

European Dimensions of the Refugee Crisis | June 2016

Facts on the European Dimension of Displacement and Asylum: LEBANON

Every third person in Lebanon is a refugee. Many are living in poverty and need legal recognition of their status, as well as access to education and health care. The government is paralyzed, civil society active. Europe is providing considerable financial aid, but achieving little politically.

OVERVIEW

Demographic Structure		Economy & Employment	
Population	4.6 million (estimated)	GDP (per capita)	\$54.7 bn (\$12,000) ↗
Growth rate	0.86% (estimated)	GDP growth	2.0% →
Ethnic groups	95% Arabs, otherwise Armenians, Kurds	GNI (PPP) (per capita)	\$79.9 bn (\$17,600) ¹ ↗
Languages	Arabic (official language), French, English, Armenian, Kurdish	Inflation (CPI)	1.1% ↘
18 official religious communities	6 Muslim (incl. Sunni, Shiite, Alawite, Druze) and 12 Christian (incl. Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Protestant, Armenian)	Unemployment	NA
Median age (EU 28)	29.4 years (42.2 years)	Youth unemployment (15-24 years)	NA
		FDI (inflows) Share of EU 28	\$1.4 bn ¹ ↗ NA
		Imports of goods Share of EU 28	\$16.3 bn ↘ 45.3% ↘
		Exports of goods Share of EU 28	\$3.5 bn ↘ 12.6% ↘

(All figures for 2015, except ¹2014; arrows: change from prev. year)

Political System & Relations with the EU

Type of state/government	De jure: republic / parliamentary democracy De facto: paralyzed national government (no president since 2014; parliament has no mandate and rarely meets; transitional government manages status quo; Hezbollah militia is a state within a state), proportional representation of fragmented political groups
Transformation	Compared to 129 developing and transition countries (Bertelsmann Stiftung, Transformation Index 2016): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political transformation: 5.7 out of 10.0, No. 59 out of 129 (“highly defective democracy”), comparable to Mali and Mozambique 2. Economic transformation: 5.79 out of 10.0, No. 64 out of 129 (“market economy with functioning flaws”), comparable to Moldova and Argentina 3. Good governance: 3.90 out of 10.0, No. 97 out of 129 (“weak transformation management”), comparable to Afghanistan and Thailand
Human rights and protection of minorities	Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 – Lebanon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of assembly and expression are generally respected. • Women participate in all aspects of society, but discriminatory provisions remain in personal status, nationality laws and the criminal code. Homosexuality is illegal. • Terrorist suspects and (alleged) supporters of militias fighting in Syria have reported being subjected to torture and lengthy detention. • Syrian refugees have also reported cases of apparently arbitrary raids on their encampments and summary detention of all men present there.
Corruption	Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2015 Country ranking: 123/167 (lower = better), comparable to Kazakhstan and Guatemala
Freedom of the press	2016 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders): Status: partially free / problematic Country ranking: 98 out of 180 (lower = better), comparable to Tunisia and Israel
Relations with the European Union	Previous steps to integration: Association Agreement (since 2006) Status of relations: Lebanon is part of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Through the corresponding financial assistance programs Lebanon will receive up to €160 million between 2014 and 2016. Priority is being given to reforming the justice and security systems and promoting sustainable economic development and transparent administrative practices. Brussels is negotiating a new “mobility partnership” with Beirut within the framework of the new ENP. The European Commission will also be providing some €350 million in humanitarian aid between 2012 and 2016. Lebanon has received a total of €4 billion in support from the EU and individual member states since 2012. The EU is also the main sponsor of UNWRA, the UN agency for assisting Palestinian refugees.

