PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON: HARSH PRESENT, UNCERTAIN FUTURE

ROSEMARY SAYIGH

Palestinians in Lebanon form a special case of the marginalization of the refugee issue begun in Madrid and given the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) stamp of approval at Oslo. While the rights of refugee Palestinians everywhere were undermined by the Oslo Accord, those in Lebanon suffer from uncertainty about the future to a degree unparalleled elsewhere.

Originating not in Gaza or the West Bank but in Galilee and the coastal cities that fell to Israel in 1948, the Palestinians of Lebanon stand virtually no chance of returning either to their places of origin or to the areas that will come under Palestinian control. At the same time, opposition to their settlement in Lebanon is one of the few issues that unites the Lebanese government and public opinion across most of the sectarian communities. As international diplomacy to dissolve the refugee question gears up, the unlikelihood that Lebanon will be able to withstand pressures toward *tawtin* (or "implantation," the term used for the permanent settlement of the refugees outside Palestine) spells trouble for its refugee community.

One cannot understand the current situation of Palestinians in Lebanon without first setting it within the international and regional polit-

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Rosemary Sayigh, who worked with Palestinian women in the camps of Lebanon on an oral history project from 1983 to 1993, is the author of *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* and *Too Many Enemies*.

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ical frameworks that act on them both directly and indirectly, through official Lebanese policies and unofficial attitudes. International, regional, and Lebanese factors interact to produce a continually deteriorating situation for the Palestinian community, especially its poorest and most vulnerable segment.

The Politics of International Aid

Since Oslo, the skewing of international aid toward the occupied territories (primarily Gaza) and away from the external refugees has become the clearest indicator of an international consensus to reach a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on a dissolution of the "refugee problem." The first step in this direction was achieved at the Madrid Conference of 1991, when James Baker's "two-track" formula hived off the refugees to a multilateral committee, thus weakening the historic legacy of the UN resolutions on refugees, and split them among bilateral Israeli-host country negotiations. Soon after Madrid, Israel succeeded in putting the refugees on the agenda of its negotiations with Jordan. It was from this time that United Nation Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and PLO aid to refugees in Lebanon began to decline.

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As the primary source of aid to the refugees, UNRWA offers a clear view of the aid bias in the comparative allocations among its fields of operation since Madrid. In 1992-93, for example, Lebanon received 11.8 percent of UNRWA expenditures, compared to 31.8 percent for Gaza and 22.4 percent for the West Bank. Adjusted to population size, these sums translate into per capita distributions of $298 for Gaza, $264 for the West Bank, and $204 for Lebanon. The budget for 1994-95 shows a similar pattern, with Gaza gaining an even higher share ($405 per capita versus $254 for Lebanon). These gaps are more dramatic considering that only in Lebanon are the refugees excluded from public services as well as from most kinds of employment.[1]

The bias in aid allocation is even clearer in UNRWA's special budgets. The Peace Implementation Program (PIP) established soon after Oslo has received donor pledges totalling $76 million for projects in Gaza, $46 million for the West Bank, and $10 million for Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon combined.[2] The other two special budgets are the Extraordinary Measures for Lebanon and the Occupied Territories (EMLOT), where aid to Gaza in 1993-94 was seven times that of Lebanon, and the Expanded Program of Assistance (EPA), where aid to Gaza was sixty-five times greater. Though the high level of Palestinian unemployment in Lebanon calls for income generation projects, the Lebanon

field received $279,000 in loans in 1993-94, compared with over $3 million for Gaza and over $1 million for the West Bank. The same trend also shows up in crucial services expenditures, with proportionally less spent on health, schools, and educational subsidies in Lebanon than in Gaza and the West Bank.[3] It is noteworthy that Syria, with fewer refugees, has more UNRWA schools (109 to 77) and more children in school (60,263 to 33,647) than Lebanon.[4]

A pattern of distribution reflecting the same international politics emerges from the activities of the Refugee Working Group (RWG), formed from the Multilateral Refugee Committee and inaugurated in Ottawa in May 1992. With its primary mission to "make an immediate contribution to the amelioration of (refugee) human needs," the RWG had almost a hundred projects completed or underway by December 1994.[5] Although financial allocation cannot be read from the distribution of projects, it is revealing that aside from thirty-six non-region-specific projects that may benefit all refugees equally, twenty-three projects were approved for Gaza and the West Bank, seventeen for Jordan, nine for Syria, and eight for Lebanon, of which the most important (emergency housing) has been suspended. Reporting at the Casablanca Economic Summit in November 1994, RWG Chairman Marc Perron noted that $80 million had been raised for RWG projects in Gaza and the West Bank, as against $10 million for projects in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

Constraints on the flow of UNRWA and RWG aid are more serious because help from other sources has declined since 1992. The PLO drastically cut its expenditures in Lebanon in the wake of the Gulf War. UNICEF used to fund public health and educational projects in the camps, but the emergency budget from which it did so was cut in 1992, a headquarters decision to which Lebanese official pressures may have contributed. International support from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to local NGOs began to fall off in 1992.

