



Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness)

Annual Report 2017

Rights of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

Executive Summary

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Introduction:

The year 2017 has witnessed an additional decline in the rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, meanwhile the Lebanese Government has not fulfilled its international obligations towards the rights of Palestinian refugees, in particular the right in property, the right to work and the right to expand the area of the camps in proportion to the increase in population. Also there has been a decline in the level of the quality of the services provided by UNRWA, and the American threats to stop the support for UNRWA have added a serious concern to the Palestinian Refugees community, and to the Lebanese state itself. And the report recorded an increase in the violence acts in the Palestinian camps that killed 24 people, as well as dozens of wounded and physical damage.

The report accurately monitored the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon at various levels, at the level of the Lebanese state and the rights of the Palestinians at the level of UN- RWA and Palestinian rights at the local government in the camps.

The report is divided into several parts as follows:

1. The Lebanese state and the Rights of the Palestinian Refugees:

On the Lebanese arena, a document was issued by the **Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee** of the Council of Ministers, included items that would, if applied, improve the humanitarian situation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon by giving them their civil, economic and social rights. One of the recommendations of the document has been worked out which is the **General Palestinian Population Census** which showed that **174,442** Palestinian refugees live in 12 camps and 156 gatherings in five Lebanese provinces.

Despite the importance of this census, however (**witness**) doesn't believe that the result of the census will reflect positively on the level of rights in the foreseeable future or even the average, because the complexities in granting the rights to the Palestinian is the largest number issue, for example on the level of the right in property, despite the positive Palestinian contribution to this issue, however, there is no positive circumstances that permits the right to own property. This attitude is cumulative, linked to cultural and historical conditions that are difficult to overcome easily.

This marked decline in the number of Palestinian refugees, according to the census from approximately 500,000 people to 174,422 is mainly due to the fact that the Palestinian refugees are trying to search for human dignity in a place other than Lebanon, and the immigration is one of the most important means to reach this goal. Although the immigration of Palestinian refugees done quietly and away from the lights, however (**witness**) recorded a remarkable and public increase in the immigration.

2. UNRWA

For UNRWA, during 2017 MR. Krähenbühl announced a deficit of 61 million dollar resulting in UNRWA's continued a policy of reducing services to refugees. This deficit impose

a serious threat to the continuity of UNRWA services, particularly in the education and hospitalization sectors.

As for the health section, UNRWA contracts with private and public hospitals are unclear to all refugees, and the number of health supervisors doctors in the regions is inadequate. Also UNRWA disclaims responsibility toward burns cases which requires specialist hospitals, this is in addition to the chronic problem and the small contribution of UNRWA to the refugees recovery process in general.

(Witness) was also noted that during 2017, UNRWA continued to reduce the number of staff in various departments, especially after allowing its employees to resign early and freeze many vital and important jobs. As for The recruitment mechanism is according to the **Roster** lists of those who pass the written exams and showed a good familiarity in using computer. There is a great observation about the **Roster** mechanism itself and the associated lack of transparency.

As for the **Rehabilitation program** of the Houses in the camps, it doesn't notice in its best situation that more than 15% of total houses may be rehabilitated. As for the **Infrastructure Projects**, most of the projects that have implemented have faults, and UNRWA employs few engineers who become unable to follow up the work properly.

As for the **Relief program** which has many faults also since it did not observe the humanitarian and economic conditions and lack of employment opportunities for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and its aim is to remove many of the former beneficiary families, which did not meet the criteria of extreme poverty, so that new families would be included.

As for **University Scholarships**, the mechanisms adopted by UNRWA have changed several times, and the number of scholarship has gradually decreased. This year UNRWA was able to provide only 14 scholarship, and this after returning to the old mechanism with a ceiling of 5 years of study and a ceiling of 6000 dollars a year. Despite the fact that between 1,000 and 1,200 students per year of Palestinian refugees who succeeded the **Lebanese Secondary Official Exams** in all branches, however, the number of scholarships is very small.

