges in the Syrian Refugee Crisis.” *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Sept. 2014): 6-10.

*An article documenting the challenges facing Syrians in being displaced from their homes and, for many, their countries as well. Despite the efforts of organizations such as the UNHCR, Zetter and Ruaudel seem to find that the real problem lies in the future of the Syrian civil war, and with the development of the Islamic State, it seems that there will be no end to the conflict any time soon.*