Despite the reduction in UNWRA services since 1990, the dissolution of the agency, implicit in the Oslo Accord, would be a severe blow to the refugee population, especially the poorest stratum. UNRWA's value lies in the broad range of functions it normally serves: relief, social services, housing, hygiene, and infrastructural services in camps, employment, and a measure of protection. True, its existence is used to justify the exclusion of Palestinians from many other aid programs, yet its aura as a UN agency has set limits to the attacks that have punctuated Palestinian history in Lebanon.

Fears for UNRWA's future are deepened by the policies of its largest donor, the United States. Although UNRWA's emergency meeting in Amman in March 1995 ended in supporting the agency's continuation for at least five years, the Beirut press reported opposition from the United States and Britain. Interviewed in Amman, Undersecretary of

State Phyllis Oakley denied U.S. intentions to cut UNRWA but added, "The U.S. wants to discuss the causes of the deficit in UNRWA's budget."[6] The inevitability of Republican overseas spending cuts heightens the uncertainty. The view in Lebanon is that the overall U.S. aim is to make the "refugee problem" disappear, first through dismantling its legal and institutional supports, and second through regional economic development expected to disperse and absorb refugee labor. U.S. missions to Iraq and Syria have been reported, with proposals for projects to resettle Palestinians from Lebanon as well as from Jordan and Gaza.

The Regional Framework

Though Israel and Syria are the most powerful regional actors where Lebanon and Lebanon's Palestinians are concerned, other regional actors, especially Jordan, also play a role. Since Oslo, the Palestinian Authority (PA) needs to be counted within the regional framework, both in its direct relations (or lack thereof) with Palestinians in Lebanon and in its eventual negotiations with Israel on the fate of the refugees.

Israel's opposition to any return of the 1948 refugees is certain, written into law by Knesset vote and reasserted in every forum and by all political tendencies. Israel's readiness to allow a small number of "displaced persons" (refugees from the 1967 war) to return would hardly affect Palestinians in Lebanon, most of whom are 1948 refugees. Nor would the RWG's family reunification scheme have much impact, since relatives of "Lebanese" Palestinians are located mainly in Israel, not Gaza or Jericho.

As for Syria, where Palestinian national politics remains a primary concern, the community in Lebanon does not appear to be a key factor. Certainly in a period of stalemate in Syrian-Israeli negotiations, Palestinian hostility to Israeli/American hegemony is a card in Syria's hands, but not one to be activated at the expense of instability in Lebanon. An incontestable Syrian aim has been to exclude "Arafatism" from the camps, a task greatly facilitated by Oslo. Though some Palestinians hoped that Damascus would use its influence to have the Lebanese extend to its refugees the rights they enjoy in Syria, there has been little to encourage this optimism. However, Syrian opposition to *tawtin* may be deduced from its recent refusal to meet RWG missions and its opposition to the rehabilitation of camps; it is likely that, in a final settlement, Syria would refuse the naturalization of refugees both in Lebanon and in Syria. While Syrian interests and influence in Lebanon are indisputable, policies toward particular parties or on specific issues remain hard to detect.

Jordan puts pressure on Lebanon primarily as a model of refugee policy that has received international (particularly U.S.) approval. From the beginning Jordan gave citizenship to its Palestinians. More recently,

by writing them into its negotiations and peace treaty with Israel, it reinforced bilateral channels as the mode of solution. Jordan also has integrated low-income refugees fully into its public services, laying the ground for a transfer of UNRWA's functions to the government. Egypt recently adopted the same route, announcing its intention to naturalize its 90,000 Palestinians. Jordan and Egypt's presence in the Quadripartite Committee[7] adds regional to international pressures on Lebanon to follow suit. Only Syria—perhaps temporarily—blocks the way.

The PA's policy toward the Palestinians in Lebanon appears mainly as one of absence. The decline of PLO interest in the area first became obvious in July 1991, when no clear orders were given to defend resistance bases near 'Ayn al-Hilwa as the Lebanese army moved to disarm all unofficial militias at the end of the civil war. Subsequently the PLO reduced all forms of aid: pensions, free services, scholarships, jobs. At UNRWA's emergency meeting in Amman last March, PA delegate Nabil Shaath stated emphatically that Palestinians in Lebanon were not the PA's responsibility but UNRWA's.[8] Yet Arafat still retains a following in the south and is believed to be interested in strengthening his police force with recruits from Lebanon.

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The diaspora hopes that the PA would make some move to affirm its representation of all Palestinians, for example by issuing passports, have not been fulfilled so far. The Palestinian delegation to RWG meetings continues to insist on the right of the refugees to return, but no one in Lebanon believes that the refugee issue is a priority for the PA, or that its negotiating position vis-à-vis Israel will have improved by the time that discussion of "final status" issues begins. Indeed, a recent survey suggested that most "Lebanese" Palestinians do not believe that the PA will even achieve its hoped-for transformation into a state.[9] From a local perspective, the PA is almost irrelevant, a leadership in abeyance.