As for the **Nahr- Al- Bared Camp**, and after ten years of Nahr- Al- Bared crises, about 40% of the camp's population are still homeless because of the delay in rebuilding their homes, and up till now about 1440 families have been forced to live either in rented houses or in garages' on their own expense after UNRWA suddenly stopped paying their rent since 2016 under the pretext of budget deficits. UNRWA has also suspended the emergency program which was applied to camp residents since 2007, and UNRWA expected to end from the reconstruction process of the camp by the end of 2021.

3. Palestinian Gatherings in Lebanon

A number of Palestinian communities' face interference of private properties where the refugee homes established on it with the lands belonging to the municipality or the lands of the community, consequently many of the land owners of the gatherings has been requesting to restore their property and resort to the judiciary. Moreover, the problem of passage of high

ways in the gatherings (Shabreha and Jal-Al-Bahar gatherings as samples) of Tyre area will remove a dozens of houses, and this issue still suspended without radical solutions, and a partial solution has been offered that provides a small amounts of compensation that will not enable these families to buy or rebuild new houses.

4. Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon: Doubling Challenges and Limited Options

Palestinian women in Lebanon are partners with men in pain and hope, and the difficulty of living and marginalization of women and men are alike. And the Palestinian woman suffers from two things, from being a woman and need a special care as well as being refugee lives in Lebanon. Where in Lebanon the Palestinian refugees live a bitter reality represented in poverty and unemployment and the deprivation of civil, economics and social rights in accordance of the Lebanese laws, including the labor law which prohibit refugees women from working in many professions such as medicine, pharmacy and engineering despite their qualifications, in addition to many other professions. As well as for the law of the real estate where it deprives the Palestinian refugees from owning at least houses. Also the Lebanese law deprives the Lebanese woman who is married from Palestinian refugee from granting her nationality to her children. And other laws that deprive the Palestinian refugees their rights in the pretext of refusing granting them Lebanese nationality for the Palestinian refugees and the permanent settle in Lebanon. These laws make refugee women feel marginalized and not belonging to the Lebanese society and become unable to develop their capacity and participate in production and achieve success and self- affirmation, especially with the increase of the refugees suffering and deterioration of the living situation, so they cannot work freely under these laws.

These violations against Palestinian woman in Lebanon are in stark contrast with Lebanon's international obligations related to refugees and with the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

5. The Palestinian child in Lebanon, between the bitterness of asylum and the rights of the child

Children under the age of 19 constitute 37.9% of the Palestinian refugee's population in Lebanon, which was shown by the general census. This large slice of refugees lives in tragic reality that limits their ability to build their future, starting from the low standard of living of the Palestinian refugees and the high poverty rate, so it's become difficult to provide food and the basic needs of children, which force them to search for work from an early age to help the rest of their family member. So a large part of them work in selling the plot and others in careers that are not commensurate with their weak body structure and exposed to various kinds of exploitation. Therefore, a high dropout rate was observed, in addition to the lack of enthusiasm of Palestinian children to receive education because Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are prohibited from practicing more than 72 professions. The Palestinian child has no space to entertain and play in the camps and they play in narrow streets with poor infrastructure exposed them to danger that threat their lives, as well as the lack of social security and stability within the camps, which deprive them living in a safe environment.

These violations against Palestinian children's in the camps in Lebanon are in stark contrast with Lebanon's international obligations related to children's rights and with the recommendations issued within the universal periodic review mechanism by 2015.

6. Palestinian Refugees from Syria

Palestinian refugees from Syria to Lebanon are still subjected to strict procedures and restrictions, particularly on their right to residence, movement or work, where they are not allowed to enter most of the camps, which are supervised by the Lebanese army without obtaining permission from the army intelligence, with the necessity that those refugee obtain valid residences and the imposition of financial fees for renewal of these residences.

7. Lebanese State Institution and the Relationship with Palestinian Refugees

For years, the Lebanese army has been controlling security in most of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon through establishing guard points at the surroundings of the camps from outside, as well as the establishment of permanent checkpoints at the entrances of those camps. Its mission is to check out the IDs of the departures and arrivals in camps, as well as the Lebanese army intelligence issues the permission for the entry of Palestinian refugees from Syria to the Palestinian camps in Lebanon and the periodic renewal of these permission, as well as checking the load of cars of passengers and goods.