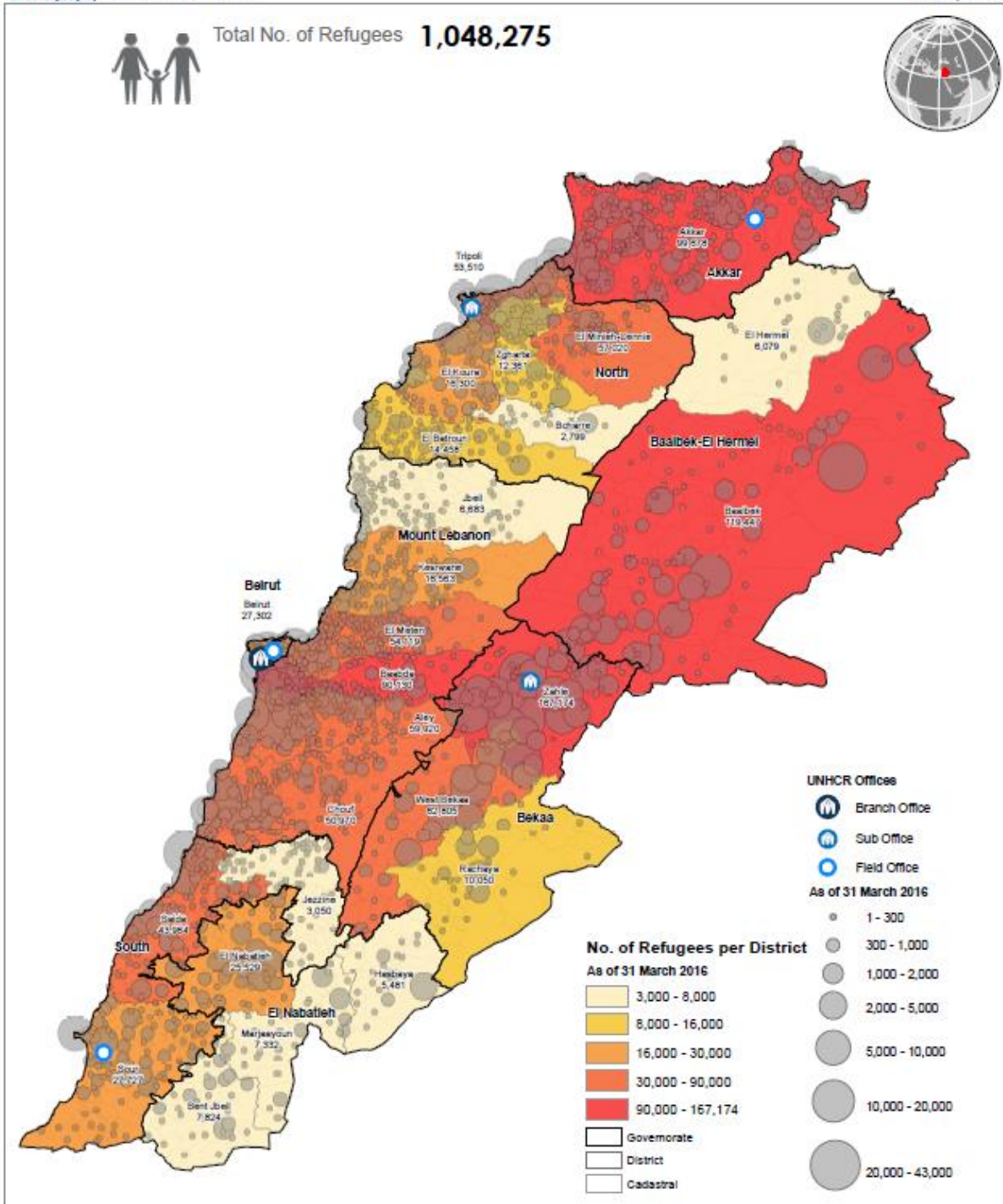
SITUATION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN LEBANON

Category	Source, transit and destination country. Not a party to the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Lebanon has passed no laws regulating asylum, integration or migration.
As country of origin	An estimated 10 million Lebanese live abroad (EU, US/Canada, Brazil, West Africa).
As transit and destination country	Syrian refugees: over 1 million (estimated). By January 2015 UNHCR had registered 1.15 million. Registered Palestinian refugees: 495,000, of whom some 45,000 are from Syria. Registered Iraqi refugees: approx. 30,000. Lebanese who returned from abroad in 2015: approx. 30,000.



SYRIA REFUGEE RESPONSE
LEBANON Syrian Refugees Registered
 31 March 2016

UNHCR Lebanon - Beirut
 Country Office



© UNHCR 2016/Registration – Lebanon – Map of Registered Syrian Refugees by District in Lebanon – March 31, 2016
<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=10697>