Reviewing the regional framework from the perspective of final negotiations on the fate of the refugees, due to begin in 1996, past experience suggests that Lebanon can expect little Arab solidarity in the face of Israeli and international pressures for *tawtin*. Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia will probably urge compromise; indeed, Saudi Arabia is expected to foot at least part of the cost of refugee compensation and resettlement. Only Syria and possibly Iran seem likely to support Lebanese and Palestinian arguments against resettlement. If the logic of power imposes *tawtin* in Lebanon, and if other Arab countries remain closed to "Lebanese" Palestinians as workers or immigrants, hostility to a national minority viewed by important sectors of the Lebanese polity and society as "troublemakers" is likely to be exacerbated.

The Post-Oslo Lebanese Setting

The period between the November 1989 signing of the Ta'if agreement ending the Lebanese civil war and the conclusion of a probable Middle East peace settlement is a transitional one in Lebanon, characterized politically by the gradual reestablishment of the authority of state and army, close relations with Syria, rapid, chaotic reconstruction, bids for foreign investment and tourism, aggressive competition, and socioeconomic polarization. Palestinians play little part in this "new" Lebanon. Marginalized politically, economically, and socially, they constitute a "sect" without a recognized place in a sectarian system, no longer a vanguard of revolution. Old bases of alliance have gone, but new ones have not yet crystallized. Where Lebanon is concerned, it is important to distinguish policies of the state (which are not necessarily those of the government) from unofficial social attitudes.

Official Policies

There are two main publicly declared policies toward the Palestinians in the wake of Ta'if: reestablishment of state control over the refugee community and refusal of *tawtin*. Both these policies enjoy a broad consensus, both within the government and between the government and mainstream Lebanese political forces. The explosiveness of the issue of *tawtin* was well illustrated by the "Qrayy'a affair" that erupted in August 1994, when government plans to use a Canadian donation to the RWG to buy a large piece of land in Iqlim al-Kharrub on which to settle war-displaced Palestinians roused such a storm of protest that cabinet unity was threatened and the project had to be shelved.

Since Ta'if, the government has moved gradually to reestablish its authority over the Palestinians, beginning with arms limitation[10] and the confining of resistance operations to the zone dominated by Hizballah. Syrian backing for these moves has ensured their effectiveness, just as it has offered a certain minimum protection. Palestinian fears of a restoration of army control along pre-1969 lines have not so far materialized.[11] The camps continue to enjoy a limited autonomy: The army remains outside, and camp popular committees still run day-to-day affairs.

But reassertion of the state makes itself felt in numerous domains where refugee ID card holders had gained some respite from legal constraints during the war years. Since the summer of 1994, the police have been closing unlicensed clinics, laboratories, and pharmacies, first outside and then inside the camps: only members of Lebanese professional syndicates can obtain licenses. Another recent sign of the extension of government control is the Ministry of Education's request for complete annual lists of UNRWA school students.

The issue of *tawtin* acquired new prominence with the signing of the Oslo Accord, which increased the likelihood that permanent settlement

would be implemented. Official rejection of *tawtin* is buttressed by two linked arguments, one confessional, the other constitutional. When Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz proposed in April 1994 that all Palestinians should eventually be removed from Lebanon, he evoked Lebanon's "delicate sectarian equilibrium."[12] The constitutional argument is based on the exclusion of Palestinian *tawtin* written into the Ta'if Accords and subsequently enshrined in the postwar constitution.

It is in the name of opposition to *tawtin*—and so as not to arouse anti-Palestinian sectors—that the Lebanese government continues to ignore appeals to extend civic rights to the refugees. The Palestinians had called for the autonomy of the camps, the reopening of the PLO office, and above all civic rights in the official PLO-Lebanese talks that opened in 1991 as part of post-Ta'if "normalization," but these talks were suspended after Madrid, pending a final regional settlement. Stagnation on the civic rights issue is maintained by Syrian opposition to any disruption of the status quo.

In addition to the two openly declared official policies discussed above, a third, undeclared policy may be inferred: encouraging Palestinian emigration through the intensification of various pressures. The policy probably inheres in sections of the state apparatus, though not in the government itself, where differences between individual leaders certainly exist. The most serious of these pressures are:

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1. *Constraints on space and shelter*: Overcrowding in the camps has been exacerbated by war-related destruction over the past twenty years and a large-scale government eviction policy, begun in summer 1994, targeting the unauthorized Palestinian settlements that have grown up to house the war displaced. The housing crisis has been further intensified by a series of official vetoes: against the rebuilding of the camps destroyed by war; against the establishment of new camps; against building on empty land on the edges of camps; and, most recently, against UNRWA reconstruction inside the camps.[13] The veto on rehousing has further discouraged the UNRWA from carrying out a planned program of repairs to homes, sewage, drinking water, and electricity facilities. Meanwhile, while threats of demolition hang over the three Beirut camps, the eviction policy begun in July 1994—which so far has involved some 6,000 war-displaced families—continues. Although evicted families have been compensated, the amounts are insufficient to buy alternative accommodation. Thus, in a contradiction that has distorted Lebanese-Palestinian relations from the beginning, structurally imposed poverty forces refugee ID card holders back into

the camps, even while the camps embody the Palestinian presence in a way that arouses Lebanese fears and hostility.