The Lebanese army takes tight measures on the entrances to the camps, hinder the lives of people in general and constitute additional suffering for them. The army always says that these strict security measures are intended to protect the camp from the wanted persons and terrorists inside the camps who try to departure or enter the camps. However, these measures apply on all residents of the camp, not only for the wanted people. And (Witness) has called in more occasion for the humanization of these measures in which the army achieves their goal in protecting the security and maintaining the human dignity of the camp residents.

Despite the significant improvement in the performance of the **-Department of Political Affairs and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon** in completing the required transactions for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, especially after the use of computer technologies in the preservation of individuals and families data, and after facilitating of transaction applications through the Libran Post and the Mukhtar, however, there are still a number of complexities that need radical solution, including transactions that had not been registered in the years in which the Department had no original manager and still without solutions, the department also still not granting the Palestinian refugee women from Syria who are married from Palestinian refugee in Lebanon an identity card, that reflects negatively on their lives.

As that the **Department of General Security** in Lebanon that provides services to Palestine refugees, as travel documents, and granting special cards for the NON-IDs refugees. Although, there are some observations on the work of this Department, including the delaying of releasing detainees at it, in addition to impose a strict restriction on the movement of Palestinian refugees from Syria to Lebanon, and the insistence on the displacement of many children of Palestinian refugees women who have married to other foreign or Arab nationalities, and

the failure to resolve many of the displaced Palestinians from Syria who were forced to enter Lebanon from illegal crossings.

8. Security Tensions inside Camps during 2017

The Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness) has recorded a remarkable increase in security tensions compared to 2016; the most significant indicator of this, is the increase in deaths due to these tensions. And (Witness) has documented 24 dead in 2017, while documenting 15 dead in 2015, and 10 dead in 2016. The Palestinian camps are still needed a political reference that will be chosen democratically and earns the confidence of the population and be capable of dealing with all the challenges, political, economic, and social and security.

Recommendations:

The international community:

The Palestinian cause and the suffering of the Palestinian people are the results of a major international dereliction, contributed to the Israeli occupation that occupied their home land and transfer them to refugees in addition that the international community admit with Israel state and grant it political and legal cover, and the status in the United Nations, at the same time neglect and ignored the rights of the original Palestinian nation that are suffering from marginalization in the host countries .The international community did not exert serious efforts after 70 years to impose fair solution for the Palestinian cause in general and particularly the problems of Palestinian refugees and their long suffering.

The international community is requested to respect and fulfill the general international law, the humanitarian international law, and all the conventions and resolutions that related to the Palestinian cause through the following:

- To apply international laws relating to international humanitarian law and international human rights law
- To pressure the occupying state to implement international resolutions relevant to the Palestinian cause, particularly the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their towns and villages.
- To make UNRWA's budget part of the UN budget, and not to be based on the contributions of voluntary states, which makes it linked to the interests of States, not specific international commitments, so that UNRWA can fulfill its obligations to refugees and their growing needs.
- General Assembly of the United Nations should be responsible for the continuation of UNRWA's work, since it established UNRWA in 1949 in accordance with Resolution 302. And to make the budget of UNRWA part of its budget, in order not to allow it to be turned into a pressure card by donor countries to achieve political interests.

- The rejection of the votes demanding the dissolution of the UNRWA Agency in compliance with Resolution 302 of the General Assembly which requires that UNRWA work in relief and employment of Palestinian refugees until a just solution to their cause is found.
- The European Union, the League of Arab States and other regional organizations must immediately intervene and pressure the US administration to urge them to retreat from the decision to consider Jerusalem as the capital of the State of “Israel” and the transfer of the embassy, and the withdrawal from the suspension of its financial obligations for the Palestinian Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