<p>Housing for refugees</p>	<p>Since the 1950s Palestinians have lived in 16 isolated camps and poor areas, assisted by the UN (UNWRA) and “administered” by Palestinian organizations (Fatah, Hamas and Salafist groups).</p> <p>The Lebanese government wants to avoid creating refugee camps for Syrians. The result is that many refugees rent plots of land and erect tents, which produces encampments (with between 2,000 and 350,000 refugees) near fields and quarries, at which the Syrians can only work illegally. Others live in garages, warehouses and unfinished homes; some can afford to rent their own apartment. Some 90% of the Syrians live in communities that are among the poorest in Lebanon.</p> <p>Well-to-do Syrians are integrated into Beirut society.</p>
<p>Status of refugees from Syria</p>	<p>The exact number of all registered/non-registered Syrian refugees is unknown. The reasons are the lack of registrations since January 2015, the high fees for residence permits (€175 per year per adult), visa requirements and the fact that the border to Syria is closely monitored.</p> <p>Syrian refugees are not permitted to work. Some 90% of Syrian households are therefore in debt to their landlords (average debt: €800), some 70% of all households are living under the national poverty line and approximately half cannot buy sufficient food without outside assistance.</p> <p>Lebanon’s refugees include 470,000 Syrian children between the ages of 3 and 14. Some 200,000 are already attending school and the other 270,000 are to start this summer (RACE II program). However, there are a number of obstacles, including that many children have to work, girls are forced to marry at a young age, Syrian teachers are not permitted to teach and there are not enough classrooms and insufficient financial assistance.</p> <p>Inadequate health care: For example, the UN covers 75% of hospital costs, but many Syrians cannot afford the remaining 25%.</p> <p>Another important issue for the refugees is reuniting families, either by having relatives from Syria join the family in Lebanon or join relatives already in Europe.</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<p>The EU has increased its financial assistance to Lebanon by 200% since 2012. It is the most important contributor to the United Nations and international aid organizations. Germany is the largest individual contributor.</p> <p>The UN has appealed for some €1.8 billion for its Syria Regional Refugee Response in Lebanon in 2016. Until now 30% of the requested funds have been made available by the international community.</p>

Lebanon and the Syrian refugee crisis

Lebanon is the size of Kosovo. The Levantine country is now beset by the Syrian refugee crisis, regional conflicts, a fragile economy and national governance that is both complicated and weak. The result of this complex situation is stagnation in the status quo.

Lebanon also borders Syria, which has suffered most from the civil war that erupted there in 2011. Lebanon and Syria have traditionally had close relations, and the Syrian army partially occupied Lebanon until 2005 as a result. Roughly speaking, two groups of Syrians live in Lebanon:

Guest workers and entrepreneurs: Since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, well-to-do Syrians have made use of the political and economic freedom found in Lebanon to establish companies and do business. Many Syrians immigrated as traditional foreign workers and are mostly employed in low-wage jobs in construction or agriculture. The situation of these guest workers is relatively unproblematic if they can afford to renew their residence permits and keep their jobs.

Refugees who have fled the conflict in Syria: This group is estimated to number over one million, since neither UNHCR nor the Lebanese authorities have been able to document all the

Syrian refugees residing in the country. The refugees are increasingly being caught up in a vicious circle of illegality and poverty which is driven by several factors:

No legal standing: Lebanon is not a party to the Geneva Convention on Refugees, and it has no national law on refugees or asylum, not to mention an integration or migration policy. Registration has been halted and residence permits are expensive.

Living in tents: Since the Lebanese government is afraid the Syrian refugees could, like the Palestinians, remain permanently, it does not want to designate official camps for Syrians, even though no alternative exists.

Child labor: Adult refugees can be deported to Syria if they do not have a residence permit and are stopped by the police or army at a checkpoint. They therefore have their children work instead, since children are not checked. The result is that Syrian children work for starvation wages in fields, workshops and quarries, instead of going to school.

Expensive health care: Non-registered refugees no longer have access to Lebanon's already over-burdened health-care system. Chronic illnesses go untreated and any services that are provided must be paid for.

High levels of debt: Approximately 90% of all households made up of Syrian refugees owe money to their landlords, on average €800. Some 52% cannot even afford the "survival minimum expenditure basket," i.e. they cannot purchase the equivalent of 2,100 calories for each family member per day.

Growing resentment among social groups: Low incomes, rising rents, the increasing cost of living, unemployment, poverty and high levels of debt are problems also faced by Palestinians and, to a greater extent, the Lebanese themselves. The approximately 25% of the Lebanese population that was already living below the poverty line in 2011 has grown even poorer. In turn, Lebanese property owners and employers ignore the country's minimum-wage law. They also lay off Lebanese employees in order to hire – illegally – Syrian refugees.

The refugee crisis has deepened social divisions in Lebanon.