2. *Refusal of civic rights*: Lebanon as "host" country always has been characterized by the absence of a legal code regulating refugee rights and obligations, the absence of rights except those of residence as refugees, regulation through ad hoc decrees, lack of legal protection against preventive detention, and obstacles to receiving necessary documents. Palestinian access to public secondary schools is restricted. They cannot enter government hospitals and do not benefit from social security.

The greatest hardship is the lack of the civic right to employment. Basic Lebanese labor law says that non-Lebanese must obtain work permits for all regular (i.e., continuous or contractual) jobs. Depending on the politics of the particular government and minister of labor, this law is more or less harshly applied with regard to Palestinians.[14] Few work permits are issued to refugees: in 1994, there were only 100. A second basic law prohibits certain kinds of jobs—state, municipal, transport, large foreign companies—to non-Lebanese. Ministers of labor have at different times extended this list to include most skilled and even semi-skilled jobs. A third law restricts the practice of most professions—medicine, engineering, pharmacy, law—to members of syndicates who have to be Lebanese. As noted earlier, the state for the past year has been preventing refugee ID card holders from practicing professions outside the camps.

3. *Obstacles to travel*: Although the Lebanese government issues travel documents to registered refugees, these can be difficult to obtain. Their renewal outside may be refused or delayed, effectively preventing return to Lebanon.

4. *Reducing the numbers of those with residence rights*: Recently the Department of General Security began to remove Palestinians who have obtained second passports from the list of those with residence rights in Lebanon. Around 25,000 people are said to have been "crossed off" so far. Sources in the Directorate of Palestinian Refugee Affairs, a section within the interior ministry, say the number is much lower and that the practice has stopped. Palestinian sources maintain that it continues, however, and that the head of General Security insists that such cancellations are within his powers.

Unofficial Lebanese Attitudes

Anti-Palestinian feeling has increased since the Oslo Accord. Among rightist and sectarian Lebanese, this is because permanent refugee settlement in Lebanon now appears more likely; among supporters of the resistance, it is because the PLO is blamed for breaking Arab ranks. A journalist recently characterized Lebanese attitudes to the Palestinians

as ranging between two poles: indifference at one end and negativism at the other, with negativism varying between active hostility and passive dislike.[15] Decline in political support for the Palestinians is partly a product of the post-1982 fragmentation and decline of the "national progressive movement."

A survey of Lebanese attitudes toward *tawtin* carried out in the aftermath of Madrid[16] had significant findings, though it did not probe motivations, which clearly differ from sect to sect. Overall, 75 percent of the sample opposed *tawtin* (Maronites: 87 percent; Shi'ites: 78 percent; Catholics: 78 percent; Orthodox: 78 percent; Druze: 71 percent; and Sunni: 63 percent). Slightly more than a third expected *tawtin* to be imposed, about three quarters believed it would be politically or economically damaging for Lebanon, and some 40 percent favored military resistance to its implementation.

Concerning the two sectarian communities that have at different times resorted to violence against the Palestinians—the Maronites and the Shi'ites—some softening of anti-Palestinianism has been discernible among the Maronites with the growth of hostility between President Hafiz al-Asad and Chairman Arafat. Confronted by a more powerful force—Syria—part of political Maronitism has come to view the Palestinians as the lesser evil. Yet mainstream Maronite leaders still exaggerate the size of the Palestinian community and still use the question of Palestinian settlement to brandish the specter of partition,[17] and most ordinary Maronites still blame the Palestinians for the civil war. Dissident mainstream Maronite voices nonetheless exist, prominent among them Nassib Lahoud, deputy for Metn and a potential presidential candidate.[18]

The Shi'ites, meanwhile, are less concerned than the Maronites about preserving the Lebanese sectarian system, but they are equally anxious to maintain the stability of the Lebanese state now that they have acquired stakes in it. An essential difference between political Maronitism and political Shi'ism is based on the fact that the Palestinians tend to be concentrated in areas of Shi'ite demographic preponderance (the south, Beirut's southern suburbs, the Biqa'), whereas few Palestinians remain in the Maronite heartland. While Hizballah allows resistance groups to operate from its zone, it should be noted that mainstream Shi'ism, as represented by Speaker of Parliament Nabih Birri, surely sees the Palestinian presence as a disruptive factor.

It is noteworthy, however, that even pro-Palestinian Lebanese have little close-hand knowledge of the conditions in which the mass of Palestinians live.[19] The commonly held myth that there is no real difference in status between Palestinians and Lebanese—that "Each community has its rich, its middle class and its poor"—ignores such factors as constraints on Palestinian employment, absence of social security, and so on. It also ignores factors linked to social structure: While it is true,

for example, that a Palestinian wealthy class exists, its size has been sharply reduced through migration; and the extent and degree of destitution among Palestinians is absolutely unlike that of the Lebanese poor, or even of other expatriate workers.

The View from 'Ayn al-Hilwa

More than 50 percent of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in camps, a higher proportion than in other "host" countries.[20] The number of official camps, originally seventeen, today stands at twelve,[21] their very diminution a sign of Lebanese intentions to phase them out. No longer sites of armed struggle ideology or capabilities, controlled by Lebanese or Syrian army checkpoints, once more ghettoized by poverty and threatened by demolition, the camps still retain their Palestinian ethos and a sliver of the pre-1982 autonomy embodied in the popular committees.[22]

'Ayn al-Hilwa, the largest of the camps[23] and located just outside Sidon, is a good place to take the measure of refugee life in Lebanon today. Grandiloquently described as "the capital of diaspora Palestinians"—a description that overstates its fragile political independence—'Ayn al-Hilwa is in reality a microcosm of refugee misery, a showcase for the effects of displacement, homelessness, overcrowding, un- or underemployment, and the inadequacy of aid—facts of refugee existence that combine to produce poverty, intracommunity violence, loss of solidarity, family breakup, stress, and sickness. Only the neatly dressed schoolchildren that line the streets at midday sustain morale.

Plagued in the early 1990s by political gang-warfare (intra-Fatah and Fatah-Abu Nidal), 'Ayn al-Hilwa today is relatively quiet. But the six-hour battle of November 1994, when Fatah loyalists attacked Fatah dissident bases, was a disquieting reminder of the ever-present possibility of factional fighting. If it does not happen now, people say, it is only because no external force has a present interest in stirring up trouble. Extraterritoriality has its negative side: After the November flare-up, Interior Minister Michel Murr went on television to say that he wouldn't risk one Lebanese soldier's life to stop the fighting in 'Ayn al-Hilwa.

Homelessness

War and government evictions have swollen 'Ayn al-Hilwa's population. Palestinians began moving there from the south before 1982, and pressures on space increased with each round of fighting, for example, the sieges of the Beirut camps and Rashidiyya by Amal between 1985 and 1987. When a shantytown called Siqqa with some 720 Palestinian squatter families on the outskirts of the camp was bulldozed in the summer of 1994, many people moved into Barraksat, an old settlement area on the northeastern edge of the camp. Now Barraksat is also threatened with demolition.

The government eviction campaign combined with constraints on camp space has created a private building boom in urban camps like 'Ayn al-Hilwa and Shatila, making handsome profits for some, debt for others. Because of space scarcity, prices are high: from $10,000 to $15,000 for a small apartment. The compensation payment to the evicted does not cover amounts like this. Rented rooms are hard to find, and tenancy is insecure. Indemnities, then, have not solved the problem of homelessness. Struck off UNRWA's list of war displaced, the evicted families are not visibly "on the streets" but scattered in a variety of precarious habitats.

Khadija's story is a paradigm. A social worker in her early twenties, she has not lived in any home more than two or three years. Her family has had to move ten times since they left Palestine in 1948, and are now lodged in a shack that goes with her father's job as plantation guard. Once they were able to buy a home on state land near Tyre but it was badly damaged during the invasion of 1982. They rebuilt it after her father was released from Israel's Ansar prison in the south, but the Amal militia forced them to leave during the siege of Rashidiyya in 1986. Her father sold their home to buy passports to emigrate but "no country would take us because my father has no profession."

Years of warfare have left an unknown number of female-headed households. Formerly supported by pensions, free services, and job priority in PLO institutions, widows now form part of the large "hardship case" stratum of camp society, their children's futures blighted. Umm Khalid is from Nabatiyya camp (destroyed by an Israeli air raid in 1974). Her husband died three years ago. Last summer she was evicted from Siqqa. Friends have loaned her a room in the camp but she does not know when they will want it back. She works when she can—some days they need her at the local NGO where we meet, sometimes not. She has seven children between the ages of three and fourteen.

There would be outright starvation were it not for "the institutions"—that carapace formed by UNRWA, the local NGOs, and the Islamic groups. None of them gives much, but together they form a safety net that makes survival possible. Several people confirm that the Islamic institutions do not give more than LL100,000 per family per month (about $60). UNRWA aid to "special hardship cases" is not in money but in kind, though some may benefit from small business loans. Local NGOs help out with fee reduction, clothing, collections for emergencies, and networking.

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Fatin, a soft-voiced eleven-year-old in the Terre des Hommes Center for children at risk, says that her mother is in the hospital with severe burns. Her father died when she was five. She has three sisters and one

brother. Later a social worker tells me that Fatin's mother tried to commit suicide. She has no document to prove her purchase of a room in the camp, but a more serious blow was the discovery of her son's involvement in a male prostitution racket.

Children like Fatin from war-displaced families find it hard to study. The center recuperates them from the streets, feeds them, gives them special classes. Fatin was dropped from UNRWA school because she failed exams two years in a row. Now she will probably be taken back next autumn.

Even in Barraksat, there are variations in socioeconomic status. Umm Ahmad, widowed by the 1982 invasion and living with her parents, says that for her the hardest thing is not being able to buy her sons things they see the neighbor children having. This is the big difference between today's poverty and that of the early refugee years. Then, there was a real equality to the destitution. Today, there is a social pyramid that little holds together.

The Health Crisis

Even more dramatic than housing insecurity is the health care crisis. UNRWA's subsidies for hospital treatment now cover two thirds of the cost of a hospital bed only—not doctor's fees, tests, or treatment. With the most simple operations costing $1,000-2,000 and heart surgery, for instance, in the $8,000 range, low-income Palestinians who need surgery have to beg or die. Chronic cases that require continual treatment or tests—those with kidney disease, thalassemia, leukemia, or epilepsy for example—have nowhere to turn.

The PLO Red Crescent's eight hospitals are barely functional and are starved of equipment, medicines, and salaries. A medical administrator says that the Red Crescent's hospital in Cairo has three kidney dialysis machines for a Palestinian community not exceeding 90,000. In Lebanon, with a Palestinian population of about 350,000, there are none.

An increasing number of young children are being hit by serious sicknesses, due doubtless to poverty, lower nutritional levels, poor habitat and drinking water, and accumulated war stress. Umm Nizar, head of the Ghassan Kanafani kindergarten, tells of cases there: a five-year-old girl whose eyesight suddenly failed, a four-year-old girl who has had to have a kidney removed, a boy with a water bubble on his head, another who needs a complicated ear operation. All of the families served by this school are poor; many are war displaced. The father of the little girl with kidney failure sells vegetables from a barrow and has seven other children; the surgeon wants $800 for the operation. And this is just one school.

Iman Shamiyya, aged eleven, was diagnosed early in 1994 as having leukemia. Her story, told by her mother, Umm Nadir, illustrates the tenacity needed to cope with the absence of health services for Palestini-

ans. The costs of the blood transfusions, tests, and chemotherapy Iman needed rapidly mounted into thousands of dollars. Umm Nadir sold all her furniture, borrowed, and approached an extraordinary number of social associations, public benefactors, ministers, even UNIFIL. Doctors advised that Iman needed a marrow graft to live that could not be performed in Lebanon. In late summer, the Malaysian government offered the operation gratis, but several more months went by before Iman's mother could raise the money for the journey. Though UNRWA could cover only a fraction of the cost of Iman's care, most of the Lebanese charities Umm Nadir approached for help turned her away with the words, "You have UNRWA."

The Palestinian health care crisis affects everyone, but certain sectors—children, mothers, old people, the handicapped—suffer in a special way. Energy and connections are needed to gain access to sources of aid: Old people with chronic sicknesses and without family cannot manage; the mentally handicapped are pushed to the back of the queue. The health crisis is a deeply emotive issue that brings out mass protests such as the one that met UN Commissioner-General Ilter Türkmen when he visited 'Ayn al-Hilwa recently. Only the stopping of PLO subsidies to martyrs' families generated such large demonstrations.

The Education Crisis

Although the problem is less visible, the education of Palestinians in Lebanon is in jeopardy, threatened by changes set in motion by Madrid and Oslo. On the purely scholastic level, there is evidence that a smaller proportion of children in each age group are in school and a recent survey suggests a rising Palestinian illiteracy rate in Lebanon, alone among host countries.[24] There is also the problem of decline in school achievement brought about by war. This cannot be reversed without major improvements to installations, syllabus development, and teacher training. With the end of PLO and UNRWA scholarships, few children continue into secondary school and university.

More radically, however, the aim of the UNRWA educational system as originally devised is undermined by a labor market that excludes skilled Palestinians. Parents who wore themselves out so that their children would get beyond them occupationally are being forced to a bitter reappraisal. Meanwhile, there are vocational and technical (V/T) courses (but no guaranteed market) offered by Sibline, UNRWA's V/T training institute, which can take only six hundred full-time students a year; local NGOs provide varied types of training to a few hundred part timers. But this hardly constitutes a solution to the massive un- and underemployment that faces the whole community.

Unemployment

If by "employment" is meant salaried, contract-regulated work (with notice, pension, and accident insurance), the figure of 90 percent un-

employment given by one researcher is justified, since few but UNRWA employees enjoy this situation. Even though the construction boom under Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri has slightly improved job opportunities, only those with qualifications and connections benefit, and there is increasing competition from Syrian workers. Wage and salary levels for Palestinians are below the official Lebanese minimum. Large camps like 'Ayn al-Hilwa offer many sources of livelihood—commerce, building, vehicle maintenance, social institutions. Unsustained by outside sources, however, the income generated is low. Apart from a few big wholesalers, most camp traders operate on just enough capital to rent a small shop or barrow. Often stock is bought on credit.

Women find jobs more easily than men: They form the backbone of local NGO staff and are more likely to be hired by Lebanese. Those with certificates are taken by schools, companies, and shops, usually at less than minimum wage; "unskilled" women work as cleaners. Many working women are widows or married to men with war injuries.

As the Lebanese state reasserts itself, 'Ayn al-Hilwa has become the last haven of professionals—doctors and engineers—who are legally barred from practicing their trades because of their refugee status. No one doubts that soon the authorities will move in to stop even this, as they have done already in the Beirut camps. Job insecurity has been especially painful for Palestinians forced to leave Kuwait during the Gulf crisis. Sidon has many of these. A friend tells me, "Most who returned were already in their forties and fifties, mature people with families. How could they find jobs here?" A relative of her husband's is in this category, a middle-aged family man, who works as a grocery assistant for $120 a month.

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The Migration Squeeze

Since Ta'if, most countries that gave political asylum to Palestinians from Lebanon during the fighting have stopped doing so. Oslo closed doors further: An unknown number who were waiting for residence permits in Germany and Scandinavia have been repatriated to Lebanon. Countries like Canada and Australia require bank guarantees and professional qualifications. The Gulf has been closed to Palestinian workers from Lebanon for several years. Now Libya, until recently the only country that still welcomed "Lebanese" Palestinian workers, has begun expelling them. Lebanese authorities have stated that even those Palestinians who can prove their residency rights and have their papers in order must have entry visas to return to Lebanon. It is this closure of receiving areas that makes Lebanese migration pressures ineffectual as well as inhumane.

Khadija's younger brother's story is a poignant illustration of the vicelike pressures in which Palestinians are caught. Though he had a job, his family put pressure on him to emigrate because he is an only son and they feared for his future. Because of the extreme difficulties of obtaining a visa, he changed the photograph on a cousin's passport that already had a visa. Detected at the airport, he was arrested. Released after his family posted a $600 bail, he faces the possibility of a trial and a three-year prison sentence.

Many stories testify to the hazards of the airport for Palestinians, whether leaving or entering. Palestinians working abroad who return in summer on family visits are subjected to a control that verges on harassment. Many young men have been imprisoned upon returning to Lebanon after having failed to gain entry elsewhere.

Conditions in 'Ayn al-Hilwa point to Lebanese policies apparently designed to induce Palestinian emigration. Yet in the absence of receiver countries, these policies have brought despair, social breakdown, criminality. Many social problems hardly known in the camps before—theft, drugs, prostitution—have appeared. Always latent in the Lebanese state apparatus, the representation of the camps as "seedbeds of criminality" is only a short step away. Two recent indications are the sentencing in June of two 'Ayn al-Hilwa youths to life imprisonment for burning an effigy of the Virgin Mary and accusations against 'Ayn al-Hilwa people made by the minister of interior for starting the July demonstrations in Sidon against the cost of living.

Conclusion

The "special case" status of the Palestinians in Lebanon is shaped not only by the factors reviewed here—the skewing of international funds away from the "outside" refugees, decline in aid, Israeli refusal of return or indemnification, and Lebanese refusal of civic rights. Rather, it is the result of the concentration of these factors in a polity characterized both by internal stresses and by weakness vis-à-vis international and regional pressures. The future of Lebanon's Palestinians will have critical repercussions, first because it will be decided through negotiations in which Lebanese and Palestinian opposition to *tawtin* will carry little weight against more powerful pressures toward settlement, and second because settlement, by being "final," is likely to arouse animosities that lie dormant in the present waiting phase.

While Lebanon's case that the Palestinian presence endangers its stability and integrity is comprehended in Western circles, the problems of Palestinian refugees forced to live in Lebanon has been less well understood, arousing concern only at moments of heightened insecurity such as the Sabra and Shatila massacres. The particularities of their situation have been either lost in the larger "Palestinian problem" or

eclipsed by "Lebanist" sympathies. It should be kept in mind that underlying structural and ideological tensions may well explode should a "final settlement" be imposed on Lebanon that ignores local specificities. The fact that 40 percent of the Lebanese queried in the Khashan survey cited above believe that *tawtin* (which most saw as inevitable) should be resisted militarily has disturbing implications, especially since anger is usually vented against the weak rather than the strong.

Historically in the forefront of the post-1948 national movement, Palestinians in Lebanon today have not lost sight of national issues despite their marginalization by the Oslo Accord. Events in Gaza/Jericho and the progress of Israeli-PA and Israeli-Syrian negotiations still receive primordial attention, since they will determine the future of the national cause and, eventually, the future of the refugees. At the same time, Palestinians in Lebanon have preoccupations not shared by compatriots elsewhere. These include the daily life problems arising from lack of housing, lack of jobs, decline in aid, and environmental deterioration. More serious is the pervasive anxiety caused by uncertainty about the future and the "campaigns of hatred" that erupt whenever the question of Palestinian naturalization or *tawtin* arises.

While anxiety combined with poverty undoubtedly presses some people toward individual solutions (for example, naturalization[25]), it also creates a "crisis consciousness" that forms powerful pressures on community leaders to produce collective solutions. "We have to take new kinds of action based on local as well as national issues," says a local resistance cadre. "Our first priority is to preserve our national identity. Our second must be to establish the relations and institutions of civil society. This means a complete change of mentality." Lebanese politics create the danger of anti-Palestinian violence, but also, conceivably, a space where such changes could take place.