UNRWA

- We the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are in need for UNRWA and its services, and we also commend its launch of the campaign “dignity is priceless “and this is an inherent position that calls for non- neutrality towards achieving the rights of the Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian cause.
- UNRWA should redouble its efforts to secure adequate funding to cover the needs of the Palestinian refugees and to move quickly with donor countries and to highlight the seriousness of the US decision on UNRWA and the life of more than 5 million Palestinian refugees.
- Establish transparent monitoring mechanisms for infrastructure, rehabilitation process for houses and the reconstruction projects in order to improve the quality and the quantity of its outcomes.
- Necessity of ending the file of Nahr al-Bared in terms of completion all the remaining packages and provides all the needs of the camp residents until they return to their houses.
- The necessity to increase the university scholarships in proportion to the number of successful student’s per-year in the secondary official exams.
- The need to provide periodic assistance for the Palestinian refugees from Syria to Lebanon, and not to stop this assistance under any pretext.
- The need to activate the legal protection section and widen its work to provide the necessary legal protection for refugees in all areas.
- Increasing and improving services for the Palestinian refugees in all fields, especially the health and education sector.

Lebanese State

- The Lebanese state should amend all laws and resolutions that violate Palestinian human rights in accordance with the provisions of the International Bill of Human Rights.
- Implement practical application on the problems that has risen by the “Working Group on Palestinian Refugee problems in Lebanon”, which was officially announced during a ceremony held on 20/7/2017 at the Government Serial.
- The Lebanese State should take strict control and punishment steps against those who are responsible for arranging illegal immigration flights for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

- The settlement of the Palestinian refugees from Syria to Lebanon and their legal settlement consistent with the provisions of international humanitarian law as refugees and not to consider them as Arab expatriates, and impose on them any financial fees or restrictions on their movement.
- Issuing a magnetic identity card in accordance with international standards.
- The effects of the ownership Law 296/2001 should be addressed until the Palestinian refugees are allowed to have real-estate, through:
 1. Transfer of ownership to their heirs.
 2. Registration of the Palestinian refugees' contracts or real-estates, who bought properties before the law that
 3. was issued in the year 2001, and exempts them from the rule of passage for the ten years.
 4. Registering the ownership of the Lebanese wives who had married with a Palestinian husband to their sons and daughters.
- To resolve the issue of a unified definition of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and to consider the three categories: Registered with the Ministry of the Interior; registered with UNRWA; and those who have lost their identity cards are Palestinian refugees, in order to get rid from any discrimination between them, and not to be considered them foreigners of a special kind.
- In accordance with what was stated in a unified Lebanese vision document for Palestinian refugee issues, the necessity of humanizing the security procedures around the camps and their entrances, and unifying the relevant Lebanese authority in this field, and dealing with the security issue in its comprehensive sense as asocial security.
- Regarding the right to work, it is necessary to allow professionals to work legally, especially the profession of medicine, engineering, pharmacy and law. With regard to the law issued in 2010, it is necessary to note the following:
 1. The necessity of issuance of executive decrees regulating the application of Law No. 129/2010 not leaving the decisions to different interpretations of each minister.
 2. The need to handle the issue of free professions. Palestinian labor in this field especially who are skilled and productive and can contribute effectively to the economic cycle.

Palestinian Liberation Organization

- The necessity to continue activating the Palestinian political reference in Lebanon and focusing its role on following up the issues and rights of the refugees in Lebanon with the relevant Lebanese authorities.
- The PLO should follow up the implementation of the recommendations of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee and implement the recommendations issued by the document, and to influence on the forces involved in the drafting of the document and all Lebanese political forces to ratify all the rights of Palestinian refugees within the clear and detailed laws issued by the Lebanese Parliament.

- Coordination of activities and initiatives to face the threat of reducing the UNRWA budget.
- The PLO in Lebanon should inform foreign missions of the consequences of the Trump decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the seriousness of the Suspension of UNRWA funding for refugees in Lebanon and the diaspora.
- To develop the Palestinian Red Crescent hospitals in terms of equipment and modern technologies, and work to attach it to the Palestine Ministry of Health and to improve the conditions of its employees.
- Follow up the Nahr al-Bared camp file with UNRWA in a precise manner, so as to ensure that the few available resources are invested wisely to guarantee the rights of the camp residents, especially their right to reconstruction.
- Support the Palestinian Student Fund financially and politically to continue its support for the Palestinian students in Lebanon, in parallel with other supporting institutions and funds.