Problem recognized – great desire to help

Donor countries and aid organizations provide considerable funding to support both the international institutions active in Lebanon and the Lebanese government. The EU and its member states have allocated some €4 billion in assistance to Lebanon since the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis. Funds from abroad are making it possible to continue providing emergency services and are keeping Lebanon's educational and health-care systems running.

Some of the required tasks are being carried out by civil society. Small projects often have a large impact and these efforts should be given ongoing support as a result. Here are two examples from Orientheifer, a German-Lebanese NGO: For €8,000 per month, a mobile field kitchen can serve almost 900 warm meals per day on site to refugees. For €20,000 per month, 800 refugee children can be educated in temporary buildings located directly next to the refugee encampments, making it easy for youngsters to access them.

Since only approximately half of the Syrian refugee children have been going to school up until now, international aid organizations are focusing on ensuring the other 270,000 receive instruction as of the 2016/2017 school year. There are insufficient funds, however, to pay for teachers, classrooms and transport and to cover operating costs. Temporary buildings would be a major help in setting up provisional schools near refugee encampments.

Yet here, at the latest, the refugees' illegal status puts an end to the helpers' good intentions: Many children must work since their parents are not registered or cannot officially be employed. In addition, young girls are forced to get married at an early age since their families need money.

It is essential to convince the Lebanese government that official, affordable residence permits are in the interests of everyone involved. Ultimately, Lebanon's security agencies also need to know who is living in the country. Berlin and Brussels have offered technical assistance

that would make it possible for refugees to use “registration cards” to identify themselves to the authorities. Until now the Lebanese government has only repeated its concern that giving refugees a residence permit would lead to their staying in the country permanently. Since the EU member states are not taking a joint policy stance on the issue, Brussels’ ability to advocate for change is limited. The EU is also in a bind since Lebanese politicians know that Europe sends money regardless so that the refugees remain in Lebanon. Lebanon, however, would prefer that the refugees leave the country as soon as possible.

Precarious stability

Beyond the precarious circumstances faced by the refugees, several additional factors make it difficult to say how the refugee crisis and the situation in Lebanon will develop in the future:

Major shortcomings in governance: Lebanon’s political governance is unique and, at the same time, focused on maintaining the status quo and “muddling through”. A total of 18 official religious communities – 12 Christian and 6 Muslim – share political and economic power according to a predetermined system of proportional representation. These 18 religious communities are reflected in the country’s political parties; their leaders and the leaders’ clans are Lebanon’s true power-holders. Many of them were warlords in Lebanon’s civil war and still call the shots.

This system of proportional representation has both advantages and disadvantages: On the one hand, it ensures that minority groups continue to exist and can influence developments in the country; on the other, it fuels corruption and makes it more difficult to reform the overall political order.

An example that is typical of public life in Lebanon is the garbage scandal of 2015, during which various clans fought over how profits from the garbage collection business were to be distributed. The result was refuse that piled up for months, while people grew ill and forests burned. Only after people took to the streets and civil society organizations also began protesting did the clans come to agreement and allow

garbage to be collected once again. The EU is offering technical assistance and money for building garbage incineration plants. Yet these projects remain filed away since the clans cannot agree how to split the gains from the incineration business. In other words, more of the same.

There is, however, some cause for hope: The protests by civil society gave rise to a local-level political movement called Beirut Madinati (Beirut, My City). It won 37% of the vote in the capital during the recent municipal elections, the first time it participated, although it will not hold power since according to the local system the winner takes all seats.

In addition, local-level politicians are getting involved in many Lebanese communities in order to jointly address the problems faced by their constituents and the refugees they represent. It would therefore make sense to network at the local level the efforts of the international community, NGOs, public administrators and Lebanon’s national ministries.

Regional powers complicate balancing interests: The 18 political-religious groups are in some cases sponsored by external powers. As a result of the Syrian civil war and the Iranian-Saudi regional power struggle, they have divided into three camps: (1) the pro-Assad, pro-Iranian March 8 Coalition, (2) the anti-Assad, pro-Saudi March 14 Coalition and (3) a so-called “independent” camp. Each bloc holds one-third of the 24 cabinet positions in the “national unity government” under Prime Minister Tammam Salam. Because of ongoing friction, the cabinet rarely meets or makes decisions, and two Christian ministers have now resigned. This will further paralyze the national government’s ability to take action, which is already limited since parliament seldom convenes and the country has been without a president for two years.