NOTES

1. For Lebanese law, see Suhayl Natour, "The Legal Status of the Palestinians in Lebanon," mimeo., 1991. For recent refugee distribution figures, see "Report of the Commissioner General of UNRWA to the UN General Assembly, 1993-1994," p. 51. The expenditure calculations were made by Yusif A. Sayigh in a report for the Welfare Association, Geneva, April 1995, based on UNRWA budgets for 1992-93 and 1994-95.
2. "Report of the Commissioner General," p. 19.
3. According to the UNRWA Biennium Budget for 1994-95, health allocations for 1994-95 were $16,498,000 for Lebanon compared to $67,010,000 in Gaza; in education they were $35,108,000 for Lebanon compared with $109,480,000 in Gaza. As for university scholarships, 41 went to Lebanon as against 218 to Gaza and 165 to the West Bank. See "Report of the Commissioner General."
4. "Report of the Commissioner General," p. 53.
5. "Refugee Working Group Activity Summary," 15 January 1995.
6. *Al-Hayat*, 4 March 1995.
7. Composed of Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and the PA, the Quadripartite Committee was set up after Oslo to negotiate the fate of the "displaced persons," the term used to specify the 300,000 refugees from the 1967 war, mainly located in Jordan.
8. See *Al-Safir*, 20 April 1995.
9. See Hussein Sha'ban in *Al-Safir*, 2 June 1994.
10. Heavy weapons were removed according to agreements that ended the Battle of the Camps, 1985-87. Lebanese and Syrian army control of entry to the camps has prevented large-scale rearming,

although there have not been searches to eliminate lighter, personal weapons.

11. Before the Cairo accords of 1969 legitimized national struggle and camp autonomy, refugee communities had been closely controlled by Army Intelligence officers stationed inside the camps.

12. See Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz's interview with *Al-Safir*, 18 April 1994, excerpts in *JPS* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1994), pp. 130-32.

13. Thus an UNWRA program initiated in late 1993 to build multistory housing in camps to accommodate Palestinians evicted from the Sahel, Rawsheh, and other areas was "frozen" in early 1994 after a meeting between the prime minister and UNRWA's field director.

14. In early 1993 there was an attempt by Abdallah al-Amin, minister of labor in the first post-Ta'if government, to extend the need for permits to all kinds of work, including construction and self-employment—small shops, crafts, vending, etc.

15. Jihad Zeine, *Al-Safir*, author interview, December 1994.

16. Hilal Khashan, "Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon: Behind the Debate," *Montreal Studies on the Contemporary Arab World*, April 1994. The survey was carried out in November and December 1992, with a structured sample of 986 respondents.

17. In an interview during the "Qrayy'a affair," Michel Eddeh, minister of higher education, gave the total number of Palestinians as 600,000 (probably double the real number), adding, "Lebanon absolutely refuses the implantation of Palestinians on its territory because this risks the partition of the country." *L'Orient/Le Jour*, 1 September 1994.

18. Lahoud reasserts opposition to coercive settlement as an infringement of Lebanese sovereignty and of the Palestinian right to return, and calls for Lebanese and Arab support for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Once a Palestinian state has been established, Palestinians in Lebanon could be given a passport and treated like other foreign nationals. See Nassib Lahoud in *Al-Safir*'s supplement of February 1995. For an earlier report on Lahoud's position, see *Lebanon Report*, October 1993, p. 5. For similar constructive proposals, see Nawaf Salam, "Between Repatriation and Resettlement: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *JPS* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1994), pp. 18-27.

19. The above-cited Khashan survey showed that more than half of the interviewees had no contact with Palestinians, and even among the Sunnis, where the rate of contact was higher than for other sects, only 42 percent reported having Palestinian friends.

20. This does not include the unofficial agglomerations, where conditions are often worse than in camps. In 1992-93, there were 328,176 registered refugees in Lebanon. "Report of the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1992-30 June 1994," p. 50.

21. Five camps have been destroyed: Nabatiyya, by an Israeli air raid in 1974; Tal al-Zatar, Jisr al-Basha, and Dbayeh by the Lebanese Forces in 1976 (though Dbayeh still stands and is still serviced by UNRWA, most of its original inhabitants have not been allowed to return); and Da'uq, the quasiofficial camp at the heart of Sabra, destroyed in 1985 by the Amal movement.

The twelve remaining official camps are Biddawi and Nahr al-Barid near Tripoli; Burj al-Barajneh, Dbayeh, Mar Ilyas, and Shatila in Beirut; 'Ayn al-Hilwa and Mieh Mieh outside Saida; Bass, Burj al-Shamali, and Rashidiyya near Tyre; and Wavell in the Biqa'.

22. The mandate of the popular committees, legalized in the Cairo agreements, is local and nonpolitical: to improve material conditions, solve social problems, and mediate between the leadership and the people. They do not have policing or judicial powers. The committees are not elected but formed through resistance group nomination. At present, all the committees except for that of Rashidiyya (controlled by Arafatist forces) are composed exclusively of representatives of the ten dissident Palestinian groups.

23. UNRWA's count of the population is 25,000, but inhabitants put it at double that.

24. Yusif Madi, "Awda' al-Dimoghrafiyya wa al-Ijtima'iyya lil-Filsatiniyun fi Lubnan," PLO Central Bureau of Statistics, June 1994. An unpublished survey of six UNRWA schools in 'Ayn al-Hilwa for the years 1992-95 shows high drop-out rates.

25. Naturalization was easy for Christian and wealthy Muslim Palestinians in the early years of exile, but became much harder later. In 1994, there was a wave of naturalization as part of the Ta'if accords. Though Palestinians were officially excluded, some (mainly Christian and Shi'ite, but also a few Sunnis) in fact became naturalized, which caused hostile reactions. The exact number of naturalized Palestinians is unknown.