Given the state of political paralysis, Beirut is not in a position to respond actively to the refugee crisis and ameliorate, let alone overcome, the conflicts that flare up in the region unexpectedly and often. What is needed is a mediator. As the largest contributor of funds, the European Union could facilitate between the feuding political parties in order to, at a minimum, restore the ability of the country’s main institutions to govern.

Hezbollah, a state within a state: Hezbollah is part of the government and the system of proportional political representation. It is dominant in the Shiite south, where it has considerable support thanks to its social infrastructure. Together with its militia, it is effectively a state within a state. Hezbollah is strengthened militarily and politically in Lebanon as a result of the resources it receives from Iran and the military activities that aid pro-Assad militias. Saudi Arabia is very distrustful of the powerful role Hezbollah – and with it, Iran – plays in Lebanon. Money from Saudi Arabia is critical for stabilizing the real estate market and financial sector and for keeping the Lebanese army supplied with materiel. Saudis are already being warned not to travel to Lebanon – a painful loss to Lebanon’s tourism industry. If Saudi Arabia were to withdraw from other areas it could destabilize the situation even further.

Israel is also concerned about Hezbollah’s burgeoning power in Lebanon and a renewed conflict between Hezbollah and Israel cannot be excluded, nor the ramifications for Lebanon’s overall stability.

Beirut urgently needs détente, especially in the Iranian-Saudi competition for power in Syria and Lebanon. At least Teheran and Riyadh are working together under the auspices of Washington and Moscow in the International Syria Support Group (ISSG). The ISSG could develop into the nucleus for a regional system of security and cooperation. Europe can promote this conflict-management initiative.

The unresolved Palestinian question: There is much frustration, especially among young Palestinians, who lack viable prospects for the future. There is a danger that they could become radicalized. Al Qaeda, ISIS and other Salafist organizations are gaining influence in the camps and poverty-stricken neighborhoods in which Palestinians live. The Lebanese establishment once believed that the Palestinian refugees would at some point return to their homeland or move to other countries, which is why Beirut never promoted their integration and even prevented it. Some 500,000 Palestinians have been registered, many of whom do not live permanently in Lebanon. Since many Lebanese also hold the Palestinians responsible for

Lebanon’s civil war, the Lebanese public tends to have a negative attitude toward refugees in general.

The international community should press for the integration of Palestinians into Lebanese society. The current efforts by France to restart the process of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could help alleviate the situation of the Palestinians living in Lebanon.

Soccer can help reduce social tensions. Sports initiatives that bring together young Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians not only give participants something to occupy their time with, they also help the youngsters get to know each other.

Few tourists, a sputtering economy: In addition to the absent Saudis, there are too few rich tourists from other Arab states in the Gulf region. In addition to the unstable political situation, the economy – whose main sector is the banking industry – has stagnated. Large parts of the economy, moreover, are monopolies run by the various political clans in keeping with the country’s system of proportional representation. This makes it difficult to diversify and stimulate the economy, something that is urgently needed if more jobs are to be created.

Paradoxical stability

Lebanese society has not collapsed completely despite all of these debilitating influences, something that can be ascribed to a number of factors:

Ongoing financial inflows from abroad: Most Lebanese citizens live outside the country. They continue to send money to their relatives at home and visit them at regular intervals. Western nations have also increased their financial assistance by 200% as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis and again classified Lebanon as a recipient of development aid.

Active civil society: The system of proportional representation and the lack of transparency create room for maneuver in keeping with the motto “It’s not permitted, but also not forbidden.” The public has made use of this gray zone to found civil society organizations. Many NGOs

fulfill needs that should ideally be met by government institutions.

Security: Despite sporadic fighting and several attacks, Lebanon's authorities ensure a higher degree of security than is often assumed to be the case.

Fear of civil war: The wounds left by the civil war that took place in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990 are still present in everyday life and in the memories of many Lebanese. During the conflict 90,000 people were killed, and 20,000 are still missing. The abiding memories have led many to fear that Syria's civil war might spill over into Lebanon. The basic attitude is therefore to avoid a civil war by persisting in the status quo, not getting involved in Syria's problems and shielding the country as much as possible.

These factors, however, cannot guarantee that the situation in Lebanon will not deteriorate tomorrow.

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Contact

Christian-P. Hanelt
 Senior Expert for Europe and the Middle East
 Europe's Future Program
 Bertelsmann Stiftung
 Telephone +49 5241 8181187
 Fax +49 5241 81681187
 Christian.Hanelt@bertelsmann-stiftung.de
 